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## FAMILY-OF-ORIGIN CONFLICT RESOLUTION PRACTICES AND QUALITY ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS AMONG TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS' STUDENTS IN UASIN-GISHU COUNTY, KENYA

<sup>1</sup>Yvonne Buyaki Moseti, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Jennifer K. Munyua, <sup>3</sup>Dr. Betty Chewen

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[Email: ymoseti@gmail.com](mailto:ymoseti@gmail.com)

### Abstract

*This study examined the influence of family-of-origin conflict resolution practices on the quality of romantic relationships among students in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The research was prompted by persistent relationship challenges among students, including trust issues, poor communication, and ineffective conflict resolution. Guided by family systems theory, the study adopted a convergent parallel mixed methods design, integrating cross-sectional survey and phenomenological approaches. The target population comprised 11,306 individuals, from which a sample of 392 respondents was selected using stratified, simple random, and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through questionnaires and in-depth interviews, with validity ensured through construct and content measures, and reliability tested using Cronbach's alpha. Analysis involved descriptive statistics frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, alongside linear regression to test hypotheses. Findings indicated a statistically significant relationship between family-of-origin conflict resolution styles and the quality of students' romantic relationships ( $R = 0.658, p < .001$ ). The study concluded that conflict resolution practices learned within families of origin significantly shape romantic relationship outcomes among TVET students. It recommends targeted psychosocial support and counselling interventions for students from conflictual family backgrounds to mitigate intergenerational cycles of maladaptive relationship behaviours.*

**Keywords:** Conflict Resolution Techniques, Romantic Relationships, Technical and Vocational Education and Training Institutions.



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## Introduction

Family-of-origin conflict resolution styles refer to the ways family members manage disagreements as recalled by individuals (Fernet, Hébert & Paradis, 2016). These styles influence children's adjustment, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills (Tahir & Quratulain, 2024). Dawson (2025) observes that such styles shape behaviours later reproduced in romantic, social, and professional relationships. In this study, conflict resolution refers to whether families used constructive communication, destructive patterns such as violence or child triangulation, or negotiation through affectionate repair. The study was conducted in Uasin Gishu County, home to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions such as the Eldoret National Polytechnic, Eldoret Technical and Training Institute, among others. The County has witnessed a concerning rise in student deaths linked to suicide, crime, and emotionally volatile romantic relationships. In 2023 alone, over 150 fatalities were reported in Kenyan universities and colleges, with several high-profile murders involving romantic partners (Kimuyu, 2025). These cases highlight the need to examine family-of-origin dynamics as possible contributors. Romantic relationships are central to young adults' emotional and psychological stability. However, unresolved family trauma affects stability by influencing emotional regulation, communication, and conflict resolution (Khosraviani, Davarani & Kazemian, 2025). Dysfunctional family practices such as

neglect, abuse, or parental loss increase risks of trust deficits and insecure attachments (Larson, Taggart-Reedy & Wilson, 2021). In Kenya, Andanje (2022) found that parental separation, alcoholism, or conflict did not significantly determine dating patterns among students, though respondents from divorced families showed higher relationship anxiety. Cultural norms stigmatizing mental health and prioritizing harmony may further suppress unresolved trauma, exacerbating relational instability. Globally, intimate partner violence (IPV) is pervasive, with one in three women experiencing it in their lifetime (WHO, 2023). About 65% of first victimizations occur during adolescence (Lawal & Animashaun, 2025). In North America, 19% of teens report physical or sexual dating violence (Abrams, 2023), while African studies show alarming prevalence, including 31% of Ugandan students reporting sexual coercion (WHO, 2024a) and 15% of Ethiopian students reporting lifetime rape (Central Statistical Agency, 2016). Kenyan data reveal entrenched gender norms and rising femicide, with over 500 cases between 2016 and 2023 (Media Council of Kenya, 2024). High-profile murders, such as those of Sharon Otieno (2018) and Ivy Wangechi (2019), underscore systemic failures in addressing gender-based violence.

