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Analyzing the Intergenerational Effects of Conflict on Survivors and Its Impact on Their Decision-Making and Development

A Case Study of Colombia with Rwanda as a Model for Peace and Economic Building.

Author's Declaration

I, Diane Mutoni, hereby solemnly declare that the Thesis titled: **"Analyzing the Intergenerational Effects of Conflict on Survivors and its Impact on their Decision-Making and Development:** ***A Case Study of Colombia with Rwanda as a Model for Peace and Economic Building.*** **"** is my original work and the result of independent research conducted under the supervision of Professor Eva Sera Komlossyova. This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the master's degree program at Palacký University, Olomouc University of Clermont, and Auvergne University of Pavia. All sources and references used have been appropriately acknowledged.

Declaration of Honor on the Use of AI: During the writing of the submitted thesis, I used the following AI tools: ChatGPT and Otter. AI, to find words that better express the concepts, synonymous. or more concise forms for expressing ideas and translation. After using the AI tool, I declare that I have reviewed and edited the text, and I will take full responsibility for the content of the submitted thesis.

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This research will examine the long-term socio-economic and psychological effects of Colombia's armed conflict on survivors and how these effects influence decision-making across generations. The study will explore whether and how Rwanda's policies in peacebuilding, inclusive development, and reconciliation, after its own genocide, could offer valuable lessons for Colombia. The study will assess whether by adapting Rwanda's successful strategies, Colombia could address the intergenerational trauma and foster sustainable development, peace and unity.

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Finally, I dedicate this work to survivors and descendants of conflict around the world. May your stories continue to inspire more inclusive, just, and healing futures.

Abstract

This thesis investigates the intergenerational socio-economic and psychological impacts of Colombia's prolonged armed conflict on survivors and their descendants while examining the potential applicability of Rwanda's post-genocide reconciliation and development policies as contextually adaptable models for Colombia. This research is guided by three core questions: (a) What are the socio-economic and psychological consequences of the Colombian conflict for survivors and their descendants? (b) What post-genocide strategies has Rwanda implemented to address comparable challenges? (c) Which elements of Rwanda's policies can be adapted to Colombia's context to support reconciliation, peacebuilding, and inclusive development?

This research used a qualitative method and was conducted through a semi-structured interview of the direct survivors and their first and second generations in Meta and Bogotá. Its discoveries showed lasting patterns of trauma, involuntary migration, joblessness, inherited poverty, fractured social trust, and a deep sense of loss and yearning. Most respondents identified a clear gap for policy intervention, especially about land restitution, increased access to education and mental health care, and community-based programs for reintegration. Inspired by the Rwandan post-genocide recovery story, especially the Gacaca courts.

Through a comparative case study of Rwanda's post-genocide recovery particularly the use of Gacaca courts, this research underscores the relevance of community driven reconciliation mechanisms. The study contributes to scholarly debates on transitional justice and post-conflict recovery, offering policy recommendations for enhancing Colombia's existing institutional frameworks.

Keywords:

Transitional Justice

Intergenerational Trauma

Post-Conflict Societies

Reconciliation

Memory of Politics

Survivor Agency

Structural Violence

Gacaca Courts

Comparative Case Study

Political Fragmentation

Emotional Resilience

Restitution

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List of Abbreviations

AERG - Association des Elèves et Étudiantes Rescapé du Genocide (Association of people and students who survived Genocide)

DDR - Disarmament, Democratization, and Reintegration

ELN - Ejército de Liberación nacional (The National Liberty Army)

FARC - Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed forces of Colombia)

FERC - Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

GAERG - Groupe des Anciens Étudiants et Élèves Rescapes du Genocide (Group of former students and people who survived Genocide)

GDP - Gross Domestic Products

IMF - International Monetary Funds

JEP - Jurisdiccion Especial para la Paz (Special jurisdiction for peace)

NGO – Non-Governmental organizations

PTSD - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

UN - United Nations

WHO - World Health Organization

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"Trauma is not just an event that happens to you, it is also the history of what happens inside you as a result of what happens to you" (The Guardian, 2023). This quote explains how the effect of Trauma people and how their impacts are transferred from one generation to another and among those things happening to people include conflicts. The socioeconomic and psychological effects of conflicts are long-lasting, often transcending the immediate result of violence and affecting generations to come. In Colombia, decades of armed conflicts have left a huge impact on its citizens, specifically survivors and their descendants (Turan, J. M, Hatcher, A. M., & Packer, C, 2016). This research seeks to explore the intergenerational effects of Colombia's armed conflict on survivors and their descendants, focusing on how these effects influence their decision-making across different generations. It also examines how post-genocide strategies implemented by the government of Rwanda after the 1994 Tutsi genocide could serve as a model for Colombia in its pursuit of sustainable peace, reconciliation, and sustainable economic development.

Understanding how trauma, loss, and destruction transfer into generations, and how various sections of families are crucial to make sense of the legacy of armed conflicts in the long run. The initial conflict as they are accompanied by the loss of loved ones, displacement, and a breakdown in social relations (Musisi & Kiyanda, 2020). But the decades-long war in Colombia has created houses of misery for them. Implications that extend beyond the direct victims in time and generations, changing the lives of children and grandchildren. This traumatization handed down from one generation to another can in multiple ways, such as the presence of psychological distress, relationship difficulties, changes in decision-making, and restricted access to socioeconomic resources. Children survivors may also internalize the fears and coping strategies of their parents, frequently without knowing where the scars cum wounds come from & the secondhand wounds passed on to them in life trajectories (Kiweewa et al., 2024; Wong, 2022).

Recognizing these quiet but powerful effects is crucial if we want to build policies that truly support community healing. It's not just helping those who lived through violence's also about

reaching their children and grandchildren, who often carry pain they didn't choose but still feel daily, and fostering broader national recovery and peacebuilding (Jacobs, 2022).
From April to July 1994, more than 800,000 Tutsi and perhaps as many as 1,000,000 Tutsi people, along with moderate Hutu, were murdered. In the presence of their families, women were subjected to sexual violence in a particularly cruel and effective way (Amnesty International, 2004: 76). This caused them more mental injury than all else put together (Gabiro, 2003). Rwanda's demography is and its social structure also shaped over the long term by this appalling massacre.

1.1. Motivation of the Study

The motivation for this research stems from both personal experience and observed gaps in existing literature. Having grown up in Rwanda a country that endured the tragic 1994 genocide against Tusi, and later lived in Japan, which continues to grapple with the long-term impacts of World War II, I have witnessed firsthand differences in the behavior and decision-making of individuals and communities that have experienced conflict compared to those that have not. These observations, along with my engagement with Rwanda’s post-genocide recovery efforts, inspired the desire to explore how conflict shapes decision-making processes and social behavior across different generations.

Each year, Rwanda holds a national commemoration in April to honor the victims of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. During these events, survivors share their testimonies, and in recent years, even descendants of survivors have begun speaking about the lingering trauma they face (BIZIMANA, 2017). These heart wrenching tales have piqued my interest in understanding the long-term consequences of conflict and how trauma defines social and economic choices for future generations. In Rwanda, the consequences of the genocide have been partly mitigated by the introduction of measures related to peacebuilding initiatives, inclusive development strategies and reconciliation. Rwanda’s programs have had world-wide praise and have influenced other countries that have experienced conflict to embrace Rwanda’s model of post war recovery (Shaheen, 2024).

Rwanda's path from the aftermath of that genocide to stability, economic strides, and the country's fraternity is notably impressive. By means of trauma recovery, socioeconomic leveling, and social cohesion, Rwanda has become a model for other countries struggling to overcome wars and related problems and emulate similar policies. Consequently, strategies have been adopted by other countries like Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Liberia, and Timor-Leste to overhaul after suffering from war (Lefler, 2015). Such broad scope of coverage demonstrates how Rwanda's model might be adjusted and applied in settings like Colombia.

Armed conflicts in Colombia that have lasted for more than a decade have resulted in large numbers of people fleeing their homes, large numbers of deaths, and disarray in social, economic and political infrastructures (Justice for Colombia, 2018). Political polarization, drug trafficking, and inequality have significantly shaped Colombia's population in enduring ways as outlined in studies by Bernal et al. (2024). Colombia is still living with the aftermath of the conflict even after making a peace agreement in 2016 that included fracturing the communities, poverty and trauma that persists among the victims (Badrán, 2023). As Colombia struggles to achieve long term peace and economic advancements there is room to benefit from Rwanda's post-conflict approach.

The study considers how the armed conflict in Colombia has influenced several generations based on a comprehensive analysis of three unique age cohorts: three age cohorts were analyzed, namely, direct survivors aged 40 to 70, first-generation descendants aged 30 to 50, and second-generation descendants aged 20 to 30. Such divisions align with trauma studies constructs that highlight diverse evolutionary tracks and roles of various age groups for the course of time (Burke et al., 2021; Brent & Stefania, 2015). Burke et al., 2021). The parties that directly participated in the armed conflict are critical sources for learning about how conflicts impact society on various levels. Survivors' children, who experienced life after the war, have a unique perspective of understanding trauma transmission from one generation to the next. Finally, the second-generation descendants, who are currently undergoing the effects of the conflict, give meaningful insights into long term developmental outcomes and the effect of reconciliation and peacebuilding policies.

This study also explores to what extent Rwanda's post-genocidal policies have successfully prevented intergenerational trauma, minimized social fragmentation, and enhanced economic conditions. By scrutinizing Rwanda's approach to peacebuilding, reconciliation, and inclusive development, especially through the Gacaca courts, land reforms, and women's economic empowerment, it was easy to identify Moreover, cases from Liberia and South Sudan have adopted Rwanda's approaches, and these were analyzed to reinforce the credibility of their potential transferability.

This research is guided by different objectives such as to examine the social-economic and psychological impacts of Colombia's armed conflict on survivors and their descendants; to explore how these impacts influence decision-making and development; to access the applicability of Rwanda's policies as a model for addressing Colombia's Intergenerational effects and promote sustainable peace and development. By exploring these questions, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the effects of conflicts and the potential policies to rebuild and heal after communities are affected by conflicts.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This research paper "**Analyzing the Intergenerational Effects of Conflict on Survivors and its Impact on their Decision-Making and Development: A Case Study of Colombia with Rwanda as a Model for Peace and Economic Building**" holds immense scholarly and practical significance, as it examines the applicability of Rwanda's post-genocide policies as a model for addressing Colombia's social-economic intergenerational effects of armed conflicts and foster sustainable peace and development. This research is aimed at providing some valuable lessons that will promote sustained healing and development in violence-stricken territories by comparing Rwanda's reconciliation exercises and economic recovery solutions and comparing them to Colombia's current conflict resolution.

This study serves as a vital referential tool for people working in academia, government, and non-profits whose role is guided by actionable post-conflict recovery recommendations. It sets the tone for the development of future studies on curated methods of reconciliation and economic policies for different conflict-affected areas. By documenting the experiences of survivors and

evaluating program outcomes, this study will not only add value to contemporary conversations about post-conflict development but also support work for new strategies for resolving conflicts in post-conflict societies.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the socio-economic and psychological impacts of Colombia's armed conflict on survivors and their descendants?
2. What strategies did Rwanda implement post-genocide to address similar challenges?
3. Which of Rwanda's policies can be adapted to Colombia's context to promote peace, reconciliation, and development?

1.4 Research Objectives

- To examine the long-term socio-economic and psychological effects of Colombia's armed conflict on survivors and their descendants.
- To analyze Rwanda's post-genocide strategies in peacebuilding, reconciliation, and inclusive development.
- To explore how these effects influence decision-making and development across generations.
- To evaluate the potential of Rwanda's policies as a model for addressing armed conflict and its intergenerational socioeconomic effects and foster sustainable peace and development in Colombia.

Chapter 2: Study Setting

This Chapter provides an overview of the study setting, focusing on the countries of Colombia and Rwanda. It explores their geographical, political, economic, and socio-cultural contexts to frame the conditions shaping post-conflict development. By highlighting both similarities and contrasts, the chapter sets the foundation for analyzing the intergenerational impact of conflict and the role of reconciliation in each country.

2.1 Colombia

The Republic of Colombia is in northwestern South America. Colombia consists of six natural regions, each with distinct topography, climate, and economically different activities. The country has 28 provinces and an estimated population of 53.4 million. It is the 28th largest country in the world. Its national territory is also larger than one-quarter of South America's mainland masses, making Colombia the mainland's fourth-largest nation (World Population 2025). Bogotá is the capital of Colombia. It also serves as the country's political, cultural, and economic hub (Statoids 2015). Colombia has 32 provinces and a single federal district, each of which is structured into provincial municipal governments.

Figure 1: *Map of Colombia highlighting Bogotá and Meta Department in red.*

(Bassols Gardella & Bonilla,2022)

It is a predominantly Christian nation, with a majority of the population adhering to Roman Catholicism, with approximately 70% of the Colombian population identifying as Catholic, reflecting the country's deep historical ties to Catholic traditions and institutions. Additionally, 20% of the population follows Protestantism, which has seen significant growth in recent decades, particularly in urban areas and among indigenous communities. The remaining 10% of the population consists of Islam, Judaism, and Indigenous spiritual practices, or who identify as non-religious (The Association of Religion Data Archive, n.d). Colombia's constitution guarantees freedom of religion, ensuring the right to practice any faith or none.

