

Exploring Family Conflict: Issues Social Workers Deal within Jimma City Woreda Court, Ethiopia

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Abstract - The goal of this study was to look into family conflict and the issues that social workers in Jimma City's woreda court deal with. The qualitative research approach with case study design was utilized to answer the research question and satisfy the study objective. To acquire relevant data, key informant and in-depth interviews were conducted. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Throughout the research procedure, research ethics such as informed permission, anonymity, dignity, privacy, and confidentiality were rigorously maintained. Family conflict issues dealt with by social workers in Jimma city woreda court include divorce, property disputes, and child abuse. According to the findings, the presence of social workers in the courtroom aided the trial process on the one hand and advocated for victims' rights on the other. As a result of the study, the court personnel were advised to pay special attention to social workers and their profession.

Keywords: Court, Family Conflict, Social Work

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Family conflict is a global problem. It can happen between husband and wife, parents and children, siblings, or extended family members including grandparents, aunts, and uncles. For various reasons, family conflict differs from other types of conflict. The first reason is that family relationships are characterized by high levels of emotion, which exacerbates disagreements. Second, family members are bound by long-term commitments that require them to connect with one another on a daily basis. Furthermore, families are frequently secluded, adhering to their own set of laws and opposing outside influence. As a result of these traits, family conflicts can be painful, complicated, and long-lasting (Malek, 2013).

Despite the fact that many families try to suppress or avoid conflict, it might lead to divorce (Aye, *et al.*, 2016). Family disagreements can lead to parental disengagement and negatively impair children's cognitive competency via intensifying disruptive conduct (Cleak, Schofield, & Bickerdike, 2014). It can also lead to emotional, financial, and parental problems. Family disagreement, in severe circumstances, can lead to violence, causing physical, psychological, and social problems for family members, particularly children and parents (Cleak, Schofield, & Bickerdike, 2014). Both formal and informal strategies are

effective in resolving family issues. According to Macfarlane (2007), the formal one is carried out in court through litigation with official government recognition and is more closely investigated and monitored for signs of impartiality, entrenched injustices, and lack of due process. Informal systems are thought to be more adaptable and responsive than legally controlled systems in terms of application and development. Informal systems, on the other hand, are less bureaucratic but less uniform, and practice is more likely to differ across generations and areas (Macfarlane, 2007).

There has been a paradigm shift in the way the judicial system handles most family problems, particularly those involving children, over the last two decades. A more collaborative, interdisciplinary, and forward-looking family dispute resolution system has replaced the law-oriented and judge-focused adversary approach. It has also changed the way family law is practiced and the way family conflicts are handled by the legal system (Singer & Murphy, 2016). Since then, social workers have been viewed as professionals who can help families settle issues. As a result, the involvement of social workers in family dispute resolution has grown in importance in various regions of the world as a result of reflexive practices that evaluate social, psychological, and economic aspects of human life that underpin social justice and equality (Martin & Douglas, 2007).

In Ethiopia, the criminal justice system in general, and the court system in particular, are unfamiliar with social work as a profession and social workers as professionals (Wassie Kebede, 2019). However, investigations have revealed that social workers in various capacities are present in court, particularly in situations involving families and children (Seble Ayalew, 2016). To that purpose, this study was created to look at family conflict and the challenges that social workers in Jimma City's woreda court are dealing with.

B. Statement of the Problem

Despite the critical functions that social workers play in the courtroom, the Ethiopian government has paid them little attention thus far. This is reflected, for example, in the lack of a policy framework to assist social workers in contributing to the legal system. It is vital to emphasize that

in Ethiopia, there are no defined legal rules or procedures that govern social workers' professional actions, notably in the courts (Wassie Kebede, 2019).