Romantic relationships among youth in TVET institutions mirror these trends. About 48% of Kenyan women report violence in intimate relationships (Obure, Ileri & Menecha, 2021). For students, relational challenges such as jealousy, poor communication, and financial dependence



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often escalate into emotional trauma or violence (Goel & Kumar, 2024). In late 2024, nearly 100 women were killed by known perpetrators, prompting the government to declare gender-based violence a national security threat (Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, 2025). Against this backdrop, the current study investigates how family-of-origin conflict resolution styles shape romantic relationships among TVET students in Uasin Gishu County.

### Statement of the Problem

Romantic relationships are central to young adults' lives, yet many students in TVET institutions in Uasin Gishu County face challenges such as mistrust, poor communication, and ineffective conflict resolution, often linked to family-of-origin dynamics. Studies show that unresolved parental conflicts, negative communication patterns, and poor conflict resolution models significantly contribute to trust issues (62%) and relationship conflicts (58%), leading to emotional distress, depression, anxiety, poor academic outcomes, and in severe cases, school dropout or even fatalities in higher learning institutions (Mwiti & Mwangi, 2020; Makokha & Odongo, 2021; Media Council of Kenya, 2024). Despite the presence of institutional counselling, rising cases of suicides and intimate partner violence among students underscore the urgency of addressing root causes rooted in early family experiences. Previous research, however, has been limited by methodological and contextual gaps, often focusing on single variables and neglecting the combined effects of attachment styles, emotional support, conflict resolution, and communication patterns, as well as underexplored dynamics like affectionate repair and child

triangulation. This study therefore seeks to fill these gaps by examining the influence of family-of-origin conflict resolution practices on students' romantic relationships in TVET institutions in Uasin Gishu County.

### Objective of the Study

- i. To assess the influence of family-of-origin conflict resolution styles on students' romantic relationships in TVETs, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

### Research Questions

- i. To what extent do family-of-origin conflict resolution styles influence students' romantic relationships in TVETs, in Uasin Gishu County?

### Null Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no statistically significant influence of family-of-origin conflict resolution styles on students' romantic relationships in TVETs within Uasin Gishu County Kenya.

### Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Family Systems Theory (FST) developed by Bowen (1978). The theory views the family as an interdependent emotional unit where patterns of interaction, particularly differentiation of self the balance between autonomy and emotional connectedness shape individuals' relational outcomes (Brown & Errington, 2024; Lampis *et al.*, 2016). Healthy families with adaptive boundaries foster resilience and relational competence, while rigid or diffuse boundaries lead to dysfunction and instability (Dolz-Del-Castellar & Oliver, 2021). FST's strength lies in explaining how unresolved family tensions, such as emotional cut-off or triangulation, often resurface in young adults' romantic relationships, influencing conflict resolution, dependency, and vulnerability to intimate



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partner violence (Gharehbaghy, 2011). FST remains a valuable lens for understanding how family-of-origin dynamics influence students' emotional regulation, and relationship patterns, while also informing culturally adapted interventions to strengthen relational stability and resilience (Hess, 2020).

## Literature Review

Conflict resolution within families has long been recognized as a central factor shaping adolescents' and young adults' interpersonal and romantic relationships. A growing body of research from different parts of the world underscores the transmission of conflict management styles from families of origin into later friendships and romantic partnerships, though the findings are contextually varied and often limited in their generalizability to sub-Saharan African settings such as Kenya. For example, a longitudinal study conducted in the Netherlands by Bellotti *et al.* (2021) followed 799 adolescents and their parents to examine the transmission of conflict management styles across inter-parental, adolescent-parent, adolescent-friend, and adolescent-partner relationships. Using the conflict resolution style inventory, the study established that adolescents who engaged in positive problem-solving and constructive communication with their parents were more likely to apply similar strategies in friendships and romantic relationships over time. This study highlights the importance of modelling constructive communication within families to nurture healthy interpersonal skills, though its generalizability to Kenya is limited due to different cultural and familial dynamics.