According to Trading Economics (2024), by 2025 Colombia's GDP is expected to rise to $372.59 billion, up from 2.5% this year (2024) and 3.2% next year; with a touch of consideration placed around the world market fares like that cake we've been hearing cracked gently into pieces so often lately by podcasters. Its economic activities are made up of a rich mix of industries. The services sector is the largest part of GDP, and at 60% its main components are: the finance industry; retailing sectors including supermarkets, clothing stores, and electronic shops among others; telecommunications corporations which transmit information through fiber optics cables or satellites established by the government itself when not needed but bought up from other countries at enormous cost (OECD et al., 2023). Tourism in Colombia has itself

become the country's most significant foreign currency earner. Colombia's unique cultural and natural environments together with growing stability helped tourism become very strong. Despite the growing economy, there still exist multifaceted problems such as income disparity and inflation. This is in addition to the heavy reliance on commodity exports. It obviously points to a long-term need for policies geared toward sustainable growth. As this interplay demonstrates, it demonstrates Colombia's ability to survive economic disasters and highlights the need to diversify to achieve stability and prosperity.

Despite the adoption of security reforms that would ensure Colombia's peace and economic stability, the country continues to face ongoing armed violence and persistent inequalities, reflecting the instability of its post-conflict period. In 2016, the peace agreement significantly reduced large scale confrontations between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Its incomplete implementation has left rural communities vulnerable to new security threats, including dissident factions and criminal groups capitalizing on illicit economies (Winstanley, 2024). The ELN (Ejército de Liberación nacional (The National Liberty Army)) remains the largest active guerrilla force, contributing to operations in remote regions where state presence is minimal (InSight Crime, 2023). Additionally, human rights organizations report that violence against social leaders and former combatants has increased with over 27 activists, and 11 ex-FARC members killed in the first month of 2025 (Nick, 2025). Regions like Chocó, Nariño, and Arauca, which have been historically marginalized and excluded from national development initiatives, have not only stayed trapped in cycles of poverty but became key recruitment areas for armed groups (Buchely, 2020).

Furthermore, the failure to fully implement rural land reforms and reintegration programs has deepened distrust in the peace process, leading some demobilized combatants to rejoin illegal armed networks (Justice for Colombia, 2023). Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach, including strengthening governance in conflict prone areas, accelerating rural infrastructure development, and bolstering judicial mechanisms to ensure accountability for human rights violations. Without decisive action from the Colombian government and continued support from international actors, the gains made since 2016 risk

being reversed, perpetuating the country's long-standing cycle of violence and insecurity (Buchely, 2020).

Despite Colombia's economic diversification and growth in recent decades, the legacy of its protracted armed conflict continues to undermine development, particularly in rural regions historically neglected by the state. Economic exclusion has shaped the geography of the conflict with violence focused on areas characterized by extractive industries and weak institutional networks. Gonzalez (2021) argues this leads to so-called "fractured territories" where there is substantial economic growth, but it does not translate into meaningful gains for the inhabitants, exacerbating underlying tension leading to violence.

Meta contrasts sharply with Bogotá, which depicts the drastic differences in this fragmentation. Contrarily, Bogotá today has become a growing metropolitan hub with strong governance whilst Meta is the rural periphery that showcases Colombia's chronic urban-rural schism. Rich in natural resources including oil, agricultural land, and water, Meta has paradoxically suffered from what economists call the "resource curse," where wealth extraction occurs without proportionate infrastructure development or social investment. According to the most recent National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) data, poverty rates in Meta remain approximately 32% compared to Bogotá's 18.6%, despite Meta's significant contributions to national GDP through oil extraction and large-scale agriculture (DANE, 2024).

The 2016 Peace Agreement attempted to address these disparities through its first point on "Comprehensive Rural Reform," which promised land redistribution, formalization of property rights, and infrastructure investments in conflict-affected regions. However, implementation has been fragmented and slow. By early 2025, only 28% of the planned rural development initiatives had been fully implemented, with land restitution particularly lagging (Kroc Institute, 2025). This implementation gap has contributed to what interviewees consistently described as "peace on paper but not in territory" a sentiment expressed by participants across both regions studied.

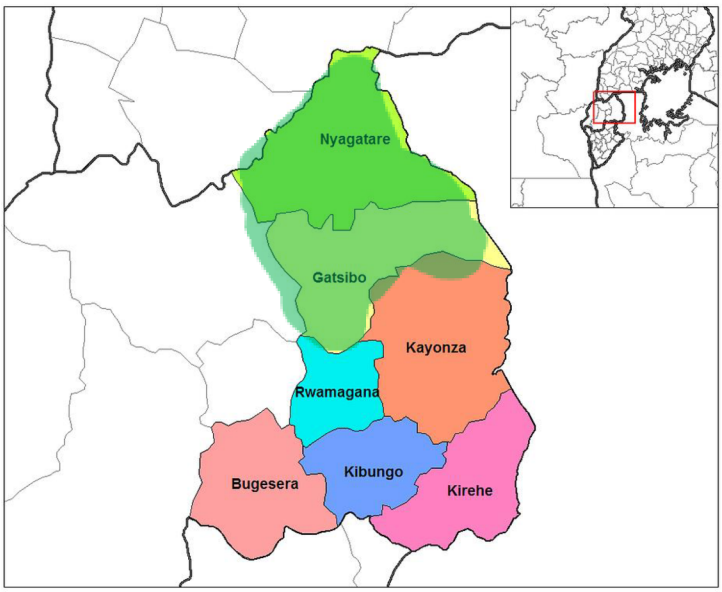
Thus, Colombia's approach to memory and historical narrative is different from Rwanda's. Under the narrative of Rwanda's Tutsi genocide, an ingenious political project rewrote history to establish a collective guilt with gender imbalance. Colombia's conflict has produced multiple

frameworks from which memories are viewed. For example, guerrilla movements and paramilitary groups have their interpretations of the past; government bodies and victims' organizations have theirs. It creates an old story for each new purpose depending on who you believe served well in its narration. Colors also imply meanings: green meant guilt, yellow innocence. As Uribe (2023) argues, "Colombia's memory landscape reflects its political fragmentation, where the right to remember differently is preserved but at the cost of a shared foundation for national healing" (p. 87).

2.2 Rwanda

The Republic of Rwanda is a small, landlocked country located in East Africa covering approximately 26,338 square kilometers, it is third most densely populated nations in the African continent exceeding 13 million as of 2024 (World Bank, 2023). Rwanda is a multilingual nation with four official languages: Kinyarwanda, French, English, and Swahili (Republic of Rwanda, 2017). Before the 1994 Genocide against the Tusti, Rwanda's economy was predominantly agrarian, with more than 90% of the population engaged in subsistence farming (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), 2012). In the Post Genocide period, Rwanda has undergone rapid economic transformation, fueled by investment in infrastructure, governance reform, and sectoral diversification. This could be seen in the key emerging industries such as tourism, services, and mineral extraction-particularly tin, tantalum, and tungsten (IMF, 2023; World Bank, 2023). By 2023, Rwanda's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stood at approximately $13 billion, with a GDP per capita of around $950, signaling recovery and modernization efforts.

Figure 2: *Map of the Eastern province of Rwanda showing Gastibo and Nyagatare in green where interviews were conducted.*



(GetArchive, 2025)

Rwanda's social structure before genocide was shaped significantly by its colonial history. Although the Hutu (85% of Rwanda's population), Tutsi (14% of Rwanda's population), and Twa (1% of Rwanda's population) are often identified as ethnic groups, it can be said that these were social categories. Tutsi were generally pastoralists associated with the aristocracy, Hutu were predominantly agriculturalists, and the Twa were hunter gatherers who were politically, and socially marginalized (Mamdani, 2001; Chretien, 2003). During Belgian colonial rule, these identities were codified and racialized through administrative mechanisms such as ethnic identity cards. This institutionalization of ethnic hierarchy created seeds of deep socio-political divisions (Mamdani, 2001). Following Rwanda's Independence in 1962, political power shifted decisively towards Hutu majoritarian rule, in an effort to address perceived historical injustices, the Hutu-led governments implemented policies that systematically marginalized the Tutsi population, often through institutional discrimination and episodes of targeted violence. During President Juvenal Habyarimana's regime, anti-Tutsi sentiment became deeply entrenched within state structures, including the education system and media, shaping public discourse and reinforcing exclusionary ideologies. This rhetoric painted Tutsi as an existential threat, fostering a national

identity grounded in fear, exclusion, and grievance (Des Forges, 1999; Prunier, 1995). The assassination of president Habyarimana on April 6,1994, acted as the catalyst for the Genocide against the Tutsi, a meticulously planned campaign of mass violence. Over a period of about 100 days, approx. 800,000 to 1 million Tutsis were hunted and systematically eliminated by state forces, militias, and civilian accomplices (Des Forges, 1999). This genocide not only resulted in severe human loss but also had intergenerational effects.

Derived from colonial interference, ethnic frictions, economic inequalities and brutal combat; the country's tumultuous history is a basic setting for Rwanda's post-genocide quest for reformation, restore and societal integration. It is also a critical framework for examining other areas of transitional justice especially when juxtaposed to Colombia. By situating Rwanda within this broader global conversation, this research seeks to contribute to the scholarly discourse on how divided societies rebuild and reimagine themselves after mass atrocity. Rwanda is often described as a nation of resilience.

Rwanda's trajectory from genocide to its current state represents one of the most studied post-conflict recovery cases globally. After the 1994 genocide which took the lives of 800,000 to 1,000,000 Tutsi and millions of other Rwandans displaced or bereaved through the destruction of infrastructure as well as deep social trauma, Rwanda faced unprecedented challenges. It is noted that the country has seen some subsequent transformations in governance. Some scholars call this "developmental authoritarianism" (Reyntjens, 2018), a civil structure of rule characterized by a closed political process and limited plural me. Nor was the memory politics in Rwanda anything comparable to the piecemeal and fragmented approach taken in Colombia today. Buckley-Zistel (2006) characterizes this as a form of "chosen remembering," with the government actively constructing a collective memory that underlines pre-colonial unity, colonial division, and post-genocide reconciliation. This narrative is further enforced through annual memory commemoration events, the national education curriculum, and extensive memorialization projects. As an interviewee from Gatsibo explained, "*Our history is taught to us as clear as daylight so we all know what happened and why it must not happen again*." The approach to memory politics promoted a rapid material recovery, but it has also raised questions about constraining one to its memory history. While the official reconciliation discourse

emphasizes unity under an umbrella nationality such as "Rwandan" rather than being divided into ethnic categories 21 research by Thomson (2013) and others implies that people informally hold onto their ethnic identification where there is no one watching them publicly- creating what several interviewees in this study call a "public transcript" of oneness alongside many netted "private transcripts" lived experiences. Since the genocide, the Rwandan government has provided “home-grown solutions” to the post-genocide era, which involves local strategies on reconciliation and development, such as Gacaca courts for justice, Umuganda for community service, and Girinka for poverty reduction.

The numbers show how Rwanda has made impressive strides in revitalizing its economy. Between 1995 and 2024, Rwanda's GDP grew at an average annual rate of 7.5%, with poverty rates declining from 77% in 1995 to 38% by 2024 (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2024). At the same time, the faster expansion is overshadowed by the increased economic inequalities, reflected in the growing Gini coefficient, which rose from 0.46 in 2000 to 0.51 by 2023. This gap indicates that though Rwanda’s centralized policies have resulted in impressive macro-level advances there are no equal gains for every citizen at the individual level, for example, feedback from residents of rural areas of Gatsibo. The aftermath left the country devastated-physically, socially, and psychologically. Families were torn apart, entire communities were destroyed, and trust in institutions and neighbors was shattered. Yet, in the years that followed, Rwanda initiated a remarkable process of peacebuilding, centered on national unity, reconciliation, and inclusive development. Community-based justice mechanisms like the Gacaca Court, participatory civic programs such as Umuganda, and socio-economic initiatives like Girinka Kinyarwanda played a crucial role in both justice and healing (Clark P, 2010; The Government of Rwanda, 2020).

Rwanda’s recovery, while far from perfect, offers available insights into how a country can confront a violent past while laying the background for social cohesion and economic renewal for countries like South Sudan still grappling with the legacy of internal conflict, Rwanda’s experience provides a meaningful model for addressing intergenerational trauma, promoting reconciliation, and building a sustainable peace (Aegis Trust, 2020).

Chapter 3: Literature Review

The wounds left by war are not easily healed; they embed themselves deeply into the lives of individuals and the very structures of society. Beyond the immediate destruction of homes and infrastructure, armed conflict tears apart families, erodes trust, and leaves psychological trauma that often goes unspoken. Survivors not only struggle with their own experiences but also pass on the emotional weight of those experiences to their children sometimes consciously, but often unknowingly. As Bar-Tal et al. (2009) stated, the psychological aftermath of violent conflict can become part of a society's collective memory, influencing their identity and intergenerational relations. Similarly, Betancourt et al. (2010) emphasize that the effects of conflict-related trauma are not confined to the individuals who directly experienced violence, but they extend to the next generation, thus, shaping family dynamics, economic opportunities, and the emotional development of younger generations. These long-term effects are entrenched in society and form a barrier to rebuilding trust and institutions, normalcy.

A broad range of studies crossing different disciplines holds that trauma can be passed on between generations. For example, the psychological, emotional, and socioeconomic effects of collective violence are not confined to its direct survivors they often extend across subsequent generations. This line of approach, originally rooted in Holocaust studies, has revealed that transgenerational trauma is usually not limited to the generation personally suffering it but that such suffering tends rather (via culture, society, or customs) to be passed down. For instance, Danieli (1998) was among the first people who tried to explain how children of Holocaust survivors internalized the unresolved grief, fear, and silence that their parents bore. Similarly, Yehuda et al. (2001) used biomedical data and clinical examples to show us that the second generation of survivors bear a certain kind of conditioned reflex action from their parents' fear, panic, and psychological problems. This approach has subsequently been applied to other post-conflict societies, offering comparative insights. For example, in Cambodia, Sonis et al. (2009) reported that high rates of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) appeared among the children of Khmer Rouge survivors. In South Africa, Kaminer and Eagle (2010) wrote more general observations about how trauma suffered under apartheid damaged not only survivors' mental health but also their ability to raise children and be accessible emotionally, to their children.

