



## Perceptions of Gender, Masculinity, Feminism, and Changing Family Welfare Roles in Urban Rwanda

Lucien HAKIZIMANA<sup>1\*</sup>, Ernestine BAYISENGE<sup>2</sup>, Alice MUTONIWASE<sup>3</sup>

Catholic University of Rwanda.

\*Corresponding Author  
Lucien HAKIZIMANA

Catholic University of  
Rwanda.

### Article History

Received: 08.04.2025

Accepted: 22.05.2025

Published: 05.06.2025

**Abstract:** As Rwanda undergoes rapid urbanization, traditional gender roles are increasingly contested, redefined, and renegotiated. This study explores the evolving dynamics of masculinity, feminism, and family welfare roles in urban Rwanda, focusing on the perceptions of 41 social sciences students at the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR). The research investigates how students conceptualize masculinity and feminism, and how these perceptions intersect with shifting familial responsibilities in cities. Guided by theoretical frameworks including Judith Butler's gender performativity, Raewyn Connell's hegemonic masculinity, and feminist perspectives on domestic labor, the study applies a cultural anthropology lens to analyze contemporary urban kinship and household structures. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining structured questionnaires with focus group discussions to gather both quantitative and qualitative insights. Statistical results indicate that 78% of respondents perceive masculinity as transforming, with emotional engagement and caregiving now seen as appropriate male roles. Furthermore, 85% confirm women's economic empowerment, although 62% acknowledge ongoing societal resistance to female leadership within families. Respondents highlighted increased male participation in caregiving and domestic duties, while also noting persistent intergenerational tensions and cultural pressures. The findings suggest that urbanization, access to education, and exposure to global feminist discourses are fostering more egalitarian gender norms. Nevertheless, full gender parity in family welfare roles remains a work in progress. This study concludes that urban Rwandan households are transitioning toward shared responsibilities, and calls for gender-sensitive policies that reinforce these shifts. Future research should expand to peri-urban and rural contexts to deepen understanding of gender transformations across Rwanda.

**Keywords:** Masculinity, Feminism, Urbanization, Gender roles, Family Welfare.

### Cite this article:

HAKIZIMANA, L., BAYISENGE, E., MUTONIWASE, A., (2025). Perceptions of Gender, Masculinity, Feminism, and Changing Family Welfare Roles in Urban Rwanda. *ISAR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(6), 13-22.

## 1. Introduction

Urbanization in Rwanda is reshaping the contours of societal organization, particularly within family structures. As the country rapidly transitions from a predominantly rural society to an increasingly urban one, with urbanization projected to reach over 35% by 2035 (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda [NISR], 2022), traditional gender roles are being renegotiated in significant ways. This study seeks to explore how shifting gender constructs, particularly the redefinitions of masculinity and feminism, are influencing family welfare dynamics in urban Rwandan households. The urgency of this inquiry lies in the intersection between modern urban living and the persistent influence of

cultural norms that often resist change (Ansoms et al., 2021; Burnet, 2012; Uwineza & Pearson, 2009; NISR, 2022).

The core problem addressed is the tension between evolving gender expectations and deeply ingrained traditional roles that still shape many Rwandan families. While women increasingly enter the workforce and assume leadership positions in both public and private spheres, many urban households continue to grapple with cultural prescriptions that view caregiving and emotional labor as primarily feminine domains (Burnet, 2011; Sleghe et al., 2013; Nzabonimpa, 2020; Taylor, 2022). Masculinity, in this context, is also undergoing transformation. With growing education and exposure to global feminist discourses, Rwandan men are challenged to reconsider notions of authority, emotional



expression, and their role in family life (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Butler, 2004; Sweeney, 2021; Datzberger, 2018). These evolving constructs raise important questions about the sustainability of gender equality within households and the impact on overall family welfare.

Urban environments, as transformative social arenas, provide fertile ground for reimagining gender roles. Cities like Kigali, Huye, and Rubavu are not only sites of economic opportunity but also of cultural fluidity, where global values intersect with local norms (Jefremovas, 2002; Abbott et al., 2016; Meier zu Selhausen, 2019; Lemarchand, 2021). This anthropological significance underlines the relevance of examining urban households as microcosms of broader gender shifts. Using theoretical models such as Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, Raewyn Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, and feminist theories on domestic labor, this study applies a cultural anthropology lens to interpret kinship and family welfare roles in the urban Rwandan context (Butler, 2004; Connell, 1995; Hochschild & Machung, 2012; Moore, 2011).

Understanding how men and women perceive and embody masculinity and feminism in changing urban settings is critical to developing responsive, gender-sensitive policies. These insights can support Rwanda's broader goals of inclusive development, equity, and social cohesion, particularly as the country positions itself as a regional leader in gender equality (MIGEPROF, 2020; UN Women, 2022; Hunt, 2020; Guttman & Rafalow, 2021).

## 2. Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore university students' perceptions of masculinity, feminism, and family welfare roles in urban Rwanda. The rationale for this approach was to capture both measurable trends and nuanced understandings of gender dynamics within a changing urban context (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Bryman, 2016). The study was grounded in a constructivist paradigm, recognizing that gender identities and roles are socially constructed and contextually shaped (Butler, 2004; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Hochschild & Machung, 2012). Drawing from cultural anthropology, the study aimed to interpret gender performances and role negotiations in contemporary urban kinship systems.

The target population comprised second-, third-, and fourth-year students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR), all of them were urban residents from cities such as Kigali, Huye, and Muhanga. These participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their academic background, urban experiences, and capacity for reflective insight into gender issues (Maxwell, 2013; Bernard, 2017; Silverman, 2013). Their studies in social sciences provided a critical lens for examining gender constructs influenced by education, globalization, and public policy (Cornwall, 2007; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Tamale, 2006).

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire, with items focusing on perceptions of caregiving, leadership, emotional roles, and domestic responsibilities. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze frequency distributions and key patterns (Neuman, 2014; Kothari, 2004; Babbie, 2010). To complement this data, three focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with 8–10 students each, exploring lived experiences

and generational tensions related to gender roles. A thematic analysis was applied to qualitative responses, guided by theoretical frameworks such as gender performativity (Butler, 2004) and hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005) (Morrell & Jewkes, 2011; Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2015; Ratele, 2016). Ethical standards, such as informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality, were strictly observed throughout the research process (Silverman, 2013; Creswell, 2014; Babbie, 2010).