Marshet (2013) looked at the practice of social workers and discovered that they serve a variety of roles in the courtroom, including middleman, advocacy, and in some cases, witness. Seble (2016) did a qualitative case study research in the same court where social workers provide intermediate, case management, guidance, and mediation services to victims and children in custody. Mubarek (2013) discovered that social workers provide multi-dimensional and intermediary services in several Federal First Instance Court Benches in Addis Ababa in another qualitative study. Sitina Bereda, (2017) recently completed an exploratory study in Addis Ababa that focused on the social work profession in the juvenile justice system and discovered intake screening, facilitation, mediation, and reintegration.

Despite the fact that various studies have been undertaken on the function of social workers in court settings, none of these studies have individually examined the family conflict issues that social workers deal with. As a result, the goal of this study was to look at family conflict and the challenges that social workers in Jimma City's woreda court are dealing with.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Family Conflict

Family conflict is one of the most common types of conflict that occurs in today's society (Aye, *et al.*, 2016). Family conflict, according to Malek (2013), occurs inside a family between spouses and wives, parents and children, siblings, or extended relatives such as grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Family conflict is a conflict that arises in a family group as a result of the dynamic forces and energies that flow in different ways among family members, both verbally and nonverbally. Because the members' interactions produce constant conflicts, the presence of a dispute in the group is quite typical (Azcona, 2012).

When family members have opposing viewpoints or opinions, family disputes can arise. When people misinterpret each other and leap to the wrong conclusion, conflicts can arise. It's natural for people to disagree with one another from time to time. When disagreement persists at home, though, it can harm relationships and produce stress, sadness, anxiety, and resentment (Estevez, 2019). Family conflicts that are not peacefully handled can escalate to more serious types of disruptive behavior and parental disengagement, both of which have negative consequences for the entire family and children (Cleak, Schofield, & Bickerdike, 2014).

Financial restrictions, sexual problems, neglect of emotional, physiological, financial maturity, and family encumbrances prior contacting marriage, psychological

problems, social, and other elements may all contribute to family conflict (Edinyang, 2012). Marriage breakup causes three crises in most families: an emotional crisis, an economic crisis, and a parenting crisis. When a family's unity breaks down, both the spouses and their children are experiencing tremendous emotional turmoil (Payne, 1997).

Family conflicts, on the other hand, can generate significant pressures such as worry, as well as long-term health impacts such as high blood pressure, immune system suppression, premature aging, and increased chances of mental diseases such as anxiety and depression (Fabricius & Luecken, 2007). Conflicts between family members have significant psychosocial consequences for children, including insecure attachment styles, behavioral issues, health-threatening behaviors, cognitive and social deficiencies, psychological discomfort, poor academic achievement, and low self-esteem (Borst, 2015).

A family conflict's intensity is a crisis. It is common to experience numerous crises during the course of a family's lifetime. Conflict, on the other hand, is used to resolve or assist in the resolution of crises and intense conflicts in order to avoid group separation, divorce, or disintegration. The termination or fragmentation of a family always causes a wide range of symptoms in children and teenagers (Azcona, 2012).

There has been a paradigm shift in the way the judicial system handles most family problems, particularly those involving children, over the last two decades. A more collaborative, interdisciplinary, and forward-looking family dispute resolution system has replaced the law-oriented and judge-focused adversary approach (Singer, 2008). This provided an opportunity for social workers to assist families in dispute. Since then, social workers have been viewed as crucial individuals capable of assisting family benches through counseling, case management, assessment, and crisis intervention.

B. The Role of Social Work in Family Conflict Resolution

The field of social work is noted for its ability to resolve conflicts in an inclusive and successful manner. Mediation, facilitation, conflict counseling, dispute system design, management, and arbitration are all forms of conflict resolution that social workers can perform. As a result, social workers help persons in conflict with preventative, restorative, substantive, procedural, and decision-making services (Mayer, 2013). In comparison to the legal profession, social workers, like other helping professions, have an advantage when it comes to dispute resolution processes since they have a practical knowledge of human development and interpersonal connections. Social workers, like other helpful professions, are taught to empathize with people in a variety of situations (Kelly, 2014).