Similarly, in Rwanda, Rutayisire et al. (2021) found that descendants of genocide survivors faced compounded vulnerabilities, including anxiety, mistrust, and socioeconomic marginalization, which hindered their capacity for resilience and upward mobility. Given the connection of these findings, the reductive idea of trauma being an individual pathology is challenged. Instead, it is seen as a collective, relational, and transgenerational phenomenon. This research stresses the importance of recognizing how unresolved historical trauma can cement structural inequalities and psychosocial barriers that last across generations. These findings raise implications, particularly relevant for transitional justice, peacebuilding, and development policy in post-conflict societies.

More than five decades of internal armed conflict in Colombia have left deep scars on individuals and communities, with over 9 million people officially registered as victims of violence including displaced families, survivors of massacres, and former combatants transitioning back into civilian life (CNMH, 2021). Although the 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC marked a significant political turning point, its implementation has been inconsistent and, for many, insufficient. Survivors and their families frequently report continued experiences of marginalization, inadequate reparations, and enduring insecurity in regions still affected by armed actors and weak state presence (Theidon, 2007; Bouvier, 2009).

The legacies of violence do not end with the cessation of armed hostilities. Instead, trauma often becomes embedded in the social and economic conditions of daily life compounded by poverty, institutional neglect, and the long-term erosion of trust in both the state and community relationships. As Denov and Bryan (2012) note, children born into such contexts often inherit the psychological weight of conflict indirectly: through the silence of parents, heightened parental control, or a pervasive sense of danger that shapes their worldview. These patterns can inhibit a young person's ability to make independent decisions, pursue educational or professional goals, or develop a stable sense of identity and belonging.

By centering the voices of survivors and their descendants, this study seeks to illuminate how these unresolved legacies continue to shape the lives of young Colombians today. It aims to

deepen our understanding of how intergenerational trauma, in tandem with socio-economic constraints, influences development trajectories and decision-making in post-conflict settings.

Rwanda, in contrast to Colombia, presents a compelling and instructive comparative case in post-conflict recovery. After the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, Rwanda began a national reconstruction process that combined transitional justice, community reintegration, and collective memory through mechanisms such as the Gacaca courts and Umuganda community workdays aimed at rebuilding both infrastructure and social ties (Clark, 2010; Ingelaere, 2016). These efforts were instrumental in promoting a sense of shared responsibility and rebuilding of fractured communities. Rwanda's commitment to national unity and economic revitalization has often been hailed as a success story, especially in contrast to other post-conflict societies in the Global South. However, it is important to mention the limitations and tensions within this approach. And thus, questions regarding the extent to which policies of reconciliation have adequately addressed individual psychological trauma or allowed for the coexistence of diverse narratives and dissenting voices have been raised (Hintjens, 2008; Purdekova, 2011).

Notably, Rwanda's development has been tightly linked to its promotion of a unified national identity often framed as an antidote to ethnic division and as a path toward inclusive citizenship. This has had a particular resonance among the youth, many of whom were born after the genocide and are now inheriting the legacy of violence indirectly. The state's emphasis on civic education, national service, and entrepreneurship among the post-genocide generation reflects an attempt to both transcend victimhood and instill resilience (Sommers, 2012). Yet, the question remains: ***To what extent does this model enable genuine reconciliation versus enforcing a scripted version of memory and belonging?***

This research draws on the Colombian and Rwandan cases to explore a generational approach to trauma, memo management across generations, and development. As Halbwachs (1992) and Ans Mann (2011) explain, collective memory is not just about individuals preserving their recollections together. Rather, it is framed by cultural symbols and political institutions as well. In turn, those memories shape how members of a society see themselves. In post-conflict contexts, the meaning of memory becomes a problem. Recognition and dialogue can facilitate healing, whereas if histories are suppressed or treated as non-issues then confusion will remain

how memory is institutionalized, shared, or silenced has immediate implications for how young people in particular, descendants of survivors, view their place in society and knowledge-based their futures.

Additionally, gendered dimensions of trauma transmission warrant close attention. In both Rwanda and Colombia, women have played critical roles not only as direct victims often experiencing sexual violence and displacement but also as primary caregivers and community healers in the post-conflict period. The emotional and psychological labor carried out by women in sustaining families affected by violence has long-term implications for how trauma is experienced and reproduced (Meertens, 2012; Freedman et al., 2021). For daughters and granddaughters of survivors, inherited trauma intersects with socio-economic vulnerability, limiting their access to education, health care, and safe livelihoods. Gender thus operates as both a lens and a structuring force in the intergenerational impact of conflict.

This study is informed by John Paul Lederach's (1997) "web approach" to peacebuilding, which emphasizes that reconciliation cannot be fully achieved through formal agreements or elite-level negotiations alone. Instead, peacebuilding must emerge through a dynamic and inclusive process that engages actors across all levels of society, particularly those whose lived experiences are often sidelined in official discourse. By applying this framework, the research seeks to understand how survivors and their descendants interpret justice, healing, and development not only through institutions, but also through the intimate spaces of family, memory, and daily life.

In sum, this research underscores the need to move beyond a focus on immediate post-conflict interventions and toward a deeper understanding of the long-term, generational consequences of violence. While Colombia and Rwanda differ in their histories, political cultures, and peacebuilding trajectories, their comparative analysis offers valuable insights into how societies come to terms with mass violence. This research contributes to an emerging body of work that situates trauma, resilience, and social recovery within intergenerational frameworks recognizing that peace is not a single event, but a long, ongoing process shaped by memory, identity, and the aspirations of those who inherit both the wounds and the hopes of the past.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Understanding the intergenerational effects of armed conflict and the potential for long-term peacebuilding requires a multidimensional theoretical lens. This study draws on three theoretical frameworks: intergenerational trauma reconciliation peacebuilding theories, and resilience. These frameworks provide a comprehensive approach to how trauma is passed across generations, how communities recover and build through reconciliation, and their resilience amidst a conflict. This integrative approach is particularly useful in comparing Rwanda and Colombia as they both have experienced widespread violence but adopted different strategies to achieve societal healing and development. By examining how trauma, reconciliation, and resilience intersect, this study seeks to understand how the intergenerational experience of trauma shapes the decision-making, development trajectories, and peacebuilding mechanisms after a conflict.

The first theoretical framework is intergenerational trauma transmission which focuses on how the psychological and emotional scars of war and genocide are transmitted from survivors to their descendants. Hirsch's concept of post-memory (1997) emphasizes how descendants of trauma survivors inherit memories so deeply that they appear to be lived experiences, shaping identity, belonging, and worldview. Yehuda and Lehrner (2018) extend this framework by identifying multiple mechanisms of trauma transmission, including psychological (e.g., parenting styles, silence), biological (such as epigenetic changes), and social pathways (e.g., education and socio-political exclusion). In the context of Rwanda and Colombia, these theories help to explain how the original violence continues to affect the lives, behaviors, and worldviews of descendants, influencing their participation in political and economic processes, as well as their perception of justice and reconciliation.

Next is the framework of peacebuilding and reconciliation, which provides tools to analyze how societies manage collective trauma and seek sustainable peace. Lambourne's (2009) multidimensional model outlines four critical pillars: justice, healing, truth, and peace which are necessary for transformative reconciliation. This framework allows for a systematic comparison of Rwanda's community based Gacaca courts and Colombia's decentralized transitional justice initiatives. Meanwhile, Lederach's (1997) emphasis on relationship-building and the "web of

interdependence" highlights the importance of social cohesion, local ownership, and inclusive narratives in rebuilding trust and fostering durable peace. These peacebuilding theories help explain how formal and informal mechanisms of reconciliation influence intergenerational attitudes toward conflict, justice, and civic engagement.

Finally, Ungar's (2011) social-ecological model of resilience shifts the focus from trauma to agency. Rather than viewing survivors and their descendants as passive victims, this framework underscores how resilience is shaped by access to culturally meaningful resources, community structures, and supportive relationships. In post-conflict societies, resilience becomes a dynamic process that enables individuals and communities to not only cope with but also challenge the legacy of violence. This is particularly visible in Rwanda, where survivors' children engage with local practices like umuganda and ndi umunyarwanda to reclaim agency, and in Colombia, where community initiatives in marginalized areas foster healing in the absence of strong institutional support.

Figure 3: *Conceptual Framework for Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma and Resilience*

(Mutoni,2025)

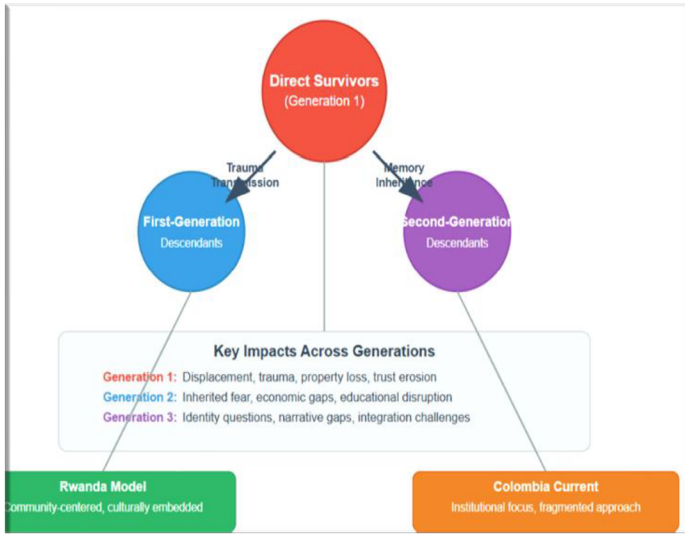


Figure 3 presents a visual representation of how these theoretical frameworks interact to inform the research questions and methodological approach of this study.

3.2 Psychological, Social, and Economic Effects of Armed Conflict

This section examines the psychological, social, and economic impacts of armed conflict through the lens of trauma theory, post-memory, and resilience studies. Instead of limiting its discussion of war to a single-path explanation, the section explores how public health and community organizations have used post-memory to treat trauma in recent years. Drawing on examples from Colombia and Rwanda, it highlights how conflict-generated suffering transcends generations, shaping not only individual mental health but also communal cohesion and economic opportunity. These effects are central to understanding how societies progress from post-conflict.

The impact of exposure to armed conflict has major psychological effects on the survivors, resulting in extensive consequences for them and for later generations. According to trauma theorists such as De Angelis (2023), "unprocessed trauma does not disappear but may be passed on through behaviors, silences, and emotional patterns", echoing Marianne Hirsch's concept of post-memory. According to Zamora-Moncayo et al. (2021), the experiences of Colombian mothers significantly determine their children's mental well-being, and psychological trauma causes decision-making difficulties that are characterized by increased anxiety, low risk-taking, and lack of social trust. In addition, high rates of PTSD and chronic stress that was documented among Colombia's armed conflict survivors are associated with decreased involvement in social and economic productivity (González Hernández et al., 2023). Thus, psychological distress such as anxiety, avoidance behaviors, that makes it difficult in developing healthy relationships is a common occurrence among Rwandan survivors of the genocide and their offspring (Rugema et al., 2016).

In addition to psychological effects, armed conflicts can cause great damage to social systems. Family disintegration, forced migration, and reduced social bonding have a significant impact on the patterns of recovery in sectarian societies that emerge from conflict (Somasundaram & Sivayokan, 2013). A case in point can be seen in Colombia where forced displacement has left multigenerational poverty and constrained education and employment opportunities leading to persistent instability (Guarin et.al, 2023). While Colombia continues to grapple with displacement-related instability, Rwanda's efforts have increasingly focused on reconciliation and rebuilding social trust through local institutions like gacaca courts and Umuganda. At the

same time, Rwanda is beginning reconciliation initiatives and community-building processes to foster confidence and build social cohesion among its communities (Ingabire & Richter, 2019).

Financial consequences are also a very serious issue. Wars often led to increased rates of job loss, large-scale infrastructural destruction, and stunted economy (Dajo & Akor, 2022). After the genocide, Rwanda introduced policies that aimed at economic empowerment, including land reforms. Colombia agreed to a peace accord in 2016 (Rettberg, 2020), but it is still economically unstable, and this research seeks the approach Rwanda has taken on economic re-energizing. While both countries experienced economic collapse, Rwanda's centralized approach to economic revival, with a focus on rural empowerment and cooperatives, contrasts with Colombia's more fragmented post-conflict reconstruction.

3.3 Peacebuilding and Reconciliation: The Role of Rwanda as a Model

Establishing sustainable peace in a post-conflict environment requires purposeful actions that support reconciliation and peacebuilding. The recovery plans implemented after the genocide by Rwanda provides a good case study for post conflict societies. The Gacaca courts, as Hilmi (2023) observed, founded on community-based justice, were key in restoring healing and trust between survivors and perpetrators of genocide. Rwanda's rigorous effort towards inclusive development were evident in gender equity, and economic empowerment programs, which has helped the country maintain a stable and dynamic situation.

Thus, although Colombia's peace process has improved the situation since 2016, there are challenges in dealing with the continuing social and economic inequalities leading to conflicts (Borja P, 2023). This means utilizing reflections on Rwanda's efforts such as building reconciliation programs and economic reintegration plans in recovery from mass atrocities could help shape Colombia's path to sustainable peace and development.