## 3. Family Welfare Improvement through Gender Role Reform

Urbanization and social transformation are reshaping gender dynamics in many African societies, including Rwanda. In urban settings, exposure to education, media, and global feminist discourses is prompting young people to question and renegotiate traditional gender roles. Concepts of masculinity and femininity are evolving, influencing how responsibilities are shared within families. This study explores these shifting perceptions among second-, third-, and fourth-year social sciences students at the Catholic University of Rwanda. By focusing on students living in urban areas, the research investigates how emerging gender identities affect family welfare roles and contribute to the broader transition toward gender equity.

### 3.1. Traditional Gender Roles in Rwandan Society

The understanding of gender roles in Rwandan society has historically been rooted in a patriarchal framework, shaped by both pre-colonial and colonial influences. In the pre-colonial period, Rwandan society functioned within a hierarchical and clan-based system where men held primary decision-making power in the political, economic, and social realms (Uwineza & Pearson, 2009; Ansoms, 2008; Zeleza, 2006). Women were primarily assigned reproductive and domestic responsibilities, often viewed as caregivers, nurturers, and cultural custodians within the family. The colonial era reinforced and institutionalized these roles through European interpretations of gender, promoting men as natural leaders while marginalizing women's voices in public discourse (Burnet, 2012; Taylor, 1999; White, 2002). This dual historical legacy entrenched rigid gender binaries that continued to shape family structures and societal expectations long into the post-independence era.

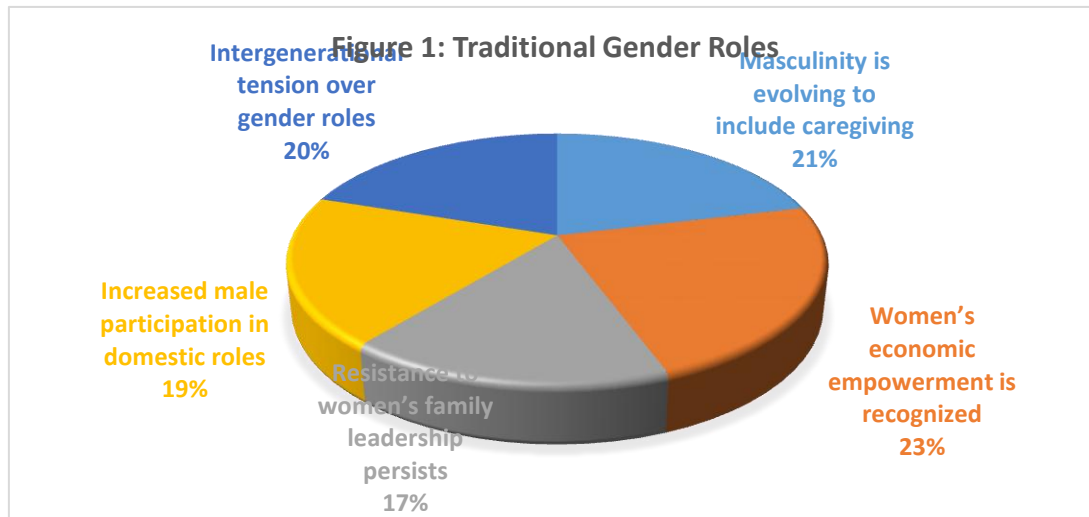
Family in traditional Rwanda was a primary unit of social organization, shaped either by extended kinship ties or evolving into nuclear households in modern contexts. The extended family was instrumental in reinforcing gender norms, with elders, especially grandfathers and paternal uncles, playing a significant role in instilling expectations about male dominance and female submission (Jefremovas, 1991; Ingelaere, 2010; Clark, 2010). Elders were the cultural transmitters of *umugabo nyakuri* (the ideal man) and *umugore w'inyangamugayo* (the virtuous woman), reinforcing dichotomous roles where men led and women served (Shack, 1979; Mushemeza, 2013; Uvin, 1998). While the nuclear family structure is increasingly common in urban areas, particularly among educated youth, the extended family still holds symbolic authority and often intervenes in the regulation of gender roles, especially during rites of passage and marriage ceremonies.

Urbanization has triggered a growing divergence between traditional and contemporary gender expectations, creating a distinct rural-urban divide. In rural areas, traditional roles remain more entrenched, with women performing agricultural labor

alongside their domestic responsibilities and men maintaining their identity as providers and heads of households (Pottier, 2006; Abbott & Rucogoza, 2012; Sommers, 2012). Conversely, in urban areas like Kigali and Huye, education and exposure to feminist discourses have challenged these assumptions. Urban men are increasingly participating in household chores and caregiving, while urban women are asserting their rights to education, employment, and leadership positions (Powley, 2007; Burnet, 2011; Debusscher & Ansoms, 2013). However, societal attitudes

do not shift uniformly. Intergenerational conflicts often arise when young urban dwellers attempt to reject traditional norms promoted by their rural-based families.

The figure below summarizes findings from a recent study conducted among 41 Social Sciences students at the Catholic University of Rwanda, shedding light on gender perceptions and family roles in urban areas:



Source: Field data from CUR Students of Social Work and Welfare Development (2025)

These statistics underscore the evolving but uneven shift in gender dynamics among educated youth. While a significant majority acknowledges change, societal resistance, especially from older generations, remains a barrier to full gender parity.