In China, Ahrsjö, Karadacic and Rasmussen (2023) examined how persistent inter-parental conflict shaped children's social development. Their findings revealed that children exposed to verbal and physical disputes often experienced social anxiety and maladjustment. The escalation of verbal arguments into violence posed threats to safety and hindered the development of constructive resolution skills, leaving children ill-equipped to navigate relationships later in life. Ahrsjö *et al.*'s study underscored the severe developmental consequences of unresolved inter-parental conflict but was situated within China's unique sociocultural environment, which differs markedly from that of Kenya. Such geographical and cultural disparities necessitate context-specific studies in developing countries, hence the present study in Kenya. Longitudinal evidence from the United States further illustrates how early family interactions persist into adulthood. Specifically, Whitton *et al.* (2018) tracked 47 individuals from adolescence into adulthood, assessing conflict resolution tasks with parents at age 14 and with spouses 17 years later. Results showed that hostility and positive engagement in family interactions predicted similar behaviours in later marriages. High levels of family-of-origin hostility correlated with increased hostility and decreased positive engagement during marital conflict, while male participants exposed to early hostility reported poorer marital satisfaction. These findings point to long-term intergenerational patterns of conflict but remain limited to a US context. Pettit *et al.* (2024) examined 184 participants in the southern United States from age 13 to 27, focusing on "you-talk" during romantic



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conflicts. Adolescents exposed to autonomy-undermining behaviours within families were more likely to engage in accusatory communication in romantic relationships, which was linked to relational aggression. The study highlights how dysfunctional communication in families can be internalized and later expressed in maladaptive forms. However, the research was restricted to verbal aggression and excluded broader conflict resolution strategies such as compromise or withdrawal, leaving gaps that demand further inquiry.

In Colombia, Galindo-Silva and Tchuente (2023) emphasized the role of child triangulation in shaping romantic relationships. Through surveys and interviews with 500 students in Bogotá, the study found that children who acted as emotional mediators in family disputes often became “fixers” in their romantic lives, prioritizing partners’ needs over their own. This highlights the long-lasting psychological burden of early emotional roles, though the focus on triangulation excluded other conflict resolution mechanisms relevant in broader contexts.

A large-scale longitudinal survey in the US conducted by Heinze *et al.* (2020) involved 850 adolescents and found that family conflict during adolescence was linked to reduced emotional closeness and support in adulthood. Even supportive peer or romantic relationships later in life could not mitigate these negative effects, emphasizing the lasting developmental damage caused by family discord. While highly relevant, the US-based study is limited in cultural applicability to Kenyan settings.

Research across Africa further provides regional insight on interventions for personal

conflicts. In South Africa, Maine (2020) used qualitative interviews with 30 high school students from low-income households to investigate the influence of inter-parental violence. Adolescents exposed to violent conflict resolution normalized aggression in their own romantic relationships. While illuminating, this study was limited to qualitative methods and high school contexts, leaving gaps regarding young adults in vocational training institutions. In Ghana, Olaseni, Oguntayo and Nel (2024) surveyed and conducted focus groups with 150 secondary school students in Accra, finding that child triangulation in family conflict led to anxiety, role confusion, and relational difficulties. These findings are contextually relevant to the sub-Saharan Africa but remain limited to adolescents and exclude broader conflict resolution styles beyond triangulation. In a study in Uganda, Millanzi, Osaki and Kibusi (2023) conducted qualitative case studies in Kampala secondary schools, showing that adolescents exposed to open and respectful family conflict discussions developed healthier communication in romantic relationships.

