

## **Assessing the effects of family conflicts on children's development in Huye district of Rwanda and the need for social work interventions**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study aimed to investigate the effects of family conflicts on children's development and the implications for the social work profession. The qualitative study guided by the conflict theory was conducted in the Huye district of Rwanda and adopted the narrative analysis of 16 interviews with families experiencing conflicts, Inshuti Z'Umuryango (IZU, Friends of Family), and local leaders who were selected on a purposive sampling basis considering that the representatives of others have more information. The study found that many children are affected by family conflicts in this district due to issues between the parents. The study also demonstrated that the main cause of family conflicts is the lack of effective communication between spouses. But there are other identified causes of family conflicts such as poverty, aggressive behaviors, infidelity, bad advice from peers, and bad leadership. Thus, the problems between partners negatively impact the children being the weaker part of the family and they drop out of school and girls may be impregnated. Social Workers in collaboration with Government Leaders are recommended to do their best to initiate more innovative programs that can be helpful for these families struggling with conflicts.

**Keywords:** family conflicts, children's development, Rwanda, social work

### **Introduction**

Social workers support families through the counseling process by assisting them in identifying issues, setting objectives, and resolving family conflicts. They also help families deal with tough situations including divorce, illness, and death (Folger, 2021; Metcalf, 2021). In micro, mezzo, and macro situations, social workers need to be able to display a number of talents. One of the most crucial abilities they can (2016). In social work, conflict management techniques like advocacy, mediation, group facilitation, negotiation, and family group conferences are frequently needed because

social conflicts can occur between individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations over values, needs, goals, positions, interests, and rights (Barrett, 2020; Folger et al., 2021). From the above short background, we are arguing that understanding the causes of family conflicts and how they affect children's development can be a good weapon for social workers to deal with them. Hence, the study assessing the effects of family conflicts on children's development in the Huye district of Rwanda and the need for social work interventions to acquire the ability to negotiate conflict. Social workers need to be skilled in a variety of areas (Lee et al. 2015; Mattocks, 2018; Menkel-Meadow et al., 2020 ). One of the most significant aspects of a social worker's job is managing disputes positively. Social workers typically deal with many forms of conflict between their clients and their social surroundings (Reamer, 2018; Madalina, 2016)

The conflict between parents on the one hand and between parents and children on the other hand affects children's behavioral, emotional, social, and academic, health and appears to be the main predictor of their maladjustment (Sturge-Apple et al., 2010). A large number of studies have found that children's psychological adjustment is negatively affected by conflict between families (Fosco & Lydon-Staley, 2020). Children tend to know well the conflict between their parents even when they are not present in that place to witness the conflicts (Sturge-Apple et al., 2010). Negative family conflict has the power undermining to child and family well-being and adjustment. In addition, adolescents who know about their parents' infidelity are more likely to try drugs and drink alcohol. In the same way, they are more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior like; unprotected sex practices and having many partners compared to their peers who do not know about their parent's infidelity (Platt et al., 2008).

Unemployment at a certain level may also be a factor to trigger conflicts (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). The high work potency, the time pressure, and the mismanagement of job schedules and job chores lead to an increase in conflict too (Gallie & Russell, 2009). Researchers found that gender equality is an important factor that makes men and women experience conflict (Powell et al, 2009). The failure of marriages negatively affects the social well-being of the children who are caught up in the marital conflict that leads to parental divorce. Children develop problems in internalizing and externalizing their parents' relationship, leading to harmful effects, such as psychological, behavioral, emotional, cognitive, physical, and social problems (Davies et al., 2017; Reynolds, 2014).

Family conflict is a stressful event for children and adult children. It causes distress, anxiety, an increase in behavioral issues for children, and many more. Family conflict affects the attachment style; a child's attachment style may

change due to changes of family dynamics like; infidelity or divorce (Ben-Ami & Baker, 2012). Conflict between parents and infidelity can cause avoidant attachment such as low self-esteem, a way of negatively viewing others, and a lack of closeness to others (Ben-Ami & Baker, 2012). Family conflict such as divorce also leads to insecure attachments as adult children may fear abandonment and closeness. In The USA, the estimation made in the years 1992 and 1996; eight out of one hundred women were victims of violence with half of their households including children under 12 years old (Hillis et al., 2016). Other studies argue that the families of police officers are affected by what the police officers experience (Sever & Cinoğlu, 2010) because of the work they do. The causes of work-family conflict include work stressors, work duties and responsibilities, work social support, work features, and personality (Michel et al. 2011). Parental and marital status have different impacts on the interaction between work and home life.