To fulfill the ethical many of service to clients and to acknowledge the value of human connections, social

workers must push for much more kinds of appropriate and healthy dispute resolution, such as mediation. They assist in the informal and formal resolution of issues between individuals or families in partnership with other experts and community volunteers (NASW, 2017).

When it comes to resolving conflicts, social workers use a variety of methods. Restorative justice and therapeutic jurisprudence are two of them, and they are all important in social work practice. The restorative justice approach is a process in which all parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to decide collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future. It is thought to strike a balance between the need to hold offenders accountable for their actions and the need to accept and reintegrate them into society, whereas therapeutic jurisprudence places a strong emphasis on the strengths of the parties involved. This strategy is adaptable enough to allow for forgiveness and apologies to be worked out (Sana Loue, 2018).

Rather than rendering a clear ruling in favor of one parent or the other, mediation considers the best interests of all family members. This method of conflict resolution, which is founded on the requirement of discussion, benefits both the children and their parents. As a result, it enables them everyone to find their position in new family circumstances, even if it is during an emotionally trying separation (Caratsch, 2014).

C. Models of Conflict Resolution

According to Kelly (2014), facilitative, transformative, narrative, and therapeutic models are used to resolve family conflicts around the world, depending on the type of conflict. Facilitative approaches concentrate on the needs and interests of individuals and parties in conflict, with the goal of identifying the parties' underlying wants and interests. Creative problem-solving strategies are employed in this model in order to develop a solution that meets the majority of the needs of all parties (Boullé, 2005).

Where violence has occurred and the woman feels safe enough to mediate, the transformational Model focuses on connections with the mediator, offering opportunity for parties to gain a greater understanding of each other's needs and concerns. Parties to a conflict are given opportunities to develop deeper empathy for one another, to notice and respond to each other's problems and challenges on both a personal and structural level, and to feel a common bond of humanity that contributes to moral growth (Boullé, 2005; Martin & Douglas, 2007).

The narrative mediation model, on the other hand, promotes the role of the mediator as a reflexive practitioner who actively contributes to the story of the mediation and abandons the pretense of neutrality by using storytelling to explore different interpretations of events according to dominant social and political influences by promoting the

role of the mediator as a reflexive practitioner who actively contributes to the story of the mediation and discards the pretense of neutrality. The mediator in this instance supports the parties in expressing their opposition against oppression in their lives. As a result, the mediator giving a clear message to the perpetrator that violence will not be accepted, openly naming any effort at intimidation, externalizing the problem, mapping, using advocates and support people, and shuttle mediation, where parties are seen separately, are all recommended (Boullé, 2005; Martin & Douglas, 2007).

The therapeutic models appear to be fit for social work since they conform to basic social work ideals such as client empowerment, self-determination, use of a systems view, process focus, and social justice commitment (Kelly, 2014).

D. Critical Conflict Resolution Theory

Critical Conflict Resolution Theory (CCRT) is a new area of conflict resolution theory, research, and practice that focuses on systematic disputes. While appreciating our old method, it is a new style of thought and practice (Hansen, 2008). Critical conflict resolution theory, according to English and Sweetman (2013), distinguishes between two types of critical thinking and critical theory. It also consists of three distinct functions of intellectual work and practices, all of which are concerned with systemic conflicts, or situations in which political, social, and economic inequalities are transformed into antagonistic, symmetric power relationships that are maintained and reproduced through violence.

According to Hansen's research, the concept and abilities of critical conflict resolution can assist social workers in fulfilling their roles as social justice advocates and assisting people in overcoming societal and interpersonal oppression through critical thinking and advocacy. According to the approach, mediators should look for power imbalances, sympathize with the underdog, and focus on assisting people in changing unfavorable relationships. It also necessitates the mediator's development of analytical thinking abilities and the promotion of critical views (Hansen, 2008).