3.4 Existing Gaps in Research

Research relating to the aftermath of conflicts on survivors is abundant, this means how these effects impact consecutive generations of decision-makers have been insufficiently examined (Haran & Miodownik, 2023). While many studies focus on how conflict interrupts immediate trauma coping, they tend to neglect long-term behavioral and economic dynamics. Moreover, there is also a lack of research that compares how various nations respond to the phenomenon of intergenerational trauma and the development effects it has. The investigation aims to bridge this gap by examining the long-term effects of conflict in Colombia from one generation to another and evaluate the extent to which Rwanda's initiatives could be leveraged to address similar challenges in Colombia.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative research method integrating a semi-structured interview, comparative policy analysis, and case study methodology to examine post-conflict reconciliation and development in Colombia, using Rwanda as a comparative model. The research is grounded in fieldwork and draws on both primary and secondary sources to develop a nuanced understanding of how communities respond to conflict-related trauma and justice mechanisms.

Primary data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with direct survivors of Colombia's armed conflict and their first- and second-generation descendants. By interviewing these people, we aim to show what impacts (socio-economic or psychological) conflicts or wars have had on their lives; and how they themselves see reconciliation, justice, and development. Our sampling plan is carried out using both purposive and snowball strategies to recruit people with recent concrete experiences of conflict.

Ethical considerations are essential to research design. This means all participants were informed of the study's objectives while written, or verbal consent is obtained by ethical research standards. The interviews are conducted with trauma-informed sensitivity, and strict confidentiality measures are maintained to ensure voluntary and secure participation.

The study incorporates a comparative policy analysis of Rwanda's post-genocide reconstruction frameworks, particularly Gacaca (Community-based justice), Umuganda (mandatory monthly community service), and Girinka Munyarwanda (a livestock redistribution program aimed at socioeconomic recovery). These policies are examined in terms of their design, implementation, and outcomes, and analyzed for their relevance and potential adaptability to Colombia's transitional justice and peacebuilding efforts.

The case study component situates Rwanda's reconciliation strategies within its unique political, cultural, and historical contexts. This analysis draws on field observations, policy documents, and scholarly literature to critically assess the effectiveness, limitation, and transferability of these approaches when applied to Colombia's distinct conflict landscape.

To guide comparative analysis, four analytical critical are applied:
(1) Community participation in justice and reconciliation, assessing the extent of grassroots involvement in transitional justice mechanisms.
(2) Use of cultural and traditional practices, evaluating the integration of indigenous or localized methods in the peacebuilding process.
(3) Psychological healing and support mechanisms, examining how justice frameworks address trauma, mental health, and social cohesion.
(4) Political and institutional context, analyzing the role of state capacity, political will, and institutional frameworks in enabling or constraining reconciliation initiatives.
These criteria allow for a structured comparison and consistency in evaluating both national cases. By employing these interlinked methods, this research provides a robust framework for exploring both institutional and community-level dimensions of post-conflict recovery. The cross-case comparison seeks to generate insights that are empirically grounded, context-sensitive, and potentially transferable to other conflict-affected settings.

4.1 Research Design

Considering the long-term consequences of armed conflict on generations' psychology, society, and economy, a qualitative approach was used in this study. It encourages good research to understand how trauma continues to affect individuals and communities in the long term. This research collected in-depth information from survivors and the next and future generations in Colombia and Rwanda to know how conflict shape's identity and behavior and decision-making in these social groups.

Such first-hand accounts will bring valuable insight to intergenerational trauma and help in the assessment of Colombia's current reconciliation processes. By taking Rwanda's Gacaca Court and similar socio-economic activities as a case-study, this research seeks to explain how inclusive and just policies can adequately address the after-effects of violence in a Colombian environment. By conducting this exploration, the research links personal accounts to real political strategies, which offer practical advice for inclusive, sustainable peace in Colombia.

4.2 Data Collection and Sources

Through the utilization of both primary and secondary data sources, this research seeks to help present a comprehensive and complex understanding of the post-conflict recovery and the long-term impact on generations to come.

4.2.1 Study Area and Participants

This chapter focused on Meta and Bogotá, regions where violence, displacement, and deep-rooted grievances still deeply affect community daily life. Meta, a site of decades-long suffering and insurrection, shows a glimpse into rural societies still mired in the aftermath of long-term trauma. Bogotá, as the capital, yields evidence from urban communities where a diverse mixture of active and passive victims has found distinct routes toward recovery.

In Colombia, Participants included conflict survivors, community leaders, peacebuilding experts, and policymakers. They were interviewed using both semi-structured and structured methods. A total of 32 interviews were carried out in Colombia: 10 direct survivors, 8 second-generation descendants, 6 youth and members of the community's action group, 6 ex-combatants, plus 2 representatives from governmental and quasi-state organizations. In Rwanda, 29 participants in a purposive way: 9 survivors of the genocide, 7 second-generation descendants, 6 youth leaders, and association members, as well as 7 policy and public-society actors working on reconciliation were interviewed.

Participants were selected through a combination of snowball and purposive sampling methods. Given the need to include voices from countryside or periphery areas that might otherwise be missed, the latter facilitated. This study drew from a broad range of economic, social, and generational backgrounds. Then also sought to represent a more comprehensive image of how trauma is experienced and transmitted across generations.

4.2.2 Data Collection Process

Interviews were conducted both in person and virtually (via Zoom). This was based on participants' availability and location. The languages used included Spanish, English, and

Kinyarwanda, with interpreters provided where needed. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, it was recorded with the participant's informed consent, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic methods. This process allowed for the identification of key patterns across national contexts, particularly concerning trauma transmission, coping strategies, decision-making, and intergenerational resilience.

4.2.3 Secondary Data and Comparative Framework

Colombia has endured over five decades of internal armed conflict, resulting in profound socio-economic, psychological, and political consequences that persist across generations. The focus of the study is on the conflict-ravaged areas in which oppressive violence, displacement, and deep-seated grievances continue to shape the fabric of community life. The research focused on Meta where the traces of paramilitary and guerrilla violence remain, and Bogota, the urban hub for rearming, reconciliation, and policy-making initiatives.

Exploring these regions is aimed at the assessment of how Rwanda's post-genocide strategy may be transformed to manage the intergenerational consequences of armed conflict and foster sustainable peace and development in Colombia. Rwanda's history of mass violence is indeed brutal, but it has managed to implement effective local reconciliation processes and economic reforms promoting national security. Understanding whether and how similar approaches could be contextually adapted to Colombia is a central focus of this study.

This study explores how Colombia's Conflict has shaped access to socio-economic opportunities in Meta and Bogota. Utilizing interviews and policy analysis, the research evaluates Colombia's reconciliation and economic recovery efforts while drawing reasonable insights from Rwanda's post-genocide programs, such as Gacaca courts, Umuganda (Community Services), Girinka Munyarwanda, and other economic programs. The goal is to identify locally informed, transferable strategies for long-term peacebuilding.

4.3 Possible Limitations

While valuable insights were gained through interviews with Rwandan and Colombian survivors and their descendants, challenges such as geographical distance, limited accessibility, and concerns related to personal safety were faced during data collection. The language barrier also hindered communication, making accurate translation essential to ensure proper interpretation of the data. Additionally, the subjective nature of survivors' narratives introduced a degree of bias, which may have affected the credibility of the research findings. In addition, differences in cultural norms and political scenes between the two countries may influence the applicability of Rwanda's approach to Colombia. Also, the time and resources may limit the scope of research, and the use of qualitative data can also make it challenging to extrapolate results widely. The quality and scope of insight collected might be compromised because the participants sometimes hesitated to discuss traumatic events.

4.4 Ethical Consideration

The study maintained high ethical standards and ensured the protection of the welfare while respecting the rights of all participants involved. The research team obtained fully informed consent from all participants, ensuring that they knew everything about the research. To ensure confidentiality, all gathered data were anonymized and the material used for publications will not contain any of the data that may help to identify participants. The topic was handled with sensitivity and trauma-informed practices to ensure the protection of the participant's welfare, letting them leave when they wished to. Researchers treated participation with cultural respect, following both countries' traditions and customs. Through accredited bodies, ethical clearance was obtained from the city hall of Meta involving local organizations as a way of promoting collaboration and integrating the study with local priorities. Researchers are dedicated to transparent communication of their goals and results to avoid manipulation of study participants' experience.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the results of qualitative fieldwork in Bogota and Meta, Colombia, focused on the experiences of residents who have survived armed conflict. Stories of life from two generations intermingle. It explores how the conflict has shaped intergenerational identity, socio-economic development, and attitudes to reconciliation. The chapter is divided into three sections: the first looks at the personal narratives of survivors and their children; the second considers changes in development and psychology across generations; the third discusses reconciliation activities undertaken at the local level, along with comparisons with Rwanda's post-genocide strategies. Key questions addressed: How do survivors and their descendants feel about such long-term effects of conflict? In what ways has the residue of violence affected their development and choices? And what might comparative models such as Rwanda's contribute to Colombia's peacebuilding efforts?

5.1 Survivors' Experiences

Interviews conducted with direct survivors of Colombia's armed conflicts revealed a consistent pattern of displacement, violence, and rupture of community ties. Most survivors described the conflict as not only a disruption of physical space but also of cultural identity and familial continuity. Several respondents, particularly in Meta, emphasized the loss of ancestral land as a huge turning point in their lives, severing economic independence and generational heritage. A 67-year-old male respondent from Meta recounted how his town was *"emptied overnight"* due to fear of retaliation from armed groups. He stated, *"We left everything we owned behind -houses, animals, and the ancestral graves of our parents and grandparents. We became homeless strangers in our country"*. His narrative depicts the magnitude of dispossession, and the pain associated with the abandonment of generational roots.

Many survivors shared that they felt forgotten by the government, pointing out that transitional justice efforts have either taken too long or never made it to their communities. While peacebuilding was supposed to bring healing, most felt it never reached those who needed it most. This lack of follow-through has left many with a deep sense of being overlooked and

unfairly treated. A 35-year-old woman from Bogota shared her disillusionment with the peace process, stating, *"I voted for a peace agreement with hope in my heart, believing it would bring justice for people like us. But everything, I regret it"*. She recounted losing her father during the conflict and said that *"despite my mother's repeated efforts, the government never provided support, nor did they return our family's land. We were left alone. No counseling, no reparations, no land. Just silence,"* she added. Her tale emphasizes the widespread feeling that the state's promises of reconciliation and support have not been translated into meaningful action, leaving survivors not only to rebuild their lives alone but also to question the legitimacy of the peace agreement they once voted for.

5.2 Social, Economic, and Psychological Impact

The socio-economic effects of displacement were one of the most frequently discussed issues across all participant groups. Many survivors reported long-term unemployment, informal labor exploitation, and reduced access to education and healthcare services. The sudden disruption of livelihood created a cycle of generational poverty, particularly among female-headed households and rural families. One first-generation descendant in Bogota, now 27 years old, shared: *"My mother never finished school because of the war, and neither did I. We had to work from a young age just to survive. It's not just poverty with a broken past"*.

Psychologically, traumas like anxiety, paranoia, severe sleeplessness, chronic brooding over past events with an overwhelming sense of helplessness. These habits came from their parents who had been impacted by war. Some said that fear has been deeply implanted into every aspect of their daily lives. "*Where should I work*?" "*Should I move*?" And even, "*Should I be in any new relationship?*" The survivors often described in deeply personal and emotionally loaded terms the horrors they had encountered. Instead of acknowledging the trauma, many referred vaguely to "storing up pain," or "bearing it alone," reflecting an emotional isolation and silence that persisted over years. Survivors often described their experiences using deeply personal and emotionally loaded language. Instead of overtly discussing trauma, many referred to *"swallowing the pain"* or *"carrying it alone"*, reflecting the emotional isolation and silence that has followed them for years. One respondent, a 42-year-old man from Meta, explained, *"We have never talked about what happened to my brother. It was like if we didn't speak, it would*

hurt less. But every time I hear fireworks or loud noises, I freeze - it all comes back" His words underscore a common pattern among survivors: the trauma didn't end the conflict, it was simply pushed beneath the surface, unspoken but deeply felt.

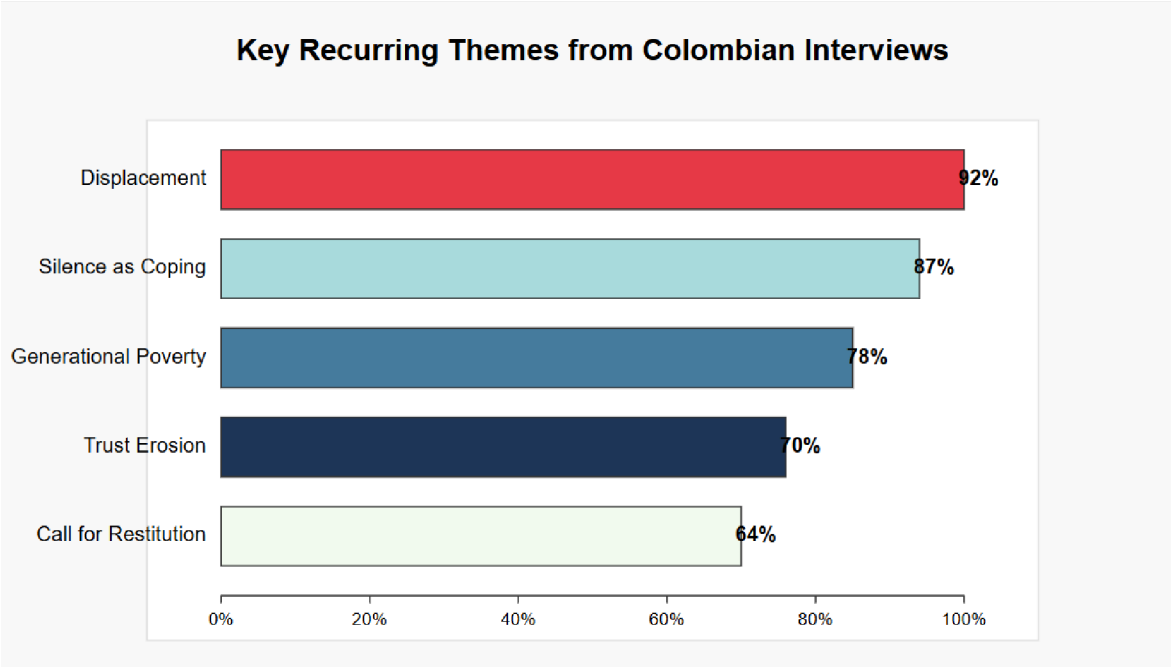
Among second-generation participants, the emotional weight of the conflict was often passed down in quiet but powerful ways through the cautious way parents spoke about the past, or their refusal to speak about it at all. Some described growing up in homes where certain topics were completely off-limits, while others spoke of overprotective parents who feared losing them too. A 33-year-old woman from Bogota shared how her mother's anxiety had a lasting effect on her childhood and grandchildren. *"My mom never spoke about what happened, but I could see how scared she was,"* she explained. *"I remember once asking why we never visited our family in the countryside, and she just said, 'It's not safe, we can't go back. 'But she never told me why."* She described her mother's overprotectiveness, where even simple things like staying out late with friends were met with harsh warnings. *"I grew up thinking the world was scary, but no one would explain. Everything was pervaded with uncertainty and fear, but they did not talk about their experiences".*

5.3 Intergenerational Trauma and Development

This study revealed significant evidence of how traumatic experiences transmitted across generations shape developmental trajectories. Children and grandchildren of survivors have both economic and emotional inheritances from their forebears. Many descendants reported feelings of detachment, dominating parenting, and attempts to thwart activism on their part. These elements often inhibit personal development, academic success, and active citizenship. A 19-year-old resident of Meta noted, *"I did not realize why my grandfather was angry and scared until much later."* It was only as I got older that I came to know that he had been a child soldier. It is difficult to overlook even if we do not want to speak on it.