Rwandan families face different problems, and family conflict is the main phenomenon that hinders the welfare of Rwandan families. During the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi; Rwandan families experienced the killings that happened even between families. In Rwanda, family conflict is the main spark of many crimes and suicide cases that happen in Rwanda. According to the reports of the National Commission for Unity and Reconciliation, we see that the victims of family conflict are not only the ones being abused but also family members, friends, work colleagues, and the community at large are affected by the family conflict (Clark, 2010). It has been found that selling land is the main cause of marital conflict, and the result of this is killings that happen between married couples. Men also deny the changes brought about by the principles of gender-equal rights entitled by the new laws and spend their time questioning those principles (Abbott & Rwica, 2014). In Rwanda there is also economic violence that hinders family relationships; this includes the lack of family assistance by married couples, leaving the family, complicity in confinement, discrimination, and deprivation of basic rights (Clark, 2010).

The study was guided by the conflict theory which emphasizes the importance of power in family life, families are frequently not safe havens but rather places where power battles can take place (Bennett et al., 2017). Family status roles are frequently performed as part of this power play; the conflict theory holds that the struggle for scarce resources keeps society in a condition of constant conflict (Orsini, 2024, Kossek et al. 2017). The theory was found to be relevant to this study because the family is made by the parents and children, and the study investigates the effects of family conflict on the children's development. This means that conflicts between parents may affect the children because the parents don't have enough time to care for their children. Same as the conflicts between the parents and the children may affect the latter. As per the theory, the family has the risk of fighting powers between the members of

the family which may affect the weak member and, in many cases, the weak member is the child who rather needs protection.

Despite Rwanda not being a big country, reports have been indicating killings that happen between husbands and wives which is a popular concern and is having the government's attention as a social problem (Gasirabo, 2020). According to the same author, Rwandan families face different problems, and family conflict is the main phenomenon that hinders the welfare of Rwandan families. On the other side, families are taken as the key to life and the number one cause of happiness, and the family is the only place for conceiving, giving birth, and educating a child; the family is also given to the community for the well-being of society (MIGEPROF,2020).

Having presented the above literature on the importance of family and family conflicts; the current study contributes to the existing literature on the effects of family conflicts on children's development especially in the Huye District of Rwanda; which is not covered by the previous studies. This study adds value to the literature on family conflict and children's development and well-being. It can also be used to analyze the link between family conflict and children's development in academic institutions and other relevant institutions. The current study also contributes to responding to the following questions: (1) What are the causes of family conflict? (2) How do family conflicts affect the children living in conflicting families? (3) How to address the identified gaps in solving conflict in families and protecting children from being affected by the family conflict?

## **Methods**

### *Study design*

This study adopted a qualitative research design. The use of this design helped us to understand the effects of family conflicts on children's development and provided insights into the problem. The choice of the design was motivated by the fact that it is also quick, cheap, and easy to perform. Qualitative research analyzes information conveyed through language and behavior in natural settings. It captures expressive information not conveyed in quantitative data about beliefs, values, feelings, and motivations underlying behaviors (Berkwits & Inui, 1998).

### *Sampling*

The study used 16 participants purposively. Two people per six families that experience family conflict, two Inshuti Z'Umuryango (community-based volunteers' friends of children and family), and two local leaders were selected. The sampling procedure adopted a judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling method which is one of the non-probability sampling techniques depending on the judgments of the researcher according to people, cases,

events, and pieces of data that are to be studied (Rai & Thapa, 2015). The researchers used a sample size of including. The interviewees were chosen because they have family conflicts and live in the study area.

#### *Data collection*

The Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources from the research participants reviewed existing documents respectively. In data collection, the researchers used interviews, document reviews, and observation. In the section of results while presenting the extract from interviews, abbreviations are used to make sure that interviewees remain anonymous.