Although highly relevant, the above-reviewed studies were limited to qualitative design and focused on adolescents rather than emerging adults. Besides, the reviewed studies involved adolescents and young people in secondary schools. This cohort may not be involved in romantic relationships yet, which is the focus of the current study. The current study examined the influence of family-of-origin on romantic relationships among TVET students. Such older students are often characterized by greater freedom away from home, which present them as suitable group for exploring how they make



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decisions to establish and maintain personal relationships. In Tanzania, Wondimu and Andualem (2023) combined surveys and interviews to examine the effects of domestic violence on romantic behaviours among 120 university students. Exposure to parental violence was strongly correlated with acceptance or perpetration of aggression in romantic relationships. While pertinent to East Africa, the study focused narrowly on domestic violence, excluding other conflict resolution approaches. Research in Rwanda by Baraki and Thupayagale-Tshweneagae (2024) used phenomenological methods with 20 university students to study child triangulation. Findings revealed anxious and avoidant attachment styles, excessive reassurance-seeking, and boundary-setting difficulties in romantic relationships. The exclusive focus on triangulation overlooked other familial conflict strategies, highlighting the need for more comprehensive approaches. Both of the studies in Tanzania and Rwanda offer useful insights on how family-of-origin experiences shape the way young people approach relationships. However, none of them focused on students in TVET institutions, where the precarities of educational, peer and academic pressures mediate interpersonal relationships. Within the Kenyan context, Makena, Wambugu and Chiroma (2023) conducted a mixed-methods study in Ruiru Sub-County with 281 students, examining child triangulation and its effects on academic motivation. Triangulated students reported lower motivation and higher stress, underscoring the psychological toll of family conflict. Although focused on academics, the findings suggest implications for relational outcomes. Nevertheless, the study excluded broader conflict resolution

styles, leaving further avenues for exploration. While the study by Makena *et al.* also used mixed-methods, it generally sampled students of all calibre. This mixture might not have

Together, the reviewed studies illustrate a consistent theme: family-of-origin conflict resolution styles significantly shape adolescents' and young adults' romantic relationships across cultural contexts. However, the reviewed literature reveals persistent gaps. Many of the studies are situated in developed countries such as the US, Netherlands and China, where family dynamics, cultural norms, and romantic expectations differ from Kenya. Even African studies remain limited by their focus on adolescents rather than emerging adults in vocational training institutions, their reliance on qualitative or single-method approaches, or their exclusive focus on specific conflict strategies such as triangulation or suppression. Furthermore, few studies integrate multiple conflict resolution styles or use mixed-method designs to capture both quantitative patterns and lived experiences. The cumulative evidence underscores the need for context-specific research in Kenya to examine how family-of-origin conflict resolution styles influence romantic relationships among emerging adults, particularly within TVET institutions.

## Materials And Methods

The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative strand used a cross-sectional survey design with structured questionnaires to collect measurable data from final-year



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students at a single point in time, while the qualitative strand employed a phenomenological design using semi-structured interviews with student support officers to capture lived experiences and perceptions. The study was conducted in Uasin Gishu County, a region with diverse rural and urban family dynamics, and home to several TVET institutions that provide a natural setting for exploring youth romantic relationships. The target population comprised 11,300 final-year students across six TVETs and six student support officers. Using Sloven’s formula, a sample size of 392 respondents (386 students and 6 key informants) was determined. Stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation from each institution, while purposive sampling was used for key informants. For easy selection, the students were stratified according to gender, then year of study, then courses.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, supplemented mainly by a semi-structured interview guide. The questionnaire had ten items related to the application of family-of-origin conflict resolution practices. These items focused on conflict resolution among parents, including discussion, arguments, aggressiveness, avoidance of argument, walking away, apologizing, dominating conversations, fear, compromising, and taking sides. The instruments were pretested in a pilot study (10% of the sample) to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity. Cronbach’s alpha assessed internal consistency, while content and construct validity were established through expert review and the Content Validity Ratio (CVR). For data analysis, quantitative data were analysed in SPSS

(v30) using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and inferential statistics, particularly correlation analysis, to test relationships between family-of-origin practices and romantic relationships. Qualitative data were thematically analysed. The model below was used as the simple linear relationship:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no relationship between family-of-origin conflicts resolution styles and student’s Romantic relationships in TVET institutions in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