Participants highlighted the fact that continuous trauma hinders healing particularly among younger members of the family who do not understand the reasons, they undergo hardships. The participants noted that trauma-informed practices, mental health resources, and culturally relevant peace education are pivotal in attaining sustainable development.

Figure 4: *Key Recurring Themes Identified in Interviews with Colombian Survivors and Descendants*



(Mutoni, 2025)

5.4 Key Narratives and Themes

Interviews with survivors and descendants in Bogota and Meta regions revealed four important thematic areas, providing useful insight into individual and communal lives in post-conflict Colombia.

5.4.1 Nostalgia and Displacement

Many of the participants from the previous era went into detail on how having been driven out by force had created deep emotional and cultural turmoil in them. They narrated how displacement did not only lead to the loss of material goods but also intense spiritual

displacement as a result involving the severing of ties with ancestral lands, communal life, and the flow of communal knowledge through generations. It was clear to many elderly individuals that displacement not only affected their physical property but also affected their old ways of life. A 70-year-old farmer from Meta explained that after his family was forced to leave, they lost not just their crops and animals, but their everyday rhythm. *"We used to gather every Sunday to cook together, and shape stories. Now everyone is scattered. My grandson asks me where we're from, and I don't know what to say anymore",* he said. *"What came through clearly in many interviews was that the loss wasn't just physically breaking the thread that tied families to their land, memories, and cultural habits."*

5.4.2 Calls for Restitution and Reintegration

During interviews, both survivors and their descendants voiced strong concerns about the state's failure to fulfill its promises of reparations. Many pointed specifically to land restitution and the lack of inclusive reintegration programs. The general sentiment was one of disappointment, with several participants expressing that while peace was promised, justice and support were never delivered.

A 41-year-old farmer from Meta recalled: *"They came to our village, took down our names, made us sign papers. We were told the land would be returned. That was seven years ago. Nothing has changed, we still rent land that once belonged to our grandparents"* His words reflect a broader pattern of disillusionment, where communities feel excluded from the peace process despite being among the most affected. The absence of follow-through has not only undermined trust in state institutions but has also slowed down efforts to rebuild livelihoods and social cohesion. These lived experiences echo long-standing concerns raised in transitional justice debates, which critique the Colombian government's delayed and inconsistent application outfits post-conflict commitments (Salvioli, 2023).

5.4.3 Silence as a Survivor Strategy

Silence emerges as one of the most recurring themes across interviews, not simply as the absence of speech, but as a deeply embedded survival mechanism. Many survivors described how, in the

immediate post-conflict, silence became a way to cope and protect themselves and their families from further pain, stigma, or danger. Over time, however, this silence became normalized, passed down through generations as an unspoken rule. While initially intended as a form of emotional safeguarding, participants acknowledged that it has increasingly functioned as a barrier to healing, understanding, and connection.

A 34-year-old man from Granada, Meta, explained that his father, who had survived a paramilitary attack, never spoke about what happened, even when asked directly: *"He'd just shut down and change the subject. I learned not to ask. But growing up, that silence grew inside our house with another family member. We all felt the weight of something we didn't have the words for"* This legacy of withholding, while understandable in context, has left emotional voids and contributed to a sense of isolation within families and communities. Without international spaces for intergenerational dialogue, many survivors and their children remain trapped in a cycle where silence continues to protect but also prevents the possibility of collective healing.

5.4.4 Multi-Actor Narratives: Ex-Combatants, Government Leaders, and Policy Officials.

To further contextualize the findings of this study, it is essential to foreground the voices of diverse stakeholders beyond survivors and their descendants. During fieldwork conducted in Bogota and Meta, Colombia, powerful testimonies from ex-combatants, government officials, and policy analysts highlighted the complex problems faced by a post-conflict society in terms of reconciliation and reintegration. These narratives underscore not only formal institutional obstacles, but also beyond such shallows lie deep and ever-present currents like grief, mistrust, and fear.

Former FARC members described their experiences in disarmament, democratization, and reintegration (DDR) programs as *"necessary but emotionally incomplete"*. One ex-combatant from Meta reflected as thus, *"We were given vocational training and jobs, but no one asked us to tell our stories, not fully. It's like we're forgiven on paper, but not in the heart of the community"*. This sentiment echoes critiques that the DDR processes often emphasize economic reinsertion while neglecting psychosocial healing and communal trust-building (Theidon, 2007;

Kaplan & Nussio, 2018). The emotional isolation reported by former fighters underlines the need for narrative justice and inclusive dialogue in transitional settings.

Government organization leaders, particularly those managing victim assistance and land restitution programs, also voiced concerns about the persistent disconnect between state initiatives and community realities. As one official from Colombia's Unidad para las Victims states, *"even when we go to the communities with resources, people don't open up"*. They said, *"You were not here when we suffered. Why now?"* This quote reveals the challenge of retrospective engagement, where temporal and emotional gaps undermine institutional legitimacy. By contrast, Rwanda's Gacaca and Umuganda systems fostered sustained community presence and engagement, thus offering relational continuity - a dimension lacking in Colombia's more fragmented institutional approaches (Clark, 2010).

Policy officials in Bogota expressed cautious optimism about learning from Rwanda's participatory frameworks. A representative from the Ministry of Peace remarked, *"Colombia is not Rwanda. We don't have one narrative or one community. We have hundreds. But what we can learn is how they made healing a civic duty-something everyone was part of, not just victims"*. This underscores a central theme of this thesis: the need for context-sensitive, culturally embedded models of reconciliation, Colombia's diversity calls for regionally tailored approaches that still honor collective memory and local agency.

These narratives collectively affirm an assertion that runs through the thesis: The construction of sustainable peace must involve survivors, perpetrators, civil society, and institutional actors healing, as the findings suggest, does not come from one memory shared by all but is brought about by negotiating diversely and sometimes opposed truths In this view, reconciliation is not a single point at end of linear history but rather an ever-changing conversation together that is grounded in shared vulnerability and mutual understanding

5.4.5 Preference for Localized Peacebuilding

A recurrent theme across interviews in both regions was a palpable distrust of state-led reconciliation mechanisms, which many respondents described as overly bureaucratic, politically

distant, and insufficiently responsive to the lived realities of those most affected by conflict. Rather than viewing reconciliation as something imposed from above, participants emphasized the value of community-driven initiatives that promote face to face dialogue, collective healing, and cultural restoration. These approaches, they argued, resonate more closely with Colombia's diverse social fabric and long-standing traditions of mutual aid and communal decision-making.

A 46-year-old community leader from Bogota, displaced from Choco during the conflict shared: *"We don't need another office in Bogota telling us what forgiveness should look like. What worked in my own town was when the church organized circles where victims and ex-combatants could speak, now shout. That's where the real work began."* Several respondents even referenced Rwanda's Gacaca courts as a potential model for Colombia not to replicate, but to inspire context-specific, locally grounded alternatives to formal transitional justice. These insights reflect a broader desire to reclaim agency in the reconciliation process, advocating for mechanisms rooted in cultural familiarity, interpersonal accountability, and long-term community involvement.

Chapter 6: Comparative Case Analysis

This Chapter explores how grassroots, and state led reconciliation mechanisms have shaped post-genocide recovery in Rwanda, offering insights relevant to other post-conflict societies. Through a comparative lens, it highlights the interplay between traditional practices, community-based models, and survivor-led initiatives in fostering healing, reintegration, and civic participation. Drawing on qualitative interviews and existing literature, it illustrates the transformative potential and ongoing challenges of embedding justice and memory within everyday life.

6.1 Post-Genocide Policies and Community Models

After the genocide era in which Tutsi people were massacred again. Rwanda has adopted hybrid reconciliation models both based on traditional culture and more aligned with modern states. A network of community-based courts styled on the pre-colonial justice system, Gacaca, has been established in the name of hearing guilt for genocide-related crimes. Despite complaints about due process (Clark 2010), Gacaca stressed truth-telling, confession, and reintegration over punishment or revenge-making restorative justice in contexts where the formal judiciary was not functioning.

'Umuganda' a reconciliation model used in Rwanda is a mandatory monthly community service day that has helped restore public infrastructure while reinforcing collective responsibility and civic participation. Instead of imposing top-down development, Umuganda has reactivated social bonds and redefined national identity through joint labor (Purdekova, 2015). Another reconciliation model used is Girinka Munyarwanda (One cow per poor family), it combines reconciliation and economic recovery by gifting cows to impoverished households. Beyond food security, the program has reintroduced community networks that existed prior to genocide through inter-household solidarity and animal exchange (Ansoms, 2010). These interventions demonstrate Rwanda's attempt to embed healing in everyday life.

AERG (Association des Eleves et Etudiantes Rescape du Genocide), formed in 1996 by student survivors, and its alumni counter per GAERRG, have emerged as a vital pillars of Rwanda's post-genocide reconstruction and psychosocial recovery. Far exceeding conventional survivor

assistance mechanisms, these organizations have institutionalized a model that merges education, psychological healing, civic engagement, and intergenerational leadership development into a cohesive system of community-based resilience. AERG's operational strategy is multifaceted: it administers academic scholarships, provides peer-based emotional support grounded in trauma-informed care, fosters structured mentorship networks, and nurtures future leadership among genocide survivors and their descendants. GAERG, leveraging the experience and institutional memory of alumni, plays a critical role in reinforcing these pillars through national advocacy, high-level policy consultation, and continued mentorship. Together, AERG and GAERG exemplify a model of what Lambourne (2009 terms "resilience-through-structure"-a concept referring to the process by which structural social institutions facilitate healing, empowerment, and civic agency in post-conflict societies.

These theoretical insights were supported by qualitative interviews conducted online in April - May 2025 across Gatsibo and Nyagatare districts, Rwanda, involving semi-structured interviews with both direct survivors and their descendant's genocide survivors who were current or former members of AERG or GAERG. As articulated by respondents, now pursuing master's abroad: "AERG functioned as a surrogate family, it supported my educational continuity amidst trauma, but more importantly, it restored a sense of collective dignity. The mentorship I received from older members who had survived similar experiences reshaped my aspirations and academic path"

Another participant, currently owning his own business and empowering youth in Gatsibo district, noted: "We came to understand that healing is not solely an emotional journey, it is political and generational. ERG taught us to transform memory into leadership, and that is why many of us are now empowering youths and contributing to national development frameworks" These accounts illustrate how AERG and GAERG operate as intergenerational bridges, embedding trauma recovery within frameworks of educational and civic advancement. The organizations' mentorship models offer survivors a psychologically safe environment to develop reciprocal support systems and cultivate long-term social responsibility. This system can play a facilitating role in mitigating the ongoing mental trauma for genocide while facilitating the social and political affiliation of young survivors in the national context.

They are equal in prestige as the guardians of the collective memory. AERG and GAERG support active commemoration through annual remembrance ceremonies, community storytelling sessions and reconciliation programs embarked by the youth. This comes out as Hirsch's (2012) concept of "post memory": the idea that trauma survivors' heirs absorb and reassess the emotional and moral weight of their ancestors. With the promotion of youth-led storytelling and memorial activities, such organizations will break the silence and the stigma, particularly for those after 1994 without close connections to the histories of their families.

In the framework of transitional justice, AERG and GAERG initiatives connect Rwanda's national project on reconciliation with grassroots level, highlighting the lived experiences within the legal frameworks as means to promote healing and reintegration. The results show how grassroots, survivor-oriented, and youth-driven initiatives can be used effectively to deal with psychological needs which are often ignored by the official national machinery. As Lambourne (2009) argues, true peacebuilding involves connecting personal healing with general societal transformation and both AERG/GAERG demonstrate this approach.

It is through the country's community level that Colombia's institutional transitional justice has frequently had little impact, the Rwandan model offers an insight. Youth-led projects that integrate emotional healing with schools that may have been affected by war, community groups, and mentoring of different generations can complement the predominantly legalistic approaches. AERG and GAERG provide a useful blueprint for countries wishing to incorporate transitional justice into daily life, especially in societies that suffer from the legacies of intergenerational trauma, dismembering of memory, or distrust in institutions.