In many ways, social work has always been about conflict and resolving conflict, according to a study done by Kelly (2014). Because conflict resolution is a basic competence in social work and mediation/conflict resolution is a burgeoning profession, it's a good idea to look into the advantages, disadvantages, and practitioner improvements connected with training in the field.

It is possible to think critically as a social work mediator using critical conflict resolution theory in order to help overcome social justice concerns directly related to oppression, which is a key social work goal. By resisting an unfair status quo, conflict resolution practice and theory originating from a critical framework pushes the social

work profession in a new and crucial direction (Hansen, 2008). Because critical conflict resolution theory is concerned with addressing social inequalities through critical thinking, social workers regard it as a foundational theory for dealing with family conflict. As a result, this theory was utilized to thoroughly investigate family conflict, which is an issue that social workers in Jimma city's woreda court deal with.

III. METHODS AND MATERIALS

A. Approach and Design

The primary goal of this study was to look into family conflict and the challenges that social workers in Jimma City's woreda court are dealing with. The study used a qualitative research approach to do this. The rationale for using this technique was that it allowed the researchers to gain a thorough understanding of the case or topic. This in-depth insight can only be gained through speaking with individuals personally, visiting their workplaces, and allowing them to relate their tales (Creswell, 2013). The researchers visited the site and collected the data directly within this framework.

In order to achieve the study's goal, an exploratory research design was used. Family conflict is a topic that social workers deal with, although little is understood about it, according to the literature. In this case, exploratory research design would be permitted in order to examine a phenomenon about which little or no information was available (Neuman, 2014).

The case-study method was used to gather thorough information about the subject. Because case study designs aid in understanding a current phenomenon in its real-life context, particularly when the distinction between phenomenon and context is blurred (Yin, 2014).

B. Description of the Study Area

The research was carried out at Jimma city, which is located in the Oromia regional state in the country's southwest. For the residents of southwestern Ethiopia, Jimma city serves as the hub of residential and business activities. In the Jimma zone, there are around 24 courts. Two of these courts are located in Jimma City (Jimma Zone High Court and Jimma City Woreda Court). Jimma City Woreda Court (JCWC) was a research location in Bacho Bore sub-city, a location known as "Yetebaberut" in Jimma city's core. The Juvenile Court/Custody Unit, Family Bench Unit, Defense Attorney Unit, Prosecutors Units, Social Work Units, and Crime Prevention Units together make up the JCWC, which covers an estimated 10,000 m² of land.

C. Study Participants Selection Procedure

Participants in the study were people who had prior knowledge of the investigation's topic. Individuals that

were directly or indirectly involved with the problem were also included in this study. They are social workers, lawyers, and family members in dispute who are attending court in JCWC for their cases. Face-to-face interviews were used to conduct the research. The researchers used the idea of data saturation to determine the magnitude of the participants.

This investigation was carried out using a targeted sampling strategy. In qualitative research, the inquirer picks individuals and settings for study on purpose since the participants contribute to a better comprehension of the research problem and key phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). As a result, the researchers utilized a purposive sampling strategy, which allowed them to select appropriate volunteers who could provide thorough information on the research issue. The participants were chosen based on the amount of information they could supply and their willingness to participate in the study as research participants.

D. Methods of Data Collection

To collect data in a qualitative case study, many data gathering approaches were suggested. Data formats, according to Creswell, can be divided into four categories: observations, interviews, documents, and video resources (Creswell, 2013). As a result, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews, key-informant interviews, and observation to gather relevant first-hand data.