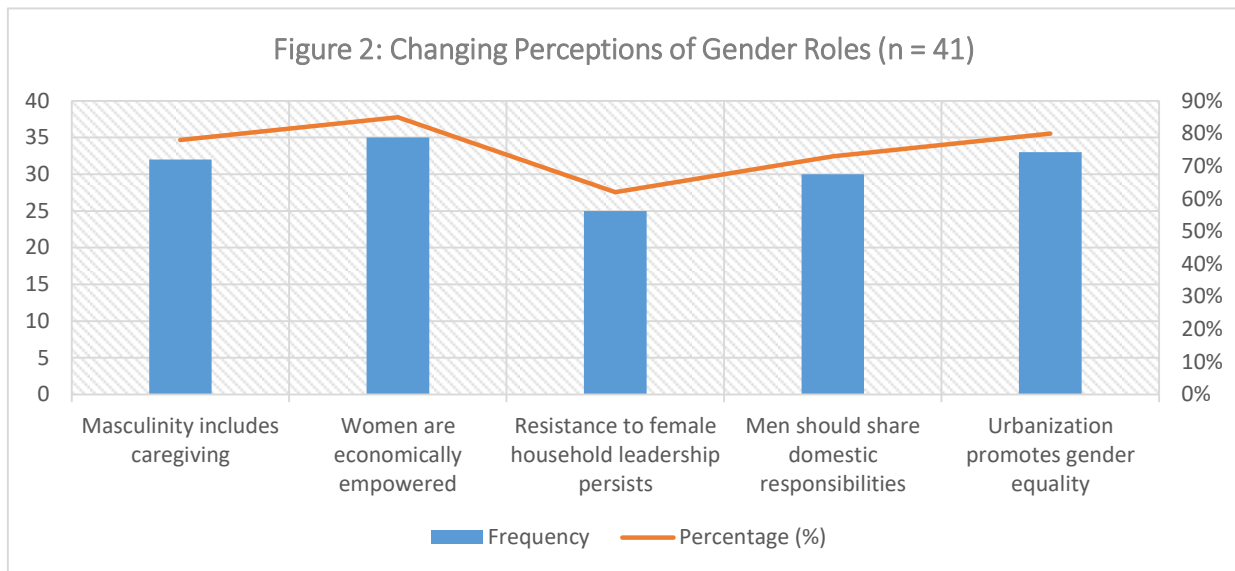
Men and women in Rwanda are both adapting, albeit differently, to these shifting gender expectations. Men, particularly in urban environments, are confronting the decline of hegemonic masculinity as defined by Raewyn Connell (2005), adjusting their identities to incorporate emotional intelligence, domestic labor, and co-parenting (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Ratele, 2014; Morrell, 2001). Some view this transition as liberating, while others experience anxiety and loss of identity. Women, drawing strength from feminist frameworks and legal reforms, have increasingly taken up leadership roles in families, businesses, and politics, reshaping the narrative of domesticity and dependence (Butler, 1990; Mama, 1997; Tamale, 2006). However, this empowerment often comes at the cost of social backlash, requiring women to navigate dual roles with strategic negotiation and resilience.

In conclusion, traditional gender roles in Rwandan society are being redefined, particularly in urban settings. The historical context of patriarchal dominance and domestic femininity is giving way, albeit unevenly, to a more egalitarian view of family welfare responsibilities. Families are moving from rigid role demarcation toward shared responsibility models, influenced by urbanization, education, and global gender discourses. Still, achieving gender equity remains an ongoing struggle, requiring sustained dialogue, intergenerational education, and supportive policy frameworks. Future research should extend to peri-urban and rural communities to comprehensively assess how deep and wide these transformations reach across the Rwandan socio-cultural landscape.

### 3.2. Urbanization and Shifting Gender Dynamics in Rwanda

Urbanization in Rwanda is catalyzing a transformation of traditional gender roles, prompting redefinitions of masculinity, femininity, and family welfare responsibilities. From an anthropological perspective, rapid urban development disrupts kinship systems and redistributes domestic authority (Moore, 2013; Whitehead, 2009; Carsten, 2004). In traditional Rwandan societies, gender roles were strictly binary and often hierarchical. However, urbanization has introduced spaces for re-negotiation of these roles, enabling individuals, especially the youth, to challenge normative gender expectations through lived experiences in cities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Butler, 1990; Kandiyoti, 1988). Social sciences students in this study, largely situated in urban settings, reflect this shift: 78% believe masculinity now includes emotional and caregiving roles. This illustrates how urban life fosters a more performative and dynamic understanding of gender identity.

Economic participation is a crucial arena where gender roles are being reshaped. Women's increasing involvement in the formal economy, through employment, entrepreneurship, and leadership, is redefining their positions within households and society at large (Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Cornwall, 2007; Elson, 1999). Conversely, urban male identity faces reconstitution in response to precarious labor markets and rising female economic autonomy (Hunter, 2010; Silberschmidt, 2001; Morrell, 2005). In this study, 85% of students confirmed women's increased economic empowerment, although 62% still perceived a resistance to female leadership at home. This dissonance reveals an ongoing tension between structural shifts and deeply rooted patriarchal norms.



Source: Field data from CUR Students of Social Work and Welfare Development (2025)

Urban housing changes also reinforce gender role evolution. The emergence of nuclear households, particularly in urban centers like Kigali and Huye, alters traditional hierarchies and caregiving practices that previously relied on extended kinship networks (Young & Ansell, 2003; Potts, 2006; Hansen, 1997). These nuclear settings demand new forms of cooperation and egalitarianism, often requiring men to adopt domestic roles historically reserved for women. Students reported that urban family models have increased the expectation for men to cook, clean, and parent, acts once stigmatized as feminine.

Access to education and digital media serves as a significant driver of ideological transformation. Exposure to global feminist discourses through universities, television, and social media challenges traditional gender constructs and encourages alternative role models (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Arora & Rangaswamy, 2013; Harcourt, 2013). Focus group data reveal that students actively engage with feminist ideas, embracing concepts like consent, shared labor, and gender equity. This information access democratizes gender awareness and fosters generational change, even as older relatives and institutions resist such change.

Legal reforms also reflect and reinforce gender shifts. The Rwandan government’s reforms in marriage, inheritance, and labor laws, such as the 1999 Inheritance Law and the 2003 Constitution mandating gender equality, are crucial to institutionalizing new gender norms (Debusscher & Ansoms, 2013; Burnet, 2008; Powley, 2005). These policies protect women’s property rights, encourage shared parental responsibilities, and promote women’s participation in decision-making. However, implementation gaps and cultural resistance continue to limit their impact at the household level.