6.2 Impacts and Outcomes

These initiatives produced mixed but notable outcomes. Gacaca contributed to processing over one million genocide-related cases within a decade and fostered communal dialogue, but also retraumatized some survivors and posed risks of social retaliation (Ingelaere, 2016). Nonetheless, it contributed to local-level truth recovery and reintegration of perpetrators-two outcomes lacking in many Colombian communities interviewed for this research. One of the most critical

contributions of the Gacaca process was its emphasis on community participation and restorative justice. Unlike formal courts, Gacaca empowered ordinary citizens - designated as Inyangamugayo (persons of integrity) - to preside over cases, drawing upon traditional models of dispute resolution. This grassroots orientation fostered a sense of civic engagement and collective responsibility in the rebuilding of social order (Clark, 2010).

Survivors, many of whom had been denied justice for years, were given a platform to speak and be heard. While this did not erase the trauma, it often provided a form of narrative closure. A woman from Eastern province, Rwanda described her experience in a post-Gacaca community meeting, stating: *"I did not forgive because I forgot-I forgave because I understood who killed my entire family and why. That knowledge allowed me to breathe again."* Truth-telling and reestablishment of collective memory were central to Gacaca's outcomes. Through public testimony, communities engaged in a shared historical reckoning that helped confront denialism and foster a broader national consciousness. Consequently, these testimonies have become critical teaching materials, used in educational areas and commemoration centers to ensure the transference of history from one generation to the next (Mgbako, 2005).

Another notable effect was the reintegration of perpetrators, particularly those who were willing to admit guilt and ask for forgiveness. Lowering the sentences for those who confessed and agreed to serve the community in relation to the crimes committed allowed thousands to return to their villages. Even though there were initial difficulties and ambivalence, especially on the part of survivors, reintegration enabled the gradual restoration of social ties. In many communities both survivors and past perpetrators were involved in cooperative programs such as communal farming or repairing homes, steps that transcended initial concerns to foster practical cohabitation (Ingelaere, 2009).

Further, involvement in Gacaca activities yielded significant psychological impacts that helped in a broader healing process. Although some had barriers from traumatization, seeing events up close, including identifying victims and perpetrators, assisted in survivors reclaiming a sense of dignity and empowerment they had lost. Scholarship indicates that despite the shortcomings, Gacaca did provide therapy for some of the survivors who became active from passivity.

Umuganda, while often under-reported in peacebuilding literature, played a central role in bridging ethnic divides, especially in rural zones. Participants in Rwanda cited it as a "non-verbal form of healing," where survivors and ex-prisoners worked side by side. In Colombia, several respondents from Meta noted that a similar practice of communal labor - if adapted - could help rebuild fractured trust between communities and ex-combatants. Girinka Munyarwanda's symbolic and material impact remains significant, especially for windows and orphan-headed households. The communal gifting culture fostered belonging and interdependence dimensions absent in Colombia's cash-based reparations approach, which several Bogota respondents criticized as "Transactional and alienating".

Both AERG and GAERG have also contributed to trauma healing by planting the concept of grief and survival dialogue among youth into societal practice. Their forums, memorial events, and psychological workshops all provide a space for processing loss, feeling guilty, and piecing identity back together. According to the impact assessment published by GAERG (GAERG, 2022), their program participants do better than their nonmember peers in terms of emotional resilience, academic performance, and engagement in civil society. These results demonstrate that initiatives led by survivors of war can make a dramatic impact on post-conflict development. It is a field that has received less attention in Colombia.

6.2.1 Persistence of Genocide Ideology and Intergenerational Challenges in Rwanda

While Rwanda is globally recognized for its remarkable post-genocide recovery and reconciliation efforts, findings from this study indicate that significant challenges persist beneath the surface, particularly concerning the transmission of genocide ideology across generations. This section draws on semi-structured interviews conducted in Nyagatare and Gatsibo district from April - May in 2025 with survivors, and their descendants, and local officials. A purposive sampling method was used to identify participants with varied experiences related to memory, reconciliation, intergenerational trauma, and youth engagement.

A recurring theme among respondents was the subtle yet enduring presence of genocidal ideology within some families, which continues to be transmitted to children born long after the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. As one teacher noted: *"Some students still express attitudes they likely hear at home. It's not that they fully understand the genocide, but they carry inherited hatred passed on silently, in how parents talk about 'us' and 'them'."* Other respondents, who were below 10 years old during the 1994 genocide against the Tusti explained: *"We are told Rwanda is united now, but sometimes, even in my neighborhood, We feel tension. There are still families who speak in coded language, avoiding outright denial but still holding onto old divisions."*

These testimonies reveal that reconciliation remains incomplete at the micro-social level, where unresolved grievances, silence, and inherited trauma continue to shape interpersonal dynamics. This aligns with an argument that state-driven reconciliation in Rwanda often obscures local narratives and dissent, producing what is referred to as "coerced consensus" (Thomson, 2013). Similarly, it was highlighted how Gacaca courts promoted national healing on the surface but left space for undressed fears and ideological entrenchments in private domains (Clark, 2010). This phenomenon was further probed by psychological scholars who showed how trauma and ideological beliefs are not only passed down by DNA but also in the social environment. explanations for "epigenetics" in quotes) That is to say, it creates "intergenerational trauma loops" (Yehuda & Lehrner 2018).25 This recurrent cycle of psychological trauma and stress appears evident in the Rwandan context, where post-genocide youth are facing not just their own lives but also inherited psychological hardens and biases as a real living reality.

The findings suggest that Rwanda's reconciliation model, while effective in achieving macro-level stability, needs deeper engagement at the family and community level. Majority of respondents' genocide survivors and now engaged in community development in Nyagatare stated: *"We need reconciliation not just in policies, but in homes. Parents must be engaged as much as the youth. Silence, in many ways, is a form of denial."* This reinforces the need for trauma-informed, intergenerational peacebuilding programs that go beyond public commemorations and civic slogans. As it is argued, sustainable reconciliation requires a

framework of "resilience-through-structure," where institutional and familial systems reinforce each other in supporting healing and coexistence (Lambourne, 2009).

Therefore, in order to achieve fully inclusive peace, Rwanda must invest in community-based reconciliation dialogue channels and parental engagement projects as well as reform school-based curriculums for critical-mindedness. Without attending to the stillness of ideological divides, resolution risks degenerating into mere performance art rather than substantial change.

6.3 Comparison with the Colombian context

This thesis compares the Colombian and Rwanda post-conflict reconciliation experiences using the analytical criteria that was outlined in the methodology as: community participation in justice, cultural practices, psychological healing, and political-institutional context. These indicators guide the evaluation of each country's approach in addressing the legacies of mass violence.

6.3.1 Community Participation in Justice and Reconciliation

While Colombia's peace agreement with the FARC established formal frameworks for truth, reparation, and reintegration, many respondents described these measures as top-down, underfunded, and disconnected from grassroots realities. A 51-year-old schoolteacher from Bogota, whose mother was killed during paramilitary violence, remarked that *"peace was signed on paper, but it never entered houses."* She pointed to Rwanda's Gacaca as *"not perfect, but at least it asked people to speak and listen to each other."* Her standpoint highlights an increasing need for a participatory approach to justice and reconciliation, grounded in lived realities, not just bureaucratic rules. By contrast, Rwanda emphasized local participation through initiatives like Gacaca courts, which despite their imperfections enabled people to speak and listen to each other. This participatory model fostered a sense of ownership and civic involvement that was largely absent from Colombia's process.

6.3.2 Use of cultural and traditional practices.

Rwanda used traditional cultural tools to support its reconciliation process. These included community rituals, the exchange of livestock under the Girinka Munyarwanda program, national community services, and so on. These practices had strong cultural resonance and aimed at the social as well as economic reconstruction act earlier. In contrast, conventional peace and reconciliation in Colombia lack cultural ritual. The lack of collective cultural recuperation systems in Colombia illustrates a potential gap in the approach to healing broken communities.

6.3.3 Psychological healing and support mechanisms

Respondents in Colombia repeatedly emphasized that emotional and psychological trauma remains unaddressed, especially in rural areas with limited state presence. Rwanda, by contrast, adopted a more holistic approach that, despite challenges, sought to address both psychological and social dimensions of trauma through public rituals, community support programs, and collective dialogue. While not without flaws, Rwanda's community-centered healing initiatives underscore the importance of psychosocial restoration as part of justice.

6.3.4 Political and institutional context

Rwanda's reconciliation strategies were supported by a centralized and stable political structure, which ensured policy continuity and rapid implementation. However, this came at the cost of limited space for dissent and criticism. Scholars note that political control often blurs the lines between genuine community participation and performative compliance (Thomson, 2011; Loyle, 2017). Colombia, on the other hand, operates in a more decentralized and fragmented political context, where weak state presence especially in rural areas has hindered the delivery of peace promises. This contrast reveals that while Rwanda benefited from strong institutional control, it also restricted pluralism, whereas Colombia struggles with fragmented authority and limited capacity.

6.4 Lessons and Limitations

The experience of Rwanda after the genocide illustrates how community-based approaches can help restore the societies that are divided by conflicts. While frameworks such as Gacaca, Umuganda, and Girinka may not be readily applicable to other posts, the context of other post-conflict societies that deal with culture, politics, and history parameters may deter integration of the frameworks; the core values help Colombia, which still struggles with the effects of In Rwanda's strategy was a commitment to community involvement, promotion of cultural traditions, and provision of symbolic ways of reparation.

Sadly, however, the Gacaca courts were not spared criticism and were accused of a lack of impartiality and fair procedures. Community members' involvement in the Gacaca adjudication process contributed to a feeling of ownership and civic participation (Clark, 2010). In a comparable direction, Umuganda, the country's monthly day of service, restored civic engagement and mutual accountability, strengthening the foundations of non-material reconciliation (Wierzynska, 2004). Such undertakings demonstrate that the restoration of justice incorporates legal solutions and social and cultural mechanisms.

However, it should be noted down by these limitations. Rwanda's approach towards reconciliation was informed by a unified political system that controlled political discourse strictly and silenced opposition. Noted by scholars is the fact that the existing political structure restricted avenues for public contestation or development of alternative visions of justice (Loyle, 2017; Thomson, 2011). Community participation, which was publicly visible in many cases, occurred under a soft-handed action hence it was hard to differentiate between authentic participation and performative compliance. There remains ambiguity over whether significant reconciliation happened, and whether public silence was covering up trauma or dissent.

Despite all these barriers, locally tailored and culturally sensitive strategies have a better probability of succeeding in achieving sustainable peace compared to policies that focus on external or excessive administration. Knowing that Colombia has not been able to deliver the promises of the peace accord within backward areas where state influence is weak, Rwanda's story could provide useful examples. Rather than copying Rwanda's model, Colombia would

benefit from establishing reconciliation forums that rely on local practices and involve mass community leadership, as well as restorative dialogues. Other options might include grassroots truth-telling sessions, rural reconciliation forums, or faith-based reintegration initiatives, which could complement the state-conducted transitional justice processes (Abuchaibe et al., 2018).

Moreover, they might help to reduce the distrust that remains between historically disadvantaged groups and larger institutions. Similar to how Gacaca guaranteed a voice to survivors, Colombia's peace-building initiatives had the potential to promote bottom-up memory sharing and self-initiated storytelling by survivors paving the way for a vast variety of citizens to participate. This may, in turn, become a part of healing, personal and communal, giving rise to lasting social bonds and healing across the generations.

Figure 5: *Comparative Analysis of Post-Conflict Approaches in Rwanda and Colombia*

Comparative Analysis: Rwanda vs. Colombia

Post-Conflict Approaches and Mechanisms

Dimension	Rwanda	Colombia
Justice Mechanisms	Gacaca Courts (Community-based)	Special Jurisdiction for Peace (Institutional)
Community Rebuilding	Umuganda (Mandatory monthly service)	Fragmented local initiatives
Economic Restoration	Girinka Munyarwanda (Material & symbolic restitution)	Primarily financial compensation
Youth Engagement	AERG/GAERG (Survivor-led associations)	Limited structured programs
Narrative Control	Centralized & cohesive	Pluralistic & contested

(Mutoni,2025)

This Chapter examined Rwanda's post-genocide reconstruction framework to draw comparative insights into Colombia's post-conflict trajectory. While the contexts differ in scope, scale, and nature of violence, both nations face the complex challenge of rebuilding trust, promoting social cohesion, and responding to generational trauma. Rwanda's approach to community-based mechanisms and national policy offers valuable lessons for Colombia's stalled transitional

justice processes. Engaging local communities through cultural practices like Girinka Munyarwanda, Gacaca and Umuganda helps foster participation, healing, and accountability. These approaches are effective because they respond to both emotional and structural trauma, something often missed by top-down bureaucratic systems.

The analysis turned its attention to three major pathways: Gacaca Court, Umuganda, and the Girinka Munyarwanda Program probing their work in reconciliation, the social and economic recovery of society, and the reintegration of Ethnic Communities into Community. These models were under the microscope together with Colombia's current strategies.

Chapter 7: Discussion

This discussion synthesizes findings from Colombia and Rwanda to explore how diverse post-conflict societies confront intergenerational trauma, rebuild society, and adapt transitional justice mechanisms to local contexts.

7.1 Cross-Case Insights: Colombia and Rwanda in Dialogue

This multilateral research reflects on the paths of Colombia and Rwanda in rebuilding after conflict, highlighting differences and similarities within the context of their reconstructions. Both countries grapple with the challenges of intergenerational trauma, distrust in institutions, and the challenge of healing divided communities despite the opposing backgrounds. Colombia experiencing a long civil war and Rwanda the 1994 genocide. The analysis points out that contextualized and community-driven interventions are necessary to reconstitute shattered social attachments.