E. Methods of Data Analysis

Data analysis is an important element of research because it allows researchers to communicate their findings in a way that allows readers to have a better grasp of the material acquired, extract meanings, and make conclusions (Creswell, 2014). Data analysis starts at the time of data collection to eliminate irrelevant data and continues after data collection to familiarize yourself with the data by rereading memos, examining in-depth interview data, categorizing and coding data, and arranging it into a theme (Creswell, 2014). To reflect the meanings of the acquired data, thematic analysis was applied. Thematic analysis was determined to be appropriate because it aids in the systematic identification, organization, and interpretation of patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

The researcher transcribed and organized all of the data collected from study participants while conducting this study. Through redundant hearing, researchers attempted to transcribe audio-recorded data into textual representations. The transcribed information was then translated from Afan Oromo to English. The data was interpreted into a meaningful whole after the themes were found and names were assigned.

F. Trustworthiness of the Data

Qualitative researchers consider member verification, triangulation, comprehensive transcription, methodical planning, and coding to ensure credibility (Gunawan, 2015). As a result, triangulation and peer debriefing procedures were utilized to ensure the reliability of data gathered from various participants via direct interview, document review, and observation. The raw data were cross-checked continuously throughout the data processing process as a result of this. Peer-debriefing was used to get feedback from another researcher in order to compare conclusions, address questions of bias, factual errors, competing interpretations, convergence of data and phenomena, and the emergence of themes, all of which are part of a long but crucial process for reaffirming credibility (Billups, 2014). As a result, friends' opinions and comments were used to assess the correctness of the findings.

G. Ethical Consideration

Ethical difficulties in qualitative research might arise prior to the study, during data collecting, data processing, reporting, and even after the study has been published (Creswell, 2013). As a result, ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the research procedure. To preserve the participants' privacy and confidentiality, interviews were held in secure locations. To protect the participants' anonymity, they were given phony names. Furthermore, after the research was completed, the recorded voices were carefully handled and eliminated.

IV. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Family conflicts are one of the social workers' intervention areas in the court, according to the study's findings. From a legal standpoint, family conflict is a broad notion that encompasses both civil and criminal issues. Child abuse is a criminal issue, while divorce and property disputes are civil ones.

The study's findings revealed that social workers in Jimma city's woreda court deal with civil and criminal family conflict cases on a regular basis. The woreda court deals with the majority of family disputes. When one of the disputing parties is dissatisfied with the woreda court's ruling, an appeal is filed to the zone court.

"In our court, we deal with issues between family members, including divorce, property-related disputes, and child abuse," W-1, an in-depth interview participant from woreda court, confirmed.

According to the following quotation, social workers in Jimma city's woreda court typically deal with family conflict situations. Divorce, property-related disagreements, and child abuse are the most common conflicts that social workers see among family members.

A. Divorce

Divorce is the most usually reported incidence of family conflict, according to the data collected from participants. J-1, a family court judge, stated that the number of divorce cases has been steadily increasing. "The main force is couples' socioeconomic position," he stated while adding. Poor communication, a lack of tolerance and respect, inappropriate sexual gratification, kin interference, and peer pressure were also listed as key causes of divorce by survey participants. One of the study participants, C-2, described her experience in this regard as follows:

We've had a wonderful friendship. Our marriage produced three children: two daughters and one son. My husband tried to display unusual conduct unintentionally a year ago. He always arrives at 12 a.m., but I have no idea with whom or where he spends his time. He turned a blind eye to us and ceased spending money on his own consumption. He doesn't want to talk about it. After a few years, I heard rumors that he was having an affair with another woman. Finally, he married that woman in a bigamous marriage, and it is for this reason that I have been in court.

This clearly demonstrates how the gradual emergence of odd behaviors, as well as a lack of peaceful mechanisms of settling differences, amplifies spousal conflicts and escalates them into irresolvable contradictions.

Such disagreements can sometimes be accompanied by physical violence, resulting in family breakdown. W-1, who was one of the participants in the in-depth interview, confirmed this;

The majority of divorce cases are reported to be emotionally charged. That is why couples are unable to determine the root of the problem. It was just an accusation, and it didn't stand up to scrutiny. After hearing such instances, judges recommend that disputes be resolved by peaceful ways. Furthermore, social workers provide counseling services and, on occasion, bring couples back to the table who were on the verge of breaking up.