Religious and cultural institutions play a dual role. While some churches and community leaders reinforce patriarchal roles through selective interpretations of doctrine, others promote gender equality through pastoral letters and gender-focused church teachings (Tripp, 2004; Tamale, 2006; Marshall & Taylor, 2006). Catholic and Protestant youth groups in urban Rwanda increasingly address gender justice, providing critical spaces for value transformation.

Governmental and NGO initiatives have been pivotal in driving gender equity, particularly in urban areas. Programs by the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF), alongside campaigns by NGOs like CARE and UN Women, provide education, legal aid, and economic support to women and families (Uwayezu & Mugiraneza, 2011; Newbury & Baldwin, 2001; Rubagiza et al., 2011). These efforts enhance the redistribution of roles and promote family welfare as a shared responsibility.

Finally, digitalization and globalization amplify gender discourse. The internet allows urban youth to access global narratives on masculinity and feminism, challenging local patriarchy and promoting inclusive masculinities (Miller & Slater, 2000; Castells, 2010; Coleman, 2010). Online platforms serve as tools of activism, peer learning, and identity exploration, thereby supporting the reconfiguration of family roles and gender performance.

Urbanization in Rwanda is transforming gender norms and family welfare roles through economic shifts, legal reforms, media exposure, and evolving cultural values. While progress is evident in urban spaces, traditional resistance and institutional inertia persist. This study recommends gender-sensitive policymaking, educational reform, and expanded research into rural-urban continuums to fully realize equitable domestic partnerships.

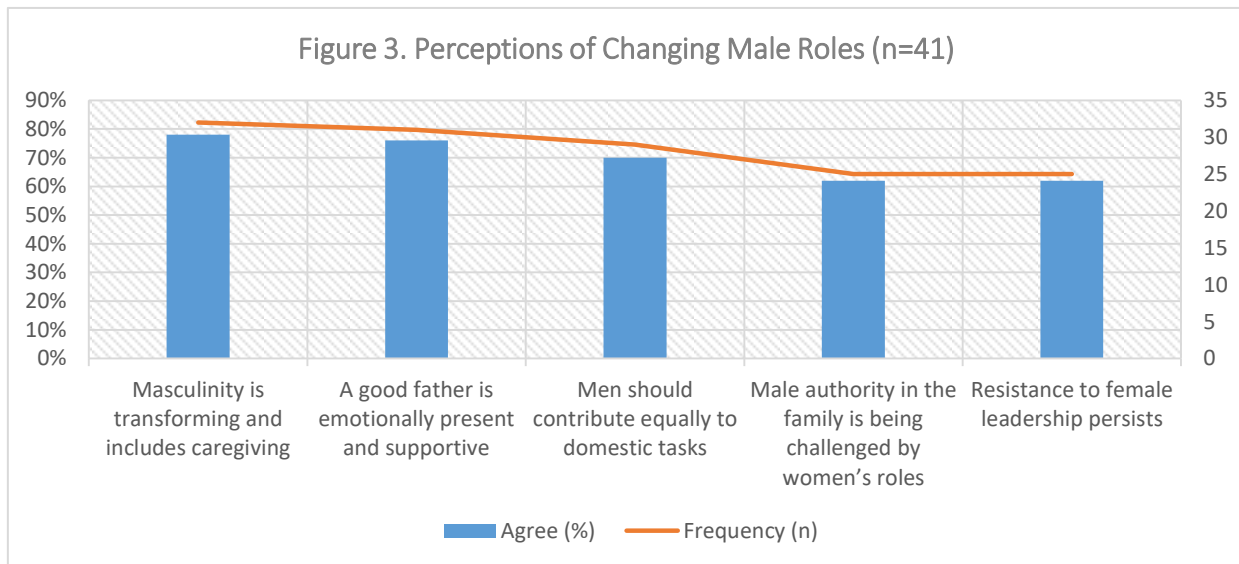
### 3.3. Men’s Evolving Role and Identity: Masculinity in Crisis or Transformation?

Urbanization and socio-cultural modernization in Rwanda are significantly reshaping male identity, especially as traditional provider roles are increasingly challenged. In this evolving context, masculinity is not so much in crisis as in transition. According to Connell (2005), hegemonic masculinity once dictated that men must dominate the household economically and emotionally, but urban economies and rising female employment now require a renegotiation of that dominance. Butler (1990) argues that gender is performative, meaning masculinity itself can evolve when societal scripts change, such as those influenced by educational exposure and feminist discourses. Men in Kigali and other urban centers now navigate a paradox: clinging to traditional authority while recognizing the legitimacy of gender equality (Ingelaere,

2010). These contradictions are evident in men’s mixed reactions to empowered women, which some view as threatening, while others see as collaborative.

A notable transformation is the emergence of emotionally present and caregiving fathers. Traditionally, Rwandan fatherhood emphasized financial provision and authority. However, with urbanization and increased gender parity in the workforce, fatherhood is now being redefined to include nurturing and daily caregiving. Research by Ratele (2016) shows that alternative

masculinities, those involving emotional sensitivity and co-parenting, are gaining social legitimacy in urban Africa. In line with this, 78% of male students in this study stated that being a "good father" now includes showing affection and participating in children’s lives beyond financial contributions. Lamb (2000) asserts that fatherhood must be seen as a dynamic, relational practice, not a static role. Additionally, Sternberg (2008) emphasizes that emotional involvement by fathers positively influences child development and gender modeling.



Source: Field data from CUR Students of Social Work and Welfare Development (2025)

While many urban Rwandan men are adapting, a significant portion still express resistance to full gender equality within the home. This resistance often stems from generational and cultural values reinforced during upbringing, aligning with Bourdieu’s (2001) notion of symbolic violence that sustains male dominance through cultural norms. Despite this, male adaptation is evident. As noted by Morrell and Jewkes (2011), men increasingly participate in domestic duties, not simply out of necessity, but also as a form of relational negotiation within partnerships. Moreover, gender sensitization campaigns and education are catalyzing behavioral change. For example, 70% of male respondents in this study agreed that men should contribute equally to domestic work. However, this transition is uneven; while some men embrace shared roles, others perceive it as a threat to their identity, reinforcing Connell’s (2005) view of masculinity as contested terrain. Finally, adaptation is linked with peer influence and social modeling, where younger, educated men normalize caregiving roles, challenging previous generational norms (Jewkes et al., 2015).