.....  
 .....(i)

Where:

Y =Students Romantic relationships

$\beta_0$  = Constant (coefficient of intercept),

$\beta_1$  = change in romantic relationships for each 1unit increment change in family-of-origins conflict resolution practices ( $X_1$ )

( $X_1$ ) = score of family-of-origin conflict resolution practices, which predicts the changes of romantic relationships among TVET students

$\varepsilon$  = standard error

### Results and Discussion

#### Descriptive Statistics

The study sought to investigate the influence of family-of-origin conflict resolution practices on romantic relationships among TVET students in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The structured questionnaire first examined the rate of application of family-of-origin conflict resolution practices in the students’ homes. Their responses were scored on a five-point Likert scale of: 5- strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-undecided, 2-



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disagree, and 1-strongly disagree. Table 1 presents the results.

Table 1: Application of Family-of-Origin Conflict Resolution Practices

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Dev.
My parents/guardians discuss their disagreements calmly and respectfully	15.0% (37)	13.0% (32)	21.5% (53)	21.9% (54)	28.7% (71)	3.36	1.40
One of my parents often gives in just to end the argument	12.6% (31)	18.2% (45)	25.9% (64)	25.5% (63)	17.8% (44)	2.82	1.28
Both my parents are aggressive; they shout or insult each other	32.5% (80)	22.4% (55)	20.7% (51)	11.8% (29)	12.6% (31)	3.48	1.38
I've never seen them argue; they avoid discussing problems	28.6% (70)	24.9% (61)	21.2% (52)	15.1% (37)	10.2% (25)	3.43	1.32
One parent often walks away during arguments	20.2% (50)	21.5% (53)	20.2% (50)	25.1% (62)	13.0% (32)	3.13	1.34
They rarely apologize but act normal the next day	23.2% (57)	17.5% (43)	19.5% (48)	23.6% (58)	16.3% (40)	2.92	1.41
One parent dominates; the other stays quiet	15.8% (39)	16.6% (41)	25.1% (62)	25.1% (62)	17.4% (43)	3.12	1.32
I am often caught in the middle and feel scared	21.2% (52)	19.2% (47)	23.7% (58)	20.4% (50)	15.5% (38)	2.90	1.36
Despite disagreement,	12.6% (31)	12.6% (31)	25.2% (62)	29.7% (73)	19.9% (49)	3.32	1.28



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one	always						
compromises							
I'm asked to take	28.7%	22.5%	19.7%	15.2%	13.9%	(34)	2.63
sides	after	(70)	(55)	(48)	(37)		1.40
arguments							

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Source: Survey data (2025)

The findings revealed that a significant proportion of TVET students were exposed to dysfunctional family-of-origin conflicts resolution practices. Over half of the respondents (54.9%) reported witnessing parental aggression during disagreements, while 53.5% indicated that their parents avoided conflict altogether. In addition, 43.3% noted that one parent typically conceded in order to end disputes, 42.5% observed imbalances of power where one parent dominated conflicts, and between 35.9%–51.2% reported being drawn into parental conflicts through triangulation. These patterns reflect unhealthy conflict resolution mechanisms that children internalize, thereby shaping maladaptive romantic behaviours in adulthood, such as conflict avoidance, emotional withdrawal, insecurity, and normalization of hostility. The reliance on non-verbal reconciliation without apologies (39.9%) further weakened the development of accountability and constructive dialogue in later relationships. The results of the study affirm the view from previous research that young people exposed to aggression and avoidance may form insecure attachment styles, leading to mistrust, dependency, or avoidance in romantic relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). The high prevalence of triangulation suggests a blurring of boundaries within families, which is consistent with Family Systems Theory, where enmeshment and

coalition undermine healthy relational autonomy and often reproduce dysfunctional interactional cycles in adult partnerships. However, the results also highlighted protective factors. About half of the respondents observed parents engaging in respectful communication and compromise during disagreements. These positive models fostered secure attachment, emotional regulation, and resilience in navigating conflicts within their own romantic relationships. This duality suggests that family-of-origin communication can serve both as a risk factor when dysfunctional and a protective factor when constructive.