The information gleaned from the preceding quote suggested that emotion has a larger role in precipitating the conditions for divorce. Regardless of whether or not a couple decides to divorce, judges advise them to settle their differences peacefully, and social workers assist them in identifying issues that lead to conflict and providing counseling.

"Among the numerous approaches used by social workers, mediation was the one and most commonly deployed family conflict resolution technique," said W2, a social worker and an in-depth interview participant. A social worker acts as a mediator by bringing both sides to the foreground and allowing them to communicate their issues without being influenced.

Divorce has a two-fold impact: on the one hand, it affects divorced couples, and on the other, it affects children's lives. Following a divorce, issues such as child custody and support will arise. To determine what is best for the child, social workers conduct an assessment. W3 stated that when it comes to child custody and maintenance, a social worker's responsibility is as follows:

When a marriage ends in divorce, we normally undertake an evaluation in accordance with the judge's decision; child custody and support concerns are frequently addressed. The court will now require the services of a social worker to do an in-depth evaluation of both couples' backgrounds and current conditions, as well as the child's best interests, and to recommend who or what would be best for the child. In the case of maintenance allowance, a social worker conducts an in-depth analysis of the spouses' income and delivers his or her findings to the court.

After family dispute has reached an irresolvable stage and divorce has occurred, social workers play an assessor function and undertake an evaluation on problems of maintenance and child custody. Above all, the child's best interests are at the heart of their evaluation.

B. Property Disputes

Partition of property is another sort of family conflict that a social worker may encounter. Property division does not always go smoothly and amicably. In this example, social workers were actively involved in resolving property conflicts in a calm manner.

According to key informants, the majority of property conflicts occur between siblings soon after their parents die. When discussing inheritance concerns and conflicts relating to the partition of property J-1, the following was said:

When parents die, family members have disagreements over how to divide their property. Women were denied inheritance rights in the early days, and only a male kid was permitted to inherit his parents' property. Gender equality is currently recognized in the constitution and other legal documents, and women have equal rights to men. Property can be owned, administered, and transferred by a woman. A social worker, as a human rights advocate, is also battling discriminatory policies and practices. In addition, the social worker worked with legal professionals to ensure that the contending parties received an equitable and fair share of the property.

As a result, a social worker plays an important role in resolving family issues. Ad hoc committees or groups of experts, as well as social workers, assist family members in getting their fair share. Despite the fact that the constitution declared gender equality, traditional and religious customs nevertheless dominated in some areas. In terms of legal transformation, some people may have a greater grasp of inheritance rights to some extent. W-1, a social worker who participated in an in-depth interview, cited civil law to show

how individuals are entitled to equal inheritance rights, even if the viability of the unborn child is taken into account. This demonstrates that social workers are aware of the inheritance right and are working to find a peaceful solution to property disputes.

Another sort of property dispute that a social worker deals with is a divorce property dispute between a husband and wife. Key informant C-3 stated in this respect,

A warranty letter was delivered to me to appear in front of the court. My wife was the one who made the claim. I was offended by her behavior. I'm not sure why she did it. I wasn't expecting our squabble to reach this point of no return. Our communication has worsened over time, and I despise speaking with her. Social workers attempted to mediate, but our relationship had already ended. Finally, a family court judge granted the divorce petition and ordered the property to be divided.

By visiting the clients' homes, social workers and other specialists carry out the court's ruling. Social workers assist persons in a family in having a fair or equal division of property.

C. Child Abuse

According to the findings of the study, long-term family conflict frequently leads to domestic violence. Women and children, as is well known, are the most common victims of domestic abuse. Family members, relatives, and neighbors could be the perpetrators. Child abuse is the single most important intervention area of social work practice in court proceedings involving family dispute. Children are abused psychologically, sexually, and physically by those in their immediate vicinity. Sexual abuse is defined by a family bench judge J-1 as any act that exposes a kid to sexual offenses such as rape, torture, or verbal harassment.