#### *Data analysis*

Data collection was followed by data analysis. In this study, we used narrative analysis to analyze and present findings.

#### *Ethical consideration*

Participants were aware of the type of information that the researchers wanted from them, the purpose of the study, and its implications for both the participants and the entire community. Before starting data collection, research participants were allowed to ask questions. Participants were also assured of their rights, the right to consent, protection of information, and respect for their privacy. The researchers explained clearly that participation in the study was voluntary; whoever wanted to participate was welcome and a person who did not want to participate was free to refuse or deny the invitation. The researchers told the participants their names would not be mentioned, and their information would remain anonymous.

### **Results**

The data were collected from 16 interviewees (see Table 1) from the Huye District of Rwanda. The interviewees were in three categories, and these are twelve citizens who come from six conflicting families in the Ngoma Sector, two Inshuti Z'Umuryango, and two local leaders. Due to the issue of saturation, where the later interviewees had started to repeat what the family members said, the researcher decided to interview two IZU and two local leaders only in addition to 12 family members. For anonymity the interviewees were assigned codes where MFC1 stands for the first interviewee in the category of Members of a Family that has Conflicts (MFC), IZU1 stands for the first interviewee in the category of Inshuti Z'Umuryango (Friends of Family Volunteers; IZU) and LL1 is standing for the first interviewee in the category of Local Leader. (LL).

**Table 1:** Interviews' data and assigned codes

Serial N <sup>o</sup>	Interviewees	Gender	Code
1.	Member of a family that has conflicts 1	F	MFC1
2.	Member of a family that has conflicts 2	F	MFC2
3.	Member of a family that has conflicts 3	M	MFC3
4.	Member of a family that has conflicts 4	F	MFC4
5.	Member of a family that has conflicts 5	M	MFC5
6.	Member of a family that has conflicts 6	M	MFC6
7.	Member of a family that has conflicts 7	F	MFC7
8.	Member of a family that has conflicts 8	F	MFC8
9.	Member of a family that has conflicts 9	F	MFC9
10.	Member of a family that has conflicts 10	F	MFC10
11.	Member of a family that has conflicts 11	M	MFC11
12.	Member of a family that has conflicts 12	F	MFC12
13.	Friends of Family Volunteers (IZU) 1	F	IZU1
14.	Friends of Family Volunteers (IZU) 2	F	IZU2
15.	Local Leader 1	M	LL1
16.	Local Leader 2	M	LL2

The purpose of this study was to assess the psychological effect of family conflicts on children's development. The interpretation and analysis focus on the main objectives of the study. For a better understanding of the data interpretation, it is organized into 4 main themes i.e the description of children whose development is affected by their conflicting families, the causes of family conflict, the consequences of family conflicts to children, and recommendations to address the identified gaps in the implementation of solving the conflict in families and protecting children.

### ***Children's development versus family conflicts***

The findings showed that there is a persistence of children's development being affected by family conflicts. In the six families, fifteen children are affected by conflicts in their families and have lived in this situation for many years. Inshuti Z'Umuryango said that they have around eight families that have conflicts in their families. Three families have around ten children affected, and five other families have around sixteen children affected. This is an alarming fact that there is a high number of children whose development is being affected by their

families who live in conflicts and who have lived in these conflicts for many years. These families have neighbors who are also struggling with conflicts in their families and those families have also children and for the look of things they are affected by these conflicts. This shows that the rate of children who are being affected by conflicts in their families is high and increasing day by day.

### ***Causes of Family Conflicts***

Findings from the field showed that the following are the main causes of family conflicts:

*Aggressive behaviors:* Aggressive behaviors are usually caused by drug abuse. Sometimes people are misled by those drugs and then behave aggressively in their families. Some of our interviews support this claim where for example MFC-2 said, 'It is very difficult to handle a partner who is drunk and wants to fight with people left at home'. MFC-1 explained that 'aggressive behavior causes family conflicts when this partner wants to fight and cannot see that what he/she does is wrong because he/she is always aggressive due to the drugs he/she takes.