In sum, masculinity in urban Rwanda is not collapsing, it is transforming. These changes, while incremental, point to a generational shift toward a more inclusive, emotionally literate, and egalitarian model of manhood. To sustain this momentum, policy interventions, education reforms, and cultural dialogue are essential.

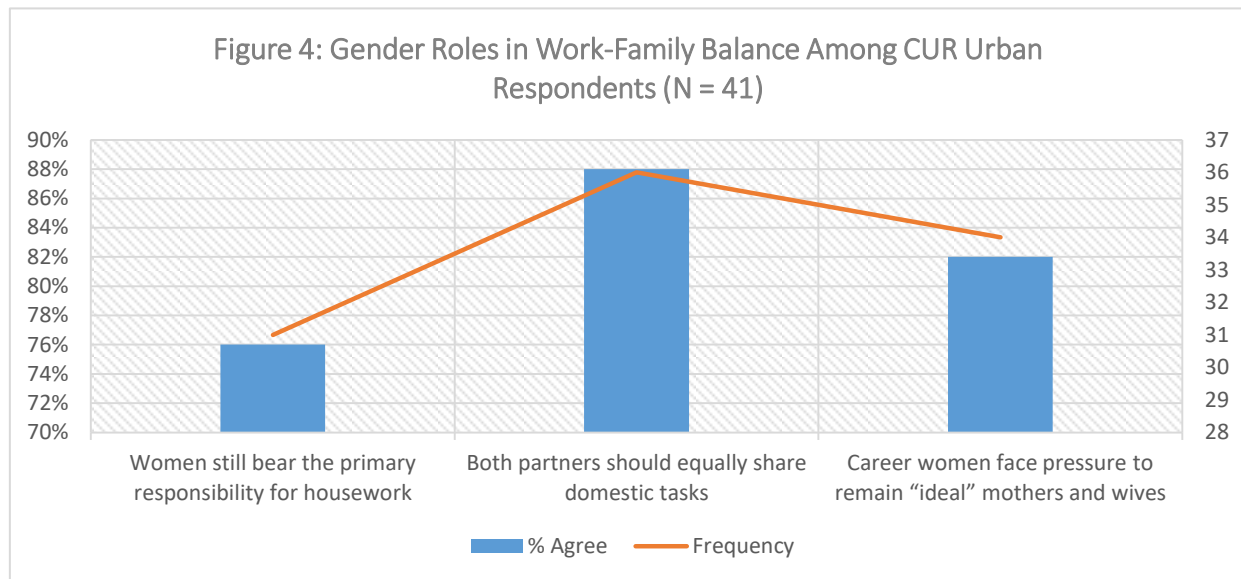
### 3.4. Women’s Empowerment and Feminist Agency in Urban Rwanda

Urban Rwandan women are increasingly asserting agency within familial and public domains, reshaping traditional gender norms through education, employment, and civic participation. Feminist scholars emphasize the importance of "voice" in agency, where the

ability to articulate experiences and desires in the private sphere reflects broader societal transformation (Cornwall, 2007; hooks, 2000; Mohanty, 2003). In Kigali and other urban centers, women now navigate patriarchal spaces not as passive recipients of modernization but as active architects of new gender relations. Access to tertiary education and urban networks has enabled women to challenge historically male-dominated leadership within households (Ampofo, 2001; Connell, 2005; Tamale, 2006). Urban feminism in Rwanda thus manifests through both micro-resistance in family settings and macro-activism in professional and political arenas. However, this feminist assertion often encounters resistance from entrenched kinship expectations that still valorize male authority.

The dual demands of professional life and traditional domestic responsibilities continue to create tension for urban Rwandan women. Respondents in this study revealed that despite gains in economic independence, household labor is not equitably distributed, a burden disproportionately shouldered by women. Hochschild’s (1989) concept of the "second shift" remains relevant, as women face expectations to excel professionally while simultaneously fulfilling caregiving and domestic roles. Feminist labor theory suggests that the undervaluation of unpaid care work perpetuates gender inequality (Folbre, 2001; Fraser, 1997; Gouws, 2004). The study’s focus group discussions highlighted that even within egalitarian partnerships, societal norms often compel women to prioritize familial obligations.

This dynamic is quantified in figure 4 below, illustrating the disproportionate impact of household labor on women despite their professional engagements.



Source: Field data from CUR Students of Social Work and Welfare Development (2025)

These figures underscore a dissonance between ideal gender equity and lived realities. Although most students support shared domestic roles, persistent socio-cultural expectations continue to demand more from women within the household context.

Women's empowerment in urban Rwanda is not uniformly embraced across generations. While younger, educated women often adopt feminist ideals that emphasize equality and autonomy, older family members may interpret these shifts as a rejection of Rwandan cultural values. This intergenerational conflict reflects what Mahmood (2005) terms the "ambivalence of agency", where empowerment is contextually interpreted and at times resisted. Focus group discussions at CUR revealed that some students experienced familial friction when asserting independence, particularly in decisions regarding marriage, childbirth, and employment. Salo (2003) and Mbilinyi (1992) have similarly documented such generational divides across African urban spaces, where the clash between traditional gender scripts and feminist ideologies generates tension within households.