In Rwanda, the Gacaca courts, Umuganda (community service), Girinka (cow-giving), and programs like AERG and GAERG (student associations supporting genocide survivors) served not only as transitional justice tools but also as platforms for psychosocial healing, social cohesion, and civic trust (Clark, 2010; Ingelaere, 2016). These strategies changed the understanding of justice from a formal legal way to a community-based manner of reconciliation. In contrast, many survivors and their descendants in Colombia viewed peace processes as distant, drawn-out, and disassociated from the daily lives of those most affected. Survivors from settings like Meta and Bogota's cities described themselves as not feeling supported and under constant neglect.

The first thing that sticks out in both contexts is silence as a survival strategy in Colombia's second-generation participants and Rwanda's post-genocide youth. In Colombia, this applies particularly to those who have succeeded beyond their ancestral position in society, and in post-Genocide Rwanda, it is the young generation of survivors who take this lesson to heart. However, at the same time that Rwanda systematically breaks through speechlessness with state

support for youth-led memorials, structured school programs, and national dialogues, Colombia's somewhat fragmentary and underequipped endeavors in comparison This inequality reveals the transformational potential of areas on the other hand which are regulated by state and civil society, where people can come together to relievedly share what has happened to them in common.

7.2 Adaptability of Rwanda's Models to Colombia

Due to different historical, cultural, and political contexts, Rwanda's post-genocide reconciliation programs can't be directly copied over to Colombia. However, the principles of these mechanisms--especially grassroots participation in problem-solving and decision-making, symbolic restitution to victims by all those who have benefited from the war, integration of traditional values, and a strong emphasis on community ownership in both management and running of programs--seem full of potential for Colombia. For example, the Gacaca model of reconciliation can provide useful lessons to Colombia's transitional justice mechanisms, which have been criticized for bureaucratic inefficiency and lack of accessibility (Uprimny and Saffron 2006). Taking from an adaptation might be a local tribunal model, which now fits in with the circles of peacemaking Community or municipal councils for telling the truth, bridging this enormous gap between survivors and the institutions of Colombia's rural hinterlands.

Similarly, Umuganda-mandatory monthly community work in Rwanda-fosters collective responsibility and can be envisioned in Colombia as a platform for post-conflict reconstruction. While coercion must be avoided, voluntary community service projects tied to reparations and memory initiatives could encourage intergroup trust. AERG and GAERG's work in Rwanda-particularly their focus on intergenerational healing, education access, and survivor empowerment-offers a replicable framework for survivor and descendant support networks in Colombia. These initiatives could inspire survivor-led collectives in Colombia focused on education, trauma-informed youth leadership, and advocacy. Yet, caution is warranted. Rwanda's centralized political system facilitated the implementation of nationwide programs. Colombia's decentralized and often fragmented governance presents a different challenge.

Moreover, any adaptation must be co-designed with Colombian communities, particularly Afro-Colombian, indigenous, and campesino populations, to avoid top-down impositions.

The cross-case comparison between Rwanda and Colombia reveals tension between cohesion and pluralism in post-conflict recovery. While Rwanda aimed at promoting social cohesion by consolidating a shared story and controlling a centralized reconciliation process, Colombia preferred an inclusive approach that acknowledged diverse stories and memories but failed in its execution. This divergence highlights an important question in transitional justice: *To what extent should post-conflict societies prioritize narrative unity versus memorialization plurality?* Based on this evidence, the best practice is to implement context-based solutions which strike a balance between various viewpoints. Rwanda's emphasis on reconciliation has received harsh criticism for limiting political permissions, but it created the pathway for general national healing by internalizing peacebuilding practices in communities, as described by Gready (2010) as "embedded reconciliation." As much as Colombia upholds democratic tenets with its varied approach, it sometimes finds it difficult to bring meaningful reconciliation, as it is the case in rural Meta where the government enjoys a limited influence.

The intergenerational findings further complicate traditional transitional justice frameworks. Both cases demonstrate that conventional timeframes for "transition" underestimate the generational persistence of trauma effects. As the data from second-generation descendants in both countries reveals, the psychological, social, and economic consequences of conflict are not confined to direct survivors but continue to shape identity formation, social trust, and economic opportunities decades later. This temporal extension challenges transitional justice theories that implicitly assume a relatively brief period of "transition" followed by normalized social relations. The dual role of silence in coping with and hindering the healing process implies the need to deploy "conspiracy of silence" interventions aimed at building a productive dialogue about traumatic events. This means intervention efforts should strive to educate the survivors through the protection strategies that they have put in place while still appreciating the importance of coherence with the narrative for the descendants.

One major theoretical implication relates to the intersection between legal justice and the process of social healing. Although the Gacaca courts were not perfect, they provided the Rwandan population with a sense of acknowledgment that was considered to mean more than the conventional systems of justice. By contrast, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in Colombia was likely to be perceived by participants as abstract and distant from the realities of daily life. The observed difference indicates that there is the possibility that there is an increase in the formal legal accountability for violations of human rights, which is known as the "Justice Cascade"

Viewed from a policy standpoint, the comparative study challenges the "ToolKit" approach commonly assumed, where standardized mechanisms are applied to various contexts without due consideration for their heterogeneity. While patterns from Rwanda's approach may have lessons to Colombia, careful consideration should be given to Colombia's political dynamics, cultural background, and historical experiences before their application. This indicates the need for a more adaptive approach where we keep the principles such as local ownership and cultural relevance, but we modify the methods of application.

7.3 Policy Recommendations

Drawing on the fieldwork in Colombia and comparative insights from Rwanda, this research offers the following recommendations:

7.3.1 Support Survivor-Led Organizations

Promote and fund survivors and descendant associations akin to AERG and GAERG, particularly in areas where institutional presence is weak. These groups can provide psychosocial support, education, and economic empowerment.

7.3.2 Strengthening Community-Based Justice

Encouraging the piloting of localized, restorative justice forums modeled on Gacaca, tailored to Colombia's diverse regions. These should include victim participation, offender accountability, and culturally relevant practices.

7.3.3 Facilitate Symbolic and Material Reparations

Beyond financial compensation, investing in symbolic acts of recognition such as renaming public spaces, building memorials, and restoring land. These measures help rebuild dignity and belonging.

7.3.4 Institutionalized Memorialization and Trauma Education

Develop national curricula and community programs that incorporate historical memory, intergenerational trauma education, and survivor testimonies-learning from Rwanda's school-based remembrance initiatives.

7.3.5 Encourage South-South Cooperation

Facilitate dialogue between Colombia and Rwanda policymakers, academics, and survivors to exchange lessons on reconciliation and development. South-South frameworks offer an alternative to Global North -centric transitional justice models.

7.3.6 Invest in Mental Infrastructure

Embed trauma-informed care into national healthcare policy. Collaborate with local NGOs, universities, and traditional healers to offer culturally appropriate mental health services, particularly in conflict-affected regions.

7.4 Contribution to Theory and Practice

This research contributes both theoretical and practically to the field of transitional justice and peacebuilding. Theoretically, it advances the argument that relational and cultural approaches to justice are not peripheral but central to post-conflict recovery. It critiques models that prioritize legal and institutional fixes while neglecting social repair and emotional healing. By integrating cross-regional fieldwork, this research adds to the comparative literature on post-conflict societies, especially between Africa and Latin America-a rarely studied pairing. It also highlights the importance of youth agencies and intergenerational memory in sustainable peacebuilding,

drawing attention to how trauma transmission shapes political trust, civic identity and collective futures.

Practically, this research provides actionable insights for policymakers, international organizations, and grassroots actors involved in Colombia's peace process further demonstrates the value of locally embedded, survivor-centered reconciliation models, and calls for a paradigm shift in how post-conflict societies conceptualize healing.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This research explored the applicability of Rwanda's community-centered post-genocide reconstruction mechanisms to Colombia's ongoing transitional justice processes. By drawing upon qualitative fieldwork conducted in Bogota and Meta which included semi-structured interviews with survivors, descendants, local leaders, and institutional actors. The research also employed a comparative case study approach to analyze how mechanisms such as Gacaca courts, Umuganda (community service), Girinka Munyarwanda (livestock-based restitution), and faith-based or survivor-led initiatives might inform and adapt to the Colombian context. The findings revealed four key insights with implications for both academic discourse and policy formulation.

First, intergenerational trauma and silence are deeply rooted in Colombia, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. Participants frequently described an atmosphere of fear, mistrust, and broken chain of memory transmission. These dynamics echo trauma transmission patterns identified in other post-conflict societies, where unresolved historical violence leads to disruption of emotional bonds and trust (Yehuda & Lehrner, 2018; Hirsch, 2012). In both Rwanda and Colombia, such trauma limits truth-telling, reconciliation, and civic reintegration- especially when institutional support mechanisms remain weak or overly formalistic.

Second, top-down transitional justice mechanisms Colombia- particularly the Jurisdiction Especial para la paz (JEP) were often characterized by participants as bureaucratic, slow-moving, and emotionally detached. While many recognized the importance of legal accountability, there was a broad consensus that these mechanisms lacked cultural resonance and emotional proximity. In contrast, Rwanda's Gacaca courts, though not without criticisms, were locally embedded and participatory, blending symbolic justice with restorative goals (Clark, 2010). This study found that Colombians expressed a preference for grassroots, faith-based, or community-led efforts, which offered more accessible and spiritually resonant pathways to healing and acknowledgment.

Third, Rwanda's post genocide innovations offer context-sensitive but transferable principles that Colombia could adapt. Practices such as Umuganda institutionalized monthly community service demonstrate how civic engagement can be harnessed to foster belonging, mutual accountability, and post-conflict cohesion (Ndagijimana, 2018). Similarly, Girinka munyarwanda, which provides livestock to vulnerable households as a form of social and economic restitution, illustrates how material support can be symbolically and practically linked to dignity restoration. Such initiatives do not replace legal justice but complement it by targeting structural inequalities and rebuilding the social fabric.

Fourth, there was a pronounced call for trauma-informed education, locally grounded restitution, and survivor-ex combatant reintegration spaces in Colombia. This aligns with a growing body of literature emphasizing the need to center survivors' voices and lived experiences in transitional justice processes (Lambourne, 2009; Duthie, 2017). Participants expressed frustration with tokenistic or externally imposed reconciliation agendas for younger generations to transform inherited trauma into agency. Rwanda's integration of genocide education, memorialization, and youth civic programs offer valuable, though not unproblematic, models of how to this (Buckley-Zistel, 2006).

The methodology used in this study is a combination of qualitative interviews, policy and discourse analysis, which proved especially useful in uncovering how people personally experience reconciliation and justice. By centering local voices and experiences, this study highlights that transitional justice must include more than legal or institutional areas but it should also consider emotional, cultural, and symbolic elements that are often overlooked in technical approaches.

Conclusively, this thesis argues that while Rwanda and Colombia differ in their historical trajectories and sociopolitical configurations, they intersect deep profound psychosocial and structural scars left by conflicts. Both countries continue to grapple with the lingering impacts of conflict, most notably, large-scale displacement, intergenerational trauma, persistent stress and loneliness, fragmented identities, and erosion of interpersonal and institutional trust. These

shared experiences point to a critical imperative: transitional justice must be localized, trauma-informed, and responsive to the lived realities of survivors and their descendants.

These findings are based on fieldwork conducted in both countries, using semi-structured interviews with survivors, their descendants, government and non-governmental leaders. The narratives that were shared illuminate how trauma is not only a psychological struggle but also a social and economic force that extends across generations.

A first-generation genocide descendant in Gatsibo reflected: *"We grew up with the silence of our parents, but we also inherited their fears. Even now, trust is difficult, sometimes I ask myself if true reconciliation has reached our homes."* In Colombia, a youth whose family was displaced by paramilitary violence shared: *"We live with stories that are not ours, but they define our future. In my community, people still don't feel safe to speak openly. Forgiveness is talked about, but fear is everywhere".* Such reflections exemplify what (Alexander Hinton, 2010) calls the *"transmission of terror,"* where collective memory and emotional residue shape the social fabric of post-conflict life. Additionally, respondents in both countries reported how conflict constrained their educational and professional choices, an often-overlooked dimension of transitional justice. In Rwanda, many youths were forced into available jobs rather than those with their aspirations due to the economic effect of the genocide. In Colombia, widespread disillusionment with political institutions led some young people to avoid careers in governance altogether. These responses reflect what (Erin Baines, 2017) terms *"survivor agency,"* wherein individuals navigate structural violence and economic marginalization by crafting narratives of resilience and practical compromise.

Rwanda's post-genocide recovery particularly through community-based mechanisms such as Gacaca courts and youth-led associations like AERG offers powerful lessons. However, it also reveals the limitations of overly state-centric narratives that may suppress dissent or overlook family-level complexities. Meanwhile, Colombia's evolving frameworks such as the Victims' Law and Truth Commission demonstrate a cautious but growing openness to plural memory, dissenting voices, and youth engagement. As stated, sustainable peace requires *"resilience-*

through-structure" where institutional frameworks are built around community dynamics, not above them (Lambourne, 2009).

Several Rwandan respondents expressed admiration for Colombia's pluralistic approach. One youth leader in Gatsibo observed: *"We have achieved peace, yes, but have we heard everyone? Colombia's experiences show that reconciliation feels at peace and often involves discomfort, not just unity."* Such cross-contextual insights suggest that reconciliation must extend beyond symbolic gestures or commemorative rituals. Instead, it must be a deeply embedded and ongoing process, one that acknowledges emotional labor, nurtures intergenerational dialogue, and carves space for healing amidst disagreement.