*Poverty:* Poverty was also identified as one of the causes of family conflicts some of the interviewees supported this in the below statements:

MFC-3 reported that 'poverty causes family conflicts mostly when a man is not able to work because he is not in a normal condition and cannot earn money because he did not work, not being able to provide for his family makes him be disrespected in the family'.

Family conflicts arise when you are no longer able to provide for the family and satisfy the family's needs. Also, MFC 9 said that 'poverty is a cause of family conflicts because when there is hunger when the family's needs are not being satisfied there is no peace, and parents start to quarrel accusing each other of being irresponsible or misusing what they have and this causes family conflicts'

*Lack of Time for discussion of family affairs between spouses:* This was said to be the main cause of family conflicts because spouses don't sit together and plan for their families, yet they have different understandings of how to manage their home and resources. Conflicts arise when there are misunderstandings, yet spouses don't have this quality time. This is a time of speaking about what is wrong and what is right in the family but when families don't have much time everyone does things in his or her way which causes family conflicts. This can be considered the main cause of family conflicts because MFC-4, MFC-5, MFC-10, IZU-1, IZU-2, and LL-1 have been pointed out as the main cause of the family conflicts in the area.

*Infidelity:* Infidelity is a sexual behavior outside marriage (Hertlein et al., 2013). The marriage cannot be stable when knowing that your spouse is seeing another person, and this may be a source of conflicts between them.

In this case, MFC-6 said that ‘Sometimes poverty at home comes from infidelity, when the spouse takes some resources from the family and starts giving them away to someone else that he/she loves ignoring that the family is also in need of that resource, this is due to infidelity because at this point that person who is seeing another wife or husband no longer care for his or her family what he/she does is taking their resources away for pleasing that person he/she is seeing’. MFC-2 added that when there is infidelity there cannot be an intimate relationship between spouses which also destabilizes the relationship between spouses and creates family conflicts.

*Peer influence:* Sometimes married couples are misled by their friends.

MFC-7 reported that ‘people can mislead you by advising you to do wrong things to your partner because they are not yet married, they don’t know how that situation seems to be, or because they are also in the same situation. For instance, when you are a man, they can convince you that you don’t have to be controlled by a woman, which means the one to decide at home is you are not involved or understand what your wife says.’

Since the peers are your friends or other people that you consider when seeking advice, you accept what they give you as a piece of advice and that makes you have conflicts in your family because of not considering the ideas of your wife. Or when you are a wife, and you earn more money than your husband, people may mislead you by telling you that you are the one who earns a lot of money, so you have to control your husband.

*Poor leadership:* When the leaders do not help the families deal with the conflicts, it may delay the conflicts to be solved sustainably. On poor leadership, the MFC-1 reported that

‘Sometimes leaders don’t solve problems that families are having in their community. Leaders are called when families have conflicts so that they can help them solve the conflicts but they fail to sustainably solve those conflicts and yet they were trusted by those people to be their community leaders to understand their problems and help them solve the problems.’

*Misunderstanding the aspects of “Gender Equality and Gender Equity:* On this issue, the LL2 reported that ‘some people misunderstood these aspects. Illiterate people don’t understand these aspects they consider themselves to be equal and fail to effectively perform their responsibilities at home.’

The MFC1 added that ‘many people in rural areas are not educated and because of not being educated people confuse gender equality, gender equity, and gender roles which causes them to have conflicts in their families because of not understanding their roles as husband and wife.’

### ***Effects of Family Conflicts on Children’s Development***

Research participants highlighted the effects of family conflicts as listed below:  
*Psychological Effects:* Bad parenting is likely to occur when there are conflicts between parents. Children experience psychological effects because they are always worried about how life will be. MFC-1 said that ‘these children are told bad words by their parents because of the situation at home, they are traumatized by these situations, and they are always afraid of how things will be tomorrow.’

*The delay in children’s development is based on the neglect of their parents:* Children cannot grow well yet something is missing for that child. Parents are supposed to be children’s primary caregivers, but when there are conflicts at home parents become stressed and fail to take care of their children. MFC-3 said ‘Sometimes children encounter the issue of stunting or malnutrition because of their parent’s conflicts’. Parents are supposed to support their children and help them through their developmental stages but having conflicts at home, parents tend to neglect their children instead of helping them grow they share with them their stresses, which makes children delay developing or miss any of the stages that they should experience because of experiencing family conflicts and not having good caregivers who can support them and help them pass through all those stages.