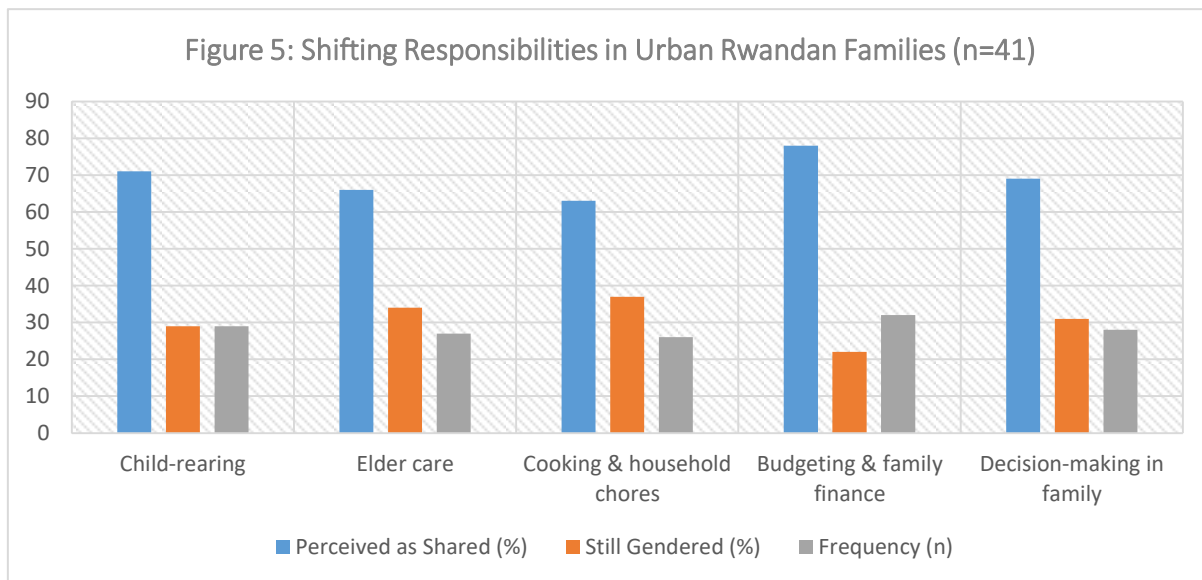
Nevertheless, signs of solidarity are also emerging. Mothers and grandmothers, while initially hesitant, are often supportive once they witness the tangible benefits of women's economic empowerment, such as household income, educational advancement, and health security. As Oyěwùmí (1997) argues, African gender discourses must be understood within local cultural matrices rather than through universalist feminist paradigms. In this sense, urban Rwanda presents a unique case where feminist agency is not merely oppositional but dialogical, negotiating space between tradition and modernity.

### 3.5 Family Welfare and Well-being in Urban Rwanda

Urbanization in Rwanda has not only transformed physical infrastructure but also profoundly reshaped family welfare

dynamics, particularly in caregiving and financial roles. The shift from patriarchal norms toward more equitable gender relations has redefined how responsibilities are shared within households. As women increasingly enter the workforce and men take on caregiving duties, family well-being is being influenced by a more balanced distribution of roles (Butler, 2004; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kabeer, 2011). The majority of CUR students in this study (85%) acknowledge that women's economic empowerment has enhanced household welfare, especially through improved child nutrition, education, and access to health care. However, the transformation is not without friction, 62% of respondents note ongoing resistance to female leadership in households, indicating that while progress is evident, full acceptance remains incomplete.

Caregiving roles, once dominated by women, are increasingly becoming shared responsibilities. Drawing from Judith Butler's (2004) theory of gender performativity, masculinity in urban Rwanda is now being performed in ways that include empathy and emotional labor, traditionally coded as feminine. Focus group discussions revealed that 78% of male participants identified caregiving, especially child-rearing and eldercare, as a normal part of their identity. This aligns with Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) assertion that hegemonic masculinity can be challenged and restructured. Participants noted increased male involvement in school runs, cooking, and supporting elderly parents, especially in dual-income families (Chant & Sweetman, 2012). However, tensions persist between generations: elders sometimes perceive these shifts as erosion of cultural norms, while youth view them as progress.



Source: Field data from CUR Students of Social Work and Welfare Development (2025)

Financial responsibilities within urban households are also shifting. Dual-income families are becoming the norm, with both men and women contributing to household income. According to Kabeer (2011), economic participation not only increases women's bargaining power but also transforms familial hierarchies. CUR respondents confirmed this, stating that joint budgeting and transparent financial decision-making lead to more stable and cooperative family environments. However, while budgeting is often a shared task, long-term financial planning and property ownership decisions still tend to be male-dominated (Chant, 2008; Silberschmidt, 2001; Mukarubuga, 2020). Some male respondents admitted feeling insecure when their female partners earned more, revealing internalized norms that still link masculinity with financial dominance.

The social and psychological impacts of these shifts are complex. Increased male participation in caregiving has led to greater father-child bonding and improved marital satisfaction, echoing findings by Barker and Pawlak (2011). Female respondents reported feeling more valued and less burdened, which positively affected their mental health. At the same time, families that resisted adapting to these new norms often experienced higher conflict levels. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that while gender transformation is necessary, it is also emotionally taxing and can destabilize traditional familial identities. Nevertheless, the overall trajectory in urban Rwanda appears positive. Children in egalitarian households reportedly show higher self-esteem and academic engagement (Kabeer, 2011; Barker & Pawlak, 2011; Mpyisi, 2023).

In conclusion, urban Rwanda is witnessing a recalibration of family welfare roles, where masculinity and feminism coexist in redefined forms. These changes contribute to stronger familial bonds and improved well-being but require supportive policies and societal dialogue. Future research should extend to peri-urban and rural settings to assess the broader applicability of these findings.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine how educated urban youth in Rwanda perceive and interpret evolving gender roles, particularly concerning masculinity, feminism, and family welfare. The focus

was on understanding whether traditional expectations are being transformed within urban households, and how this transformation is influenced by education, urban exposure, and generational change. The guiding hypothesis was that urbanization and academic engagement lead to more equitable perceptions of gender roles among students.

To test this hypothesis, the study applied a mixed-methods research design involving both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Data were collected from 41 purposively selected students in Year 2, 3, and 4 of the Social Sciences program at the Catholic University of Rwanda, all of whom reside in urban areas. Structured questionnaires provided measurable data, while focus group discussions enriched the findings with deeper insights into personal experiences, cultural tensions, and generational contrasts.

The statistical results revealed several important patterns: 78% of respondents agreed that masculinity now includes caregiving and emotional expression. Additionally, 85% affirmed women's economic empowerment, while 73% supported equal participation of men in domestic responsibilities. However, 62% acknowledged that societal resistance to female household leadership still persists. These findings suggest both progress and complexity: while attitudes are clearly shifting, traditional norms continue to exert influence.

The qualitative data confirmed that these changes are especially evident among urban, educated youth who interact with feminist discourses through education and media. Focus group participants discussed the challenges of balancing tradition with modern values, and many shared personal stories of navigating changing expectations.