In the context of Uasin Gishu County TVET students, these findings underscore the enduring impact of family background on romantic relationships. Dysfunctional communication within families mirrors broader social realities, where intergenerational cycles of poor conflict management perpetuate relational instability. Yet, the presence of positive models indicates that interventions aimed at strengthening family communication and equipping students with healthier conflict resolution skills may mitigate risks and foster relational resilience.

### Interview Results

Interviews were conducted with students' counsellors and students' affairs support staff in TVETs. In the interview, a counsellor in



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one of the institutions had this to say concerning the effectiveness of family-of-origin conflict resolution practices: “Students who grew up in families where parents openly discussed issues tend to approach their romantic partners in the same way: calm, respectful, and willing to compromise.” (Counsellor 001, Oral Interview, 2025).

One Students’ Affairs Support Staff stated thus: “I’ve noticed that those from homes where conflict was ignored or swept under the carpet often avoid addressing problems in their relationships. They fear confrontation and may withdraw instead of resolving issues.” (Student’s Affairs Support Staff 003, Oral Interview, 2025). Another staff pointed out that: “When parents modelled aggressive shouting or stonewalling, their children now in college are more likely to either shout back in arguments or shut down completely. It’s like a script they learned early.” (Student Affairs Support Staff 005, Oral Interview, 2025).

students’ affairs support staff working with students in one of the institutions said that: “If a family created a safe space for emotional expression, those students are more secure in their relationships. They share feelings without fear of judgment. However, in homes where the students are denied the chance to express their emotions constructively, the end have avoidance behaviour in their own romantic relationship which affects how they express their emotions” (Student’s Affairs Support Staff 001, Oral Interview, 2025). Similarly, a staff in one of the institutions added that: “Students who experienced consistent care and reliability from caregivers tend to trust their partners and believe in relationship stability however

those from homes marked by infidelity and abandonment often struggle with jealousy and fear of being left. It shows up in constant partner-checking or mistrust. The greatly affected their romantic relationship and you will observe that they are in constant fighting an attributed caused by their family-of-origin attachment styles” (Student’s Affairs Support Staff 002, Oral Interview, 2025).

A students’ affairs support staff in one of the institutions said that students learnt maladaptive coping from dysfunctional homes: “Some students resort to avoidance, substance use, or breaking up quickly because they never learned to sit with discomfort or work things out. Parents who micromanaged their children’s friendships often continue trying to control their romantic relationships. This leads to hidden dating or secrecy. Some young adults deliberately choose partners or lifestyles opposite to their parents’ expectations, especially if they felt overly controlled.” (Student’s Affairs Support Staff 004, Oral Interview, 2025). Another counsellor added thus: “When students see their parents handling disagreements calmly listening, clarifying misunderstandings, and finding solutions they tend to mirror those same behaviours in their dating relationships. However, if conflict at home meant shouting, name-calling, or long periods of silence, that pattern often repeats in their romantic life. They default to what they grew up with” (Student’s Affairs Support Staff 006, Oral Interview, 2025).

Lastly, another students’ affairs support staff intimated that: “A have observed that student from a stable home environment with regulation keeps relationships stable while those from volatile homes often get easily



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triggered in disagreements. They raise their voices quickly or shut down completely because that’s how their parents responded.” (Student’s Affairs support Staff 002, Oral Interview, 2025).