*School Dropout:* Children tend to drop out of school because of family conflicts. LL1 reported that ‘children need someone to encourage them and make them know the importance of school, but when there are conflicts in the family parents are less engaged in their children’s lives including their life at school.’ This makes children hate school and decide to drop out of school.

*Early Pregnancy:* family conflicts expose children to different things. IZU-1 reported that

‘Children get tired of the conflicts that happen in their families and having a girl child in the family that has conflicts exposes her to sexual behaviors because she is tired of those conflicts in her family and thinks that she is getting some relief when involved in those behaviors.’

Girls are more exposed to sexual behaviors than boys and from that they are impregnated at a very young age. Also, girls in the family sometimes engage in sexual behaviors because they lack some things from their families and think that the way to get those things that they were not given by their parents is by

engaging in sexual behaviors. They encounter old men who can satisfy their needs but in return, they have to sleep with them, this leads to early pregnancy which is caused by family conflicts.

*Theft:* Boys also are more likely to engage in stealing behaviors. LL-2 said that ‘not being satisfied by what their parents give them or not being satisfied by the life that they live in, they decide to engage in those behaviors.’ They will respond to their needs without thinking if they are good or bad behaviors or what will come with those behaviors.’

### ***Research participants’ recommendations to address the identified gaps***

The following are some of the key recommendations from research participants to deal with family conflicts:

*Educating people about Gender Equality and Gender Equity:* People who live in rural areas misunderstand these two aspects which are of great importance. Families in rural areas fail to perform their roles, which means women fail to perform their roles and responsibilities at home as men fail to do so because of misunderstanding these two aspects. Participants recommended this as something that can help women and men know their responsibilities at home and perform them appropriately.

*Training them on things related to families:* Participants recommended training for the families living in conflicts from the country level up to the village level. They said that sometimes some of them are given training related to family things, but it can be perfect when this training are given to every family most especially those living in conflicts. These family trainings would help them to even connect with other families that don’t have conflicts in their families, which can help them to see good examples to follow. That will help them to see what it looks like to have a peaceful family and experience that. This will enable them to decide what is right for their own families.

*Strengthen Umugoroba W’Imiryango (Parents’ Forum):* It is a platform where members of the families living in the village come together and share ideas and make decisions that can help them to develop and improve their relationships by preventing and solving conflicts that may arise in their homes, in the neighborhood or anywhere else (MIGEPROF, 2020). This is an established program that helps very much, but more efforts are needed to be put into this program. The number of people who participate in UWI is still low. Many families neglect to participate in this program and yet families should be encouraged to participate in it. There is a need for mobilization and informing people about this program and how families living in conflict may benefit from UWI. Families should be encouraged to participate in UWI as a family, not a husband only or a wife only, both of them should be encouraged to participate

in this program to understand things in the same manner and be given pieces of advice together.

*Taking every child as your own:* People who often meet children in places such as at school, in the neighborhood, at church, etc. should help children to have a better understanding of life, family, and a better way they can live regardless the conflicts that are in their families. Teachers at school are recommended to bear with these children and take care of them as their own. Because sometimes they are also mistreated by their teachers and decide to drop out of their schools. Teachers are requested to first understand the child and help that child in case he/she is struggling with conflicts in their family. Participants encourage people to take care of children, understand them, help them, and take them as their own. This will help a child to feel that affection that he/she does not get at home.

*Putting in place civil education Camps (Ingando) specifically for men:* Ingando camps are Rwandan political and civic reeducation and indoctrination camps (Mgbako, 2010). This is something that was recommended by IZU-1, MFC-3 and LL-2 and according to them this can help so much to maintain good marriages, have a peaceful home, and protect children from family conflicts. This happened once and women had this time of camping, and they were educated about things that concern them and their marriages.