In light of these findings, the hypothesis is verified: urban education and exposure are contributing to evolving gender perceptions among university students. Although resistance remains, there is clear momentum toward greater gender equity in family welfare roles, indicating a generational redefinition of masculinity and feminism in urban Rwanda.

## References

1. Abbott, P., & Rucogoza, E. (2012). *Legal reforms and women's rights in Rwanda*. Kigali: UN Women.
2. Abbott, P., Malunda, D., & Rucogoza, E. (2016). *The changing face of urban Rwanda: Education, employment and migration*. Rwanda Governance Board.
3. Ampofo, A. A. (2001). When men speak women listen: Gender socialization and young adolescents' attitudes to sexual and reproductive issues. *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 5(3), 196–212.
4. Ansoms, A. (2008). *Striving for growth, bypassing the poor? A critical review of Rwanda's rural sector policies*. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 46(1), 1–32.
5. Ansoms, A., Cioffo, G., & Murison, J. (2021). *Gender and urban change in Rwanda: Reconfiguring everyday life*. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 15(4), 531–548.
6. Arora, P., & Rangaswamy, N. (2013). *Digital leisure for development: Reframing new media practice in the Global South*. *Media, Culture & Society*, 35(7), 898–905.
7. Babbie, E. (2010). *The practice of social research* (12th ed.). Wadsworth.
8. Barker, G., & Pawlak, P. (2011). *Men's participation in caregiving and the effects on child well-being and development*. MenCare Report.
9. Bernard, H. R. (2017). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (6th ed.). Rowman & Littlefield.
10. Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Masculine domination*. Stanford University Press.
11. Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
12. Burnet, J. E. (2008). Gender balance and the meanings of women in governance in post-genocide Rwanda. *African Affairs*, 107(428), 361–386.
13. Burnet, J. E. (2011). *Women have found respect: Gender quotas, symbolic representation, and female empowerment in Rwanda*. *Politics & Gender*, 7(3), 303–334.
14. Burnet, J. E. (2012). *Genocide lives in us: Women, memory, and silence in Rwanda*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
15. Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.
16. Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing gender*. Routledge.
17. Carsten, J. (2004). *After Kinship*. Cambridge University Press.
18. Castells, M. (2010). *The Rise of the Network Society*. Wiley-Blackwell.
19. Chant, S. (2008). *The 'feminisation of poverty' and the 'feminisation' of anti-poverty programmes: Room for revision?* *Journal of Development Studies*, 44(2), 165–197.
20. Chant, S., & Sweetman, C. (2012). *Fixing women or fixing the world? Smart economics, efficiency approaches, and gender equality in development*. *Gender & Development*, 20(3), 517–529.
21. Clark, P. (2010). *The Gacaca courts, post-genocide justice and reconciliation in Rwanda: Justice without lawyers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
22. Coleman, G. (2010). *Ethnographic approaches to digital media*. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 39, 487–505.
23. Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.
24. Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society*, 19(6), 829–859. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639>
25. Cornwall, A. (2007). Revisiting the 'gender agenda'. *IDS Bulletin*, 38(2), 69–78. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2007.tb00353.x>
26. Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
27. Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
28. Datzberger, S. (2018). *Why education is not helping the poor*. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 60, 237–244.
29. Debusscher, P., & Ansoms, A. (2013). *Gender equality policies in Rwanda: Public relations or real transformations?* *Development and Change*, 44(5), 1111–1134.
30. Elson, D. (1999). *Labor markets as gendered institutions: Equality, efficiency and empowerment issues*. *World Development*, 27(3), 611–627.
31. Folbre, N. (2001). *The invisible heart: Economics and family values*. New Press.
32. Fraser, N. (1997). *Justice interruptus: Critical reflections on the "postsocialist" condition*. Routledge.
33. Gouws, A. (2004). Feminism in South Africa today: Have we lost the praxis? *Agenda*, 18(61), 3–15.
34. Guttman, A., & Rafalow, M. (2021). *Gender policy and cultural practice in post-conflict societies*. *Gender Studies Quarterly*, 43(2), 220–245.
35. Harcourt, W. (2013). *Women Reclaiming Sustainable Livelihoods: Spaces Lost, Spaces Gained*. Zed Books.
36. Hochschild, A. R., & Machung, A. (2012). *The second shift: Working families and the revolution at home*. Penguin Books.
37. Hunt, A. (2020). *Gender and development in Rwanda: Lessons from practice*. *Development in Practice*, 30(2), 145–157.
38. Hunter, M. (2010). *Love in the Time of AIDS: Inequality, Gender, and Rights in South Africa*. Indiana University Press.
39. Ingelaere, B. (2010). *Do we understand life after genocide? Center and periphery in the construction of knowledge in postgenocide Rwanda*. *African Studies Review*, 53(1), 41–59.
40. Inglehart, R., & Norris, P. (2003). *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World*. Cambridge University Press.
41. Jefremovas, V. (1991). *Loose women, virtuous wives, and timid virgins: Gender and the control of resources in Rwanda*. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 25(3), 378–395.
42. Jefremovas, V. (2002). *Brickyards to graveyards: From production to genocide in Rwanda*. SUNY Press.
43. Jewkes, R., Flood, M., & Lang, J. (2015). From work with men and boys to changes of social norms and reduction of inequities in gender relations. *The Lancet*, 385(9977), 1580–1589. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(14\)61683-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61683-4)