8.1 Scholarly and Practical Significance

From an academic perspective, this research adds to the growing body of literature calling for decolonized and non-western models of transitional justice (Shanks et al., 2022; Shaw, Waldorf, & Hazan, 2010). It challenges normative paradigms that prioritize formal judicial mechanisms, arguing instead for culturally embedded frameworks that respect survivor agency, emotional restoration, and collective memory (Lambourne, 2009; Mutua, 2015). Practically, the study underscores how Rwandan initiatives such as Gacaca and Umuganda offer key insights into restorative justice, participatory healing, and social reintegration.

These models adapted thoughtfully inform Colombia's evolving peace strategies. For instance, survivor-led networks like AERG and GAERG in Rwanda have successfully created trauma-informed spaces for education, economic reintegration, and youth-led memory initiatives, breaking cycles of inherited trauma (Clark, 2014; Ingelaere, 2016). Moreover, this study highlights the potential South-South learning in peacebuilding-an emerging field emphasizing the exchange of experiential knowledge and alternative epistemologies between post-conflict societies in the Global South (Atehortua & Cante, 2020; Mutua, 2015).

8.2 Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. Fieldwork in Colombia was conducted in two key regions - Bogota and Meta - strategically chosen for their socio-political significance in the post-conflict landscape. However, these regions do not represent the full geographical, ethnic, and historical diversity of Colombia's conflict-affected territories. As such, while the findings offer valuable insights, they should not be overgeneralized across national context.

The language barrier was a notable methodological constraint, as I am not a fluent Spanish speaker. Thus, interviews in Colombia were conducted with the support of trained interpreters. Although an interpreter mediated interview helped bridge this language gap, they might have resulted in the loss of subtle meanings, emotional tones, and culturally grounded expressions (Squires, 2009). This may have affected how openly participants shared their experiences, and how well those nuances were captured during transcription and analysis (Temple & Young, 2004). To reduce these challenges, interpreters were trained in trauma-informed methods and confidentiality. Interview themes were regularly cross-checked with other sources to ensure reliability.

Additionally, the structural and political symmetries between the two case studies introduce comparative limitations. Rwanda's reconciliation framework operates within a highly centralized and state-led context, while Colombia's approach is more pluralistic but often fragmented. These differences complicate direct policy or practice comparisons, particularly regarding the scalability of community-based mechanisms and the role of dissenting narratives in each country's transitional justice process.

Despite these constraints, this study adhered to high ethical standards and methodological integrity, including culturally sensitive engagement, informed consent, and psychological safeguarding when discussing trauma (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008). These limitations, rather than undermining the research, highlight productive areas for further inquiry such as expanding comparative studies to additional regions, improving linguistic inclusivity, and deepening longitudinal engagement with survivor communities across generations.

8.3 Directions for Future Research

Future research could broaden the comparative lens to include other post-conflict contexts-such as South Sudan, Guatemala, or Bosina-where local peacebuilding intersects with state structures. Longitudinal studies tracking second-and third-generation survivors in both Rwanda and Colombia would be particularly valuable for understanding memory, resilience, and civic transformation over time. There is also a need for interdisciplinary work that combines trauma studies, education, and digital media to understand how youth in post-conflict societies engage with inherited memory and healing. In Colombia, further exploration of Afro-Colombian and Indigenous approaches to reconciliation could deepen the cultural scope of peacebuilding research.

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Appendix A: Codebook

Themes	Codes	Definition	Examples
1. Nostalgia and displacement	Loss of ancestral land	Emotional and spiritual disruption due to forced separation of land	"We used to gather every Sunday to cook together... Now everyone is scattered." 70-year-old farmer, Meta
	Disruption of communal life	Breakdown of traditions, shared routines, and social cohesion	"We lost not just our crops... But our everyday rhythm."
	Cultural dislocation	Detachment from inherited practices and intergenerational knowledge	"My grandson asks me where we're from, and I don't know what to say anymore."
2. **Calls for Restitution and Reintegration**	Unfulfilled promise of separation	Perception that government failed to deliver promised compensation	"They told us the land would be returned. That was seven years ago."
	Bureaucratic disillusionment	Frustration with ineffective state mechanisms	"We still rent land that once belonged to our grandparents."
	Exclusion from peace process	Feeling of being sidelined in normal reconciliation efforts	"Justice and support were never delivered."
3. Silence as a survivor strategy	Intergenerational silence	Trauma passed down through a culture of not speaking	"Growing up, that silence grew inside our house. We all felt the weight."
	Silence as emotional coping	Use of silence to protect self and others from trauma	"He'd just shut down and change the subject."
	Barrier to healing	How silence obstructs emotional processing and connection	"Without space for dialogue... Healing remains distant."

4. Mult-actor narratives	Paper forgiveness	Institutional forgiveness that lacks emotional or social acceptance	"We're forgiven on paper, but not in the heart of the community." Former FARC combatant
	Institutional disconnect	Gaps between government efforts and community expectation	"You were not here when we suffered. Why now?"-Victim assistance official
	Comparative learning	Recognition of Rwanda's model as a valuable reference	"They made healing a civic duty something everyone was part of." Government official
5. Preference for localized peacebuilding	Community - driven healing	Emphasis on local, participatory reconciliation practices	"What worked was when the church organized circles for dialogue."
	Cultural accountability	Reconciliation rooted in local customs and relationships	"We don't need another office in Bogota telling us what forgiveness looks like."
	Inspired by Gacaca	Mention of Rwanda's Gacaca as an adaptable community justice model	"Not to replicate but to inspire grounded alternatives."

Appendix B: Interview Guiding Questions (Rwanda)

Interview Guiding Questions (Rwanda)

Title: *Analyzing the Intergenerational Effects of Conflict on Survivors and its Impact on their Decision-Making and Development: A Case Study of Colombia with Rwanda as a Model for Peace and Economic Building*

Consent Declaration

This study aims to understand how Colombia's armed conflict has impacted survivors and their descendants across generations, shaping their decision-making, socio-economic conditions, and psychological well-being.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time without consequences. Your responses will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. By proceeding with the interview, you acknowledge that you have been informed about the study's purpose, your rights as a participant, and your ability to withdraw from the interview at any time. The researcher will have access to interview recordings, which will not be published or shared outside of the study. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to ask before the interview begins.

Do you understand the information provided above?

- Yes
- No

Do you consent to participate in this study?

Yes
No

Do you consent to the audio recording of this interview?

- Yes
- No

Participant's name:

Signature:

Dates:

Researcher's name…..

Signature ……

Date …..

Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at diane.mutoni01@universitadipavia.it

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. What is your age?
   - **i. ☐ 20-29**
   - **ii. ☐ 30-39**
   - iii. ☐ 40-70
2. What is your gender?
   - **i. ☐** Male
   - ii. ☐ Female
   - iii. ☐ Other / Prefer not to say
3. Are you a survivor, or child of a survivor of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi?
   - a. Direct survivor
   - b. Child of a survivor
   - c. Both

4. Where do you currently live?
   - a. Rural area
   - b. urban area
5. 5. What is your occupation?
   - a. ☐ Government official
   - b. ☐ Community leader
   - c. ☐ Business owner
   - d. ☐ Student
   - e. ☐ Farmer
   - f. ☐ Unemployed
   - g. ☐ Other (please specify) __Internship___/self employed_/Non profit

Intergenerational Impact for first and second generation

1. What did your parent(s) experience during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi?
2. How do you think those experiences affected their lives afterward?
3. Did your parents share their experiences during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi with you?
4. What exactly did they tell you about their experience?
5. Have those experiences influenced your own life? If yes, how?
6. Do you think your family trauma has been passed down to you? If yes, in what ways?
7. What challenges do you face as a descendant of the Genocide against the Tutsi survivor that others might not face?
8. How has the government of Rwanda supported you and other descendants?

Psychological and Social Effects (for all participants)

9. Has your family history affected your ability to trust people outside your immediate circle? If yes, how?
10. What personal or family strategies have helped you cope with your family's past?
11. Do you think Rwanda has done enough to support the mental health of survivors and their descendants? Why or why not?
12. Have you or your family members faced emotional or mental health issues related to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi? If yes explain

Economic and Development Impacts (for all participants)

13. Has your family's experience during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi impacted your education or job opportunities? If yes, how did it impact your education or job opportunities?
14. Have you or your family faced any challenges accessing land, job, or education due to your background?
    - Yes
    - No

    If yes, explain……

15. How has your family's experience influenced your career or future goals?

Reconciliation and peacebuilding (all participants)

16. Have you participated in reconciliation or healing programs (such as AERG, Itorero, and Ndi Umunyarwanda)? If yes, what impact did it have on you?
17. Do you think Rwanda's reconciliation efforts (like Umuganda, Gacaca, and Girinka Munyarwanda have helped people in your generation? Why or why not?
18. What are the biggest challenges to reconciliation among the young generations in Rwanda?

Appendix C: Interview Guiding Questions (Colombia)

Interview Guiding Questions (Colombia)

Title: *Analyzing the Intergenerational Effects of Conflict on Survivors and its Impact on their Decision-Making and Development: A Case Study of Colombia with Rwanda as a Model for Peace and Economic Building*

Consent Declaration

This study aims to understand how Colombia's armed conflict has impacted survivors and their descendants across generations, shaping their decision-making, socio-economic conditions, and psychological well-being.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time without consequences. Your responses will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. By proceeding with the interview, you acknowledge that you have been informed about the study's purpose, your rights as a participant, and your ability to withdraw from the interview at any time. The researcher will have access to interview recordings, which will not be published or shared outside of the study. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to ask before the interview begins.

Do you understand the information provided above?

- Yes
- No

Do you consent to participate in this study?

Yes
No

Do you consent to the audio recording of this interview?

- Yes
- No

Participant's na

Signature…..

Dates…… ..

Researcher's name…..

Signature ……

Date …..

Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at diane.mutoni01@universitadipavia.it

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. What is your age?
   - ☐ 20-29
   - ☐ 30-39
   - ☐ 40-70
2. What is your gender?
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female
   - ☐ Other / Prefer not to say
3. What is your relationship to the armed conflict?
   - ☐ Direct survivor (experienced conflict firsthand)
   - ☐ First-generation descendant of a survivor (child of a survivor)
   - ☐ Second-generation descendant (grandchild of a survivor)
4. What is your highest level of education?
   - ☐ No formal education
   - ☐ Primary school
   - ☐ Secondary school
   - ☐ University degree
   - ☐ Postgraduate degree
5. What is your occupation?
   - ☐ Government official
   - ☐ Community leader
   - ☐ Business owner

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Farmer
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Other (please specify) _Private sector _____

6. Where do you currently live?
   - ☐ Rural area
   - ☐ Urban area

Section 2: Intergenerational Impact (For First- and Second-Generation Descendants)

7. What challenges did your parents or grandparents face during the armed conflicts, and how did these shape their lives afterward?

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8. How did the above challenges influence your life choices on education, work, and relationships?

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9. Do you think the trauma from the conflict has been passed down in your family? If yes, how?

10. What specific challenges do children or grandchildren of conflict survivors face that others might not?

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11. Have your family members talked to you about their experiences of the conflict? If so, how has this shaped your perspective on reconciliation and future aspirations?

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12. Do you think there is enough help for descendants of conflict survivors? What additional support would you like to see?

Section 3: Psychological and Social Effects

13.Has the conflict affected your ability to trust people outside your immediate family or community? If yes, how?

14. Have you or your family members faced mental health challenges linked to the conflict? If yes, what are some of those challenges?

15. What have you or your family done to cope with the effects of the conflict?

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16. Do you think Colombia is doing enough to help people with the long-term mental health effects of the conflict? Why or why not?

Section 4: Economic and Development Impact (all participants)

17. How has the conflict affected your or your family's financial situation (e.g., access to jobs, land, financial security)?

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18. Have you or your family had difficulties getting an education because of the conflict? If yes, what difficulties did you face?

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19. How has your family's experience with the conflict influenced your career or job choices?

Section 5: Reconciliation and Peacebuilding

(All participants)

20. What policies or programs do you think would help in Colombia's post-conflict recovery?

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21. Have you taken part in any reconciliation or peacebuilding programs(such as community healing, community integration program, truth-telling forum? If yes, what specific outcome did you observe?

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22. What do you think are the biggest barriers to peace and reconciliation in Colombia today?

Government officials and Organizations

23. What recommendations do you have for improving reconciliation, trauma healing, and economic development for conflict survivors and their descendants?

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24. What has the government done to support survivors and their families after the conflict?

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25. Do you work/support specifically with second-generation survivors? If so, how are their needs different?

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26. Are you aware of Rwanda's post-genocide recovery efforts, such as Gacaca courts, Umuganda (community service), and Girinka (economic empowerment programs)?

    ☐ Yes

    ☐ No

27. Only if you answered question 33. Do you think Colombia could benefit from adopting similar reconciliation and development programs? Why or why not?

Section 6: Direct Exposure to Conflict (For Survivors Only)

28. Were you forced to leave your home during the conflict? If so, where did you relocate?

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29. What are some of the challenges faced in rebuilding?

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30. How did the conflict impact your daily life at the time?

31. What were the biggest struggles you faced immediately after the conflict?

32. Have you received any help (psychological, financial, legal) to help rebuild your life? If yes, what kind?

33. To what extent was that help sufficient for you, and if it wasn't, what did you lack?

34. How has the conflict influenced your long-term decision-making (e.g., career choices, relationships, political beliefs)?

Section for Ex-Combatants

1. What motivated you to join the armed group during the conflict, and how do you reflect on that decision today?

2. How has your participation in the conflict affected your relationship with your family, especially your children or younger relatives?

3. In what ways has your past as an ex-combatant influenced your reintegration into society economically, socially, and psychologically?

4. Have you taken part in any reintegration, reconciliation, or trauma healing programs? If yes, what impact have they had on your personal development and your family's well-being?

5. What message would you like to share with future generations about your experience and the lessons learned from the conflict?