Women came from different parts of Rwanda, and they were put together, trained, and learned from one another. Through this program women learned a lot of things; they learnt their responsibilities as mothers, they learnt how to take care of themselves, how to take care of their families, especially their children, they were shown their abilities and they were encouraged to be good wives for their husbands, better parents for their children, and incredible women for the Nation. They found this to be helpful in their families, so they recommended this training for men. In the participants' view about men, they said that men are providers of their families; with this, they can provide also peace and protect children from having traumas that result from family conflicts.

## **Discussion**

In this section, the researchers compared the study findings with the findings of other authors on the impact of family conflicts on children's development. In this section, the researcher discussed the findings on family conflicts, what are the causes, and the main causes of family conflict, and compared the findings with other authors' views on the causes of family conflict.

Starting with identified causes of family conflicts, various factors were found to result in family conflicts. According to the study findings, the identified causes of family conflicts are a lack of time for discussion of family affairs

between spouses, poverty, aggressive behaviors, peer influence, poor leadership, infidelity, and misunderstanding of the aspect of gender equality and gender equity. Lack of time for conversation was said to be the main cause of family conflicts according to this study and this is in line with the previous studies where it was found that the main cause of family conflicts is lack of communication between the husband and wife and their financial conditions (Ningrum & Mas' udah, 2021). It has been also found that selling land is the main cause of marital conflict, and this results in killings that happen between married couples.

In addition to the above, other authors found other factors contribute to family conflicts such as the double burden on the wife: the wife is responsible for housework and has another job that she usually attends and this contributes to a lack of time for conversation between the couples due to the wife not being effective in responding to all those many tasks (Yusuf & Khan., 2019). Other the same authors revealed that limited opportunities to spend time together: because of being busy with other activities or with work schedules, push the husband to be engaged in infidelity activities which in the end will contribute to family poverty due to resources wastage in those infidelity activities (Yusuf & Khan., 2019). Also contributes to a lack of affection, comfort, joy, and hospitality within the home among the family members (Hesse et al., 2014).

Among others, it was also found that having different views or understanding of gender equality and equity is among the causes of family conflicts which communicates with the previous findings which show that family members who hold divergent understandings or beliefs may come into conflict because conflict can occasionally arise when individuals misinterpret one another and draw incorrect conclusions (Todd, 2016). The same author pointed out that when family conflicts that are not settled amicably might give rise to disputes and animosity which contribute to aggressive behaviours among family members (Todd, 2016). In the current study, it was also found that peer influence on one of the family members to reach a given achievement and poor leadership of local leaders who do not sustainably help families solve their problems contribute to conflicts in families.

Concerning the effects of family conflicts on children's development; the study found that children delay development due to the neglect of parents who are facing conflicts in families, parents fail to attend to their children, and this affects their developmental stage. Children are psychologically affected due to how they are treated, the words they are told, and the situation itself. Girls are early impregnated, and boys are exposed to theft, children who face family conflicts are likely to drop out of school. In relation to these findings, previous studies have found that individuals' development and growth are often discovered in families (Corey and McCurry 2018; Kagitcibasi, 2017). Families

that experience conflict do not have a space that allows healthy discovery, development, and growth (Saxbe et al., 2014). Children who experience family conflict face dysfunction in the future (Habib et al., 2014); such dysfunction includes psychological and behavioral responses (Santiago et al., 2020; Saxbe et al., 2014).

Children who experience family conflicts are at high risk of being negatively affected psychologically as well as socially as it was found that It is hard for these children to develop relationships with their friends or family members, and they encounter problems of insomnia which leads them to not have a great performance at school (Reynolds, 2014). Children who experience conflicts in their families are mostly affected psychologically, especially in their thoughtful way and the way they see the future (Ndayambaje et al., 2020). Children are affected by the continuous conflicts between their parents in a way that they can imitate them thinking that it is a normal situation, this is caused by the bad functioning of relationships that are shown to them by observing their parents (Ndayambaje et al., 2020). Researchers have shown an increase in the probability that children's disorders are caused by marital conflicts where children are affected; cognitively, socially, academically, and psychologically (Heberle & Carter, 2015; Cummings & Davies, 2002). Children are likely to be negatively affected by family conflicts in a way that it affects their attachment style, their future relationships, and their academic progress at school or college (Borst, 2015).