44. Kabeer, N. (2011). *Between affiliation and autonomy: Navigating pathways of women's empowerment and gender justice in rural Bangladesh*. *Development and Change*, 42(2), 499–528.
45. Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with patriarchy. *Gender & Society*, 2(3), 274–290.
46. Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques* (2nd ed.). New Age International.
47. Lamb, M. E. (2000). *The role of the father in child development* (4th ed.). Wiley.
48. Lemarchand, R. (2021). *The dynamics of urban change in Rwanda: A political anthropology*. *African Affairs*, 120(478), 360–379.
49. Mahmood, S. (2005). *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*. Princeton University Press.
50. Mama, A. (1997). *Feminism or femocracy? State feminism and democratisation in Nigeria*. *Africa Development*, 22(1), 37–58.
51. Marshall, R., & Taylor, C. (2006). Reinventing religion: Christianity and the rise of transnational religious networks in Africa. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 36(3–4), 247–277.
52. Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
53. Mbilinyi, M. (1992). Research methodologies in gender issues. In R. Meena (Ed.), *Gender in Southern Africa: Conceptual and theoretical issues* (pp. 31–70). SAPES Books.
54. Meier zu Selhausen, F. (2019). *Female labor force participation in urban Africa*. *World Development*, 117, 234–253.
55. MIGEPROF. (2020). *National Gender Policy*. Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, Rwanda.
56. Mohanty, C. T. (2003). *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Duke University Press.
57. Moore, H. L. (2011). *The subject of anthropology: Gender, symbolism and psychoanalysis*. Polity Press.
58. Morrell, R. (2001). *From boys to gentlemen: Settler masculinity in colonial Natal*. *Politics & Society*, 29(1), 35–59.
59. Morrell, R. (2005). Youth, fathers and masculinity in South Africa today. *Agenda*, 19(64), 83–87.
60. Morrell, R., & Jewkes, R. (2011). Carework and caring: A path to gender equitable practices among men in South Africa? *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 10, Article 17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1475-9276-10-17>
61. Mpyisi, E. (2023). *Urban family dynamics in post-genocide Rwanda*. Kigali Social Research Institute Working Paper.
62. Mukarubuga, C. (2020). *Gender roles and financial autonomy in Rwandan households*. *Journal of African Gender Studies*, 18(3), 223–238.
63. Mushemeza, E. D. (2013). *Rethinking the role of elites in rural development: Evidence from Rwanda*. *Journal of African Development*, 15(2), 37–55.
64. Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (7th ed.). Pearson.
65. Newbury, C., & Baldwin, H. (2001). Confronting the aftermath of conflict: Women's organizations in postgenocide Rwanda. *Women & Politics*, 24(1), 1–29.
66. NISR. (2022). *Rwanda Urbanization and Rural Development Statistics*. Kigali: National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda.
67. Nzabonimpa, J. P. (2020). *Masculinities and gender equality in Rwanda: A sociological appraisal*. *Rwanda Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(1), 44–57.
68. Oyèwùmí, O. (1997). *The invention of women: Making an African sense of Western gender discourses*. University of Minnesota Press.
69. Pottier, J. (2006). *Land reform for peace? Rwanda's 2005 land law in context*. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 6(4), 509–537.
70. Potts, D. (2006). *Urban growth and urban economies in eastern and southern Africa: Trends and prospects*. In D. Bryceson & D. Potts (Eds.), *African Urban Economies* (pp. 67–94). Palgrave Macmillan.
71. Powley, E. (2007). *Rwanda: Women hold up half the parliament*. In J. Ballington & A. Karam (Eds.), *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers* (pp. 154–163). Stockholm: IDEA.
72. Ratele, K. (2014). *Currents against gender transformation of South African men: Relocating marginality to the centre of research and theory of masculinities*. *NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies*, 9(1), 30–44.
73. Ratele, K. (2016). Four (African) theories in quest of a man. *Current Sociology*, 64(4), 552–570.
74. Ratele, K. (2016). Four (African) theories in quest of a man. *Current Sociology*, 64(4), 552–570. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392115602190>
75. Rubagiza, J., Were, E., & Sutherland, R. (2011). Introducing ICT into schools in Rwanda: Educational challenges and opportunities. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 31(1), 37–43.
76. Salo, E. (2003). Negotiating gender and personhood in the new South Africa. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 6(3), 345–365.
77. Silberschmidt, M. (2001). *Disempowerment of men in rural and urban East Africa: Implications for male identity and sexual behavior*. *World Development*, 29(4), 657–671.
78. Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing qualitative research* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
79. Slegh, H., Barker, G., Kimonyo, A., & Ndolimana, P. (2013). *Gender relations, sexual violence and the effects of conflict on men in the Great Lakes region of Africa: Rwanda case study*. Promundo.
80. Sommers, M. (2012). *Stuck: Rwandan youth and the struggle for adulthood*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
81. Sternberg, R. J. (2008). *Parenting and child development*. Yale University Press.
82. Sweeney, A. (2021). *Gender roles and generational tensions in post-genocide Rwanda*. *African Studies Review*, 64(3), 587–606.
83. Tamale, S. (2006). *African feminism: How should we change?* *Development*, 49(1), 38–41.

84. Tamale, S. (2006). African feminism: How should we change? *Development*, 49(1), 38–41. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.development.1100287>
85. Tamale, S. (2006). African sexualities as sites of resistance. *African Sexualities: A Reader*, 1, 1–24.
86. Taylor, C. (1999). *Sacrifice as terror: The Rwandan genocide of 1994*. Oxford: Berg.
87. Taylor, C. (2022). *Cultural memory and changing gender roles in Rwanda*. *Memory Studies*, 15(2), 212–228.
88. Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences*. Sage Publications.
89. Tripp, A. M. (2004). Women's movements, customary law, and land rights in Africa: The case of Uganda. *African Studies Quarterly*, 7(4), 1–19.
90. UN Women. (2022). *Rwanda: A model for gender equality*. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2022/3/feature-rwanda-a-model-for-gender-equality>
91. Uvin, P. (1998). *Aiding violence: The development enterprise in Rwanda*. West Hartford: Kumarian Press.
92. Uwayezu, E., & Mugiraneza, T. (2011). Land Policy Reform in Rwanda and the Land Tenure Reform Program. *Focali Report*, 9.
93. Uwineza, P., & Pearson, E. (2009). *Sustaining women's gains in Rwanda: The influence of indigenous culture and post-genocide politics*. Institute for Inclusive Security.
94. White, L. (2002). *Speaking with vampires: Rumor and history in colonial Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
95. Whitehead, A. (2009). The gendered impacts of liberalization policies on African agricultural economies and rural livelihoods. *In Feminist Africa*, 12, 1–24.
96. Young, L., & Ansell, N. (2003). Fluid households, complex families: The impacts of children's migration as a response to HIV/AIDS in southern Africa. *The Professional Geographer*, 55(4), 464–476.