C-4, a sexual violence victim and one of the in-depth interview participants, described her rape experience and how social workers assisted her.

I don't want to remember that day because it was the day my hope, wish, ambition, and interest were dashed. Let me tell you about how he raped me (her eyes welled up with tears) ehrrrrrr... (She wiped her tears). He grew up in our house and might be considered a family member. When we saw him, he appeared to be a humble man, which is why I approached him brotherly. He went crazy, seized my hand, muffled my mouth, stripped me naked, and raped me all of a sudden (she bite her lip). But I was afraid to show my distress. What would I say about it? I'm not sure who I'm going to tell this to. I choose to keep it in the dark. My face shouted out when something happened to me, despite my best efforts to disguise my agony. My mother kept a close eye on me and once requested me to let her know if anything went wrong. I didn't have a preference, despite my fear of telling her. I was afraid to look her in the eyes.

Nonetheless, I decided to tell her, and she was interested in hearing and sharing my grief as well. She remained silent for a few minutes after hearing everything. She then drove me to the Women and Children's Bureau. The gentlemen urged me to come forward with the details of the case so that I may be subjected to additional inquiry and medical treatment. As a result, the family court judge assigned my case to the social workers. They spoke to me in a kind manner, showed me the route, and assisted me greatly in determining how I could proceed, where I should go, and what I should do. Now, due to my mother, the judge, and the social worker, I'm on the mend.

Despite the fact that children were raped, evidence showed that they were afraid to report the assault, which had harmed them emotionally, sexually, morally, and physically. The availability of a social worker at this point is critical because he or she gives psychosocial support that helps to heal the damaged personality. According to key informant J-1, the majority of child abuse cases are first investigated by the child protection unit before being submitted to the court for further inquiry. Some of the cases would be decided by the woreda court based on medical evidence, eyewitness testimony, and victim complaints. W-3, a social worker who took part in the in-depth interview, revealed why most cases of child abuse go unreported:

Because of fear of shame and discrimination, as well as community seclusion, the majority of child abuse incidents go unreported. If it is perpetrated by close relatives, such as her father or brother, it is possible that it will not be disclosed in order to protect the family from disgrace and incarceration. It's possible that the abuse would be reported if it resulted in a significant injury. The majority of the time, parents choose to address their problems with the help of local elders. The case will be directed to the court for adjudication if it goes beyond the elders' arbitration capacity. The social worker is supposed to do an evaluation, offer professional recommendations, and arrange child support programs whenever it appears in court. As social workers, we provide psychological support to victims and advocate for them to receive justice. We work closely with the victim until a decision is reached. If the youngster is afraid of appearing in court, we will act as an intermediary between the victim and the judge using CCTV cameras.

Because of cultural, environmental, and personal variables, the majority of child abuse instances go undetected, according to the information shown above. Previous all, the above quotation demonstrated how social workers are important experts who can assist victims by offering direct assistance and connecting them with the resources they require.

V. DISCUSSION

The study looked into family conflict and the issues that social workers in Jimma city's woreda court deal with. According to the findings, social workers perform a variety

of responsibilities in resolving family dispute through peaceful means. Social workers deal with divorce, property disputes, and child abuse situations while working in the courtroom.

Divorce is becoming a more common social problem that affects both the divorced spouse and their children. According to Adyam (2016), family mediators should provide scenarios and tales to clients in order to teach them about the impact of divorce on the divorced couple's scholastic achievement as well as their children's future relationships. Following a divorce, social workers' assistance is in high demand. Adoption, maintenance, child custody, and property division are among issues that arise following a divorce. In child custody, maintenance, and adoption proceedings, social workers conduct in-depth investigations and prepare findings for the courts. As a result, the social worker's report informs the court's decision-making process. In times of conflict, social workers also provide psychosocial counseling to the couples (Birhanu & Amaha, 2020).