The family conflict theory was found to play a big role in understanding the findings of the current study and among the main findings is that lack of proper communication between the spouses is the main source of conflicts between the two spouses and this affects the children because the parents who are always involved in conflicts do not have enough time to care for their children. The conflict theory which states that in the family there pushing forces between the family members is more relevant at the end of the day in the situation of family conflicts; it is one family member who is pushing another. In addition to the lack of quality communication between the parents, the study also identified other factors that may lead to conflicts like poverty, aggressive behaviors, peer influence, poor leadership, and infidelity. All these factors contribute to battles between family members which results in family conflicts that later affect the children's development where children drop out of school, girls are impregnated due to lack of attention from the parents and all these battles in the family are in line with the contact of the conflict theory.

The study findings recommended a number of measures to deal with family conflicts which in the end affect the children's development. The suggested recommendations include educating family members on gender equality and family issues management; all parents to come together and treat all children

like theirs so that children will feel that care is provided by parents from all sides. Previous studies have pointed out that the family is a place for children to grow and learn from their home environment (Ndayambaje et al., 2020). Parental conflicts can affect the children's behaviors, and this may affect children's personality (Xuan et al., 2018). The characteristic of family members is that they complement each other and should live peacefully. If this is not followed the family is destroyed and affected by conflicts and children will be the victims (Tolorunleke, 2014).

The findings have implications for social work practice, in the sense that social workers are involved in dealing with family conflicts at different levels; being at the family level or the community level (Travis et al., 2016). Generally, it is known that when conflicts emerge among their clients, social workers can use a variety of techniques and approaches to address them. In social work, the Thomas-Kilmann model, mediation, negotiation, and restorative conferencing are a few of the main techniques used to address conflicts (Trippe, B., & Baumuel, 2015). However, in the context of the current study, Social Workers in Rwanda; in collaboration with government leaders are recommended to do their best to initiate more innovative programs that can be helpful for these families struggling with conflicts. They cannot only initiate these programs but also strengthen and make a follow-up for those programs already initiated. Citizens also have to consider those programs and understand that those programs are initiated for them.

Another implication of social worker practice in Rwanda is that there is a need to investigate the implementation science of the identified recommendation to deal with family conflicts which affect the children's development. The study participants recommended enhancing education on gender perceptions, and family management; strengthening the Umugoroba w; Iwiryango and putting in place the civic education camps for families that have continuous conflicts. The practitioner social workers are in a better place to draw up the strategy to implement those recommendations, in addition to brainstorming other possible innovative interventions.

## **Conclusion**

We conclude that family conflicts are caused by different issues at home as identified in the current study. These include lack of time for conversation between the family members, infidelity, misunderstanding of gender equality, peer influence, etc. We also found that family conflict hurts child development which later results in children's involvement in bad behavior like school dropout and stealing people's property which may even lead to early pregnancy. Regardless of the difference in issues they all affect the family's relationship which results in family conflicts. There is no specific person who can cause the conflicts in the family, both men and women can be either the victim or cause

conflicts in the family. Different things can cause family conflicts, but they all result to having conflicts in the family which affect people in the family.

From the findings of the study, are very much affected by conflicts that arise in their families, and their needs are not met when experiencing these conflicts in their homes. Consequently, they delay in development because of the neglect of their primary caregivers; parents; who are stressed by problems occurring in the family. Children face this problem of delaying development because those who must attend to them and help them to develop are busy solving problems or stressed by those problems and for this many children are left to do certain things by themselves that they are not even capable of doing and due to this they fail to early develop. These consequences that arrive to children who experience conflicts in the family make them misbehave and give them a hard way of living in the community because they are doing what society calls abnormal and this hinders them from living peacefully and being understood in society.

We acknowledge that the current study has limitations, like the fact that it did not involve social workers among research participants. This could have brought in to capture points of their understanding of how to deal with the identified issues in the families with conflicts. The study also used a qualitative approach which did not quantify the occurrence of the findings so that someone may understand easily which comes before the other. Future studies may tackle these limitations for continuous interventions by social workers and practitioners.

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