Similarly, according to Seble (2016), social workers on the custody bench are obliged to offer extensive information about both parents and children based on home and visit assessments. Seble Ayalew, (2016) noted that social workers in child benches function as intermediary agents between the court and children who are victims of crime, which is in line with the current study. This research reveals that social workers provide psychological support to children who have been sexually abused before, during, and after a court hearing in order to protect and rehabilitate them (Birhanu & Amaha, 2020).

According to the findings, social workers are committed to safeguarding children from harm. Those social workers who work on sexual abuse benches, in particular, push for the victim's wound to be healed via just desert. Marshet Abate (2013) discovered that social workers on the victim bench serve as witnesses and experts to the court professionals, as well as advocate for the child. Similarly, there is a concept known as a one-stop center, which is a facility dedicated to providing complete care to children who have been sexually abused. Social worker practitioners coordinate service delivery teams that include health workers, legal experts, and psychologists in the case of one-stop centers. Children who have been sexually abused can receive free medical, legal, and psychosocial treatment at the center (Birhanu & Amaha, 2020).

Simultaneously, Sityana, (2017) and Marshet, (2013) found that social workers educate sexually abused children's families, counsel the kid, and provide group counseling in court and rehabilitation centers. Similarly, Rosicky & Northcott (2010) found that social workers assist and counsel children who have been abducted throughout separation and preparation for reunification with their other parents under international law. As a result, social workers

act as family counselors, assisting families and their children in coping with psychological and emotional issues. According to the findings of the study, property division disputes are widespread after spouses divorce. In this situation, social workers and legal experts collaborate to find a solution to the problem. Despite the fact that divorce is used, most social workers strive to promote peaceful relationships.

Critical conflict resolution theory was employed to provide a theoretical framework to support the study findings. This idea can be considered as an advantage since it allows practitioners, particularly social workers, to combine basic social work values and the concept of social justice in resolving conflicts that require critical analysis. Hansen proposes that in conflict situations, the mediator could apply critical conflict resolution theory to assist the parties in overcoming social injustice and power difficulties. Outside of traditional settings where a neutral third-party viewpoint is desirable or required, such as a mediator in court, critical practice can serve a specialized gap in the field of conflict resolution (Hansen, 2008).

VI. CONCLUSION

In every human encounter, conflict is an inescapable and unavoidable social phenomena. Any quarrel between husband and wife, parents and children, siblings, or extended families is referred to as family conflict. Both formal and informal techniques have been used to address family problems. In the courtroom, social workers play a critical role in resolving family disputes. Social workers, together with other specialists, deal with situations such as divorce, property division, and child abuse. As a result, the purpose of this study is to look at family conflict and the challenges that social workers in Jimma city's woreda court deal with.

Divorce, property-related issues, and child abuse are the most common family conflict problems that social workers rigorously deal with, according to the study's findings. Diverse social work sections were formed in the court to assist various types of clients. According to the findings of the study, social workers have played important roles in promoting social justice in conjunction with legal professionals, civil society organizations, and government agencies.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the investigation and the conclusions reached.

1. Through legal and material support, both the local and federal governments should promote social work practice in the courtroom. Effective and efficient social work services might be provided if certain conditions were met.

2. The criminal justice system should pay more attention to the field of social work. They must officially acknowledge and promote the social work profession, as well as the duties and contributions of social workers.
3. Professional social workers should be recruited and hired by the court administration, and they should be retained through incentive programs.
4. The school of social work should provide training on the role and responsibilities of social workers to actors in the criminal justice system, particularly lawyers. This type of training allows social workers to perform their jobs more successfully.
5. The social workers' association, in consultation with legal experts, should develop a clear set of guidelines for social workers' roles, obligations, and ethics.

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