### Romantic Relationship among Students in TVET Institutions

The study investigated TVET students’ perspectives on conflicts in romantic relationships. Various statements

characterising romantic relationships, nature of conflicts and responses were proposed. The structured questionnaire required the students to indicate their level of agreement with the statements based on a five-point Likert scale of: 5-strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-undecided, 2-disagree and 1-strongly disagree. The findings were as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Romantic Relationship among Students in TVET Institutions

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Deep down my heart I know even if my current lover leaves me, I was not be devastated	39 16.3%	36 15.1%	50 20.9%	48 20.1%	66 27.6%	3.27	1.43
My lover does not blame me if anything goes wrong in our relationship; we share blame if need be	34 14.1%	37 15.4%	67 27.8%	58 24.1%	45 18.7%	3.18	1.30
I feel complete with or without my lover around. He/She values my opinion, feelings, and activities	29 12.1%	20 8.4%	47 19.7%	86 36.0%	57 23.8%	3.51	1.28
I do not really need to worry where my lover is all the time. I trust him/her to run his/her life without me controlling	31 13.0%	15 6.3%	60 25.1%	71 29.7%	62 25.9%	3.49	1.30
My lover has not lied to me or betrayed me to the best of my knowledge	31 12.9%	39 16.2%	66 27.4%	64 26.6%	41 17.0%	3.19	1.26
I love someone who does not love me back	92 38.0%	48 19.8%	45 18.6%	29 12.0%	28 11.6%	2.40	1.40
I am so terrified of being abandoned that I am ready to do anything to keep my relationship going	67 27.5%	56 23.0%	41 16.8%	45 18.4%	35 14.3%	2.69	1.41
I always try harder to please the one I love. I am extremely jealous and possessive	56 23.0%	48 19.8%	35 14.4%	62 25.5%	42 17.3%	2.9424	1.44



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In my relationship, I take more than 50% of responsibility, guilt and blame	50	42	71	39	37	2.88	1.34
	20.9%	17.6%	29.7%	16.3%	15.5%		
I feel empty without the one I love, even if being with her/him is pain and tormenting. He/she belittles my opinion, feelings, and accomplishments	73	39	53	37	40	2.72	1.45
	30.2%	16.1%	21.9%	15.3%	16.5%		

**Source:** Survey data (2025)

The analysis of the ten relational statements revealed a diverse range of emotional and relational patterns among participants. The highest mean was recorded for the statement “I feel complete with or without my lover around” (M = 3.51, SD = 1.28), indicating strong self-concept and independence, closely followed by “I do not really need to worry where my lover is all the time” (M = 3.49, SD = 1.30), suggesting high relational trust. Other items such as “My lover does not blame me if anything goes wrong” (M = 3.18, SD = 1.30) and “My lover has not lied to me or betrayed me” (M = 3.19, SD = 1.26) reflected moderate perceptions of fairness and trust. Conversely, lower mean scores were observed for vulnerable items such as “I love someone who does not love me back” (M = 2.39, SD = 1.39) and “I feel empty without the one I love, even if being with her/him is tormenting” (M = 2.72, SD = 1.45), which point to emotional dependency and insecurity. Overall, the mean scores suggest that while many participants display secure attachment traits such as independence, trust, and mutual respect, a notable proportion still experience emotional vulnerabilities including jealousy, fear of abandonment, and over-pleasing behaviours. The relatively high means for autonomy-related items align with Bowen’s (1978) self-differentiation concept,

highlighting psychological stability and emotional maturity, whereas the lower scores on items reflecting dependency reveal traces of anxious or preoccupied attachment. These results indicated that participants were divided between relational security and relational insecurity, reflecting both resilience and lingering vulnerabilities in their romantic experiences.

Placing the findings within Sternberg’s Triangular Theory of Love, the higher means for trust and self-completeness indicate balanced integration of intimacy, passion, and commitment, essential for secure romantic bonds. However, the lower scores associated with abandonment fears, jealousy, and unreciprocated love suggest imbalances, such as passion without intimacy (infatuated love) or commitment without closeness (empty love), often linked to insecure family-of-origin dynamics. This echoes literature emphasizing how early caregiving and family conflict styles shape adult attachment patterns. Thus, while the majority of participants appear to embody secure, trusting relationships, the persistence of relational insecurity among others underscores the importance of psychoeducational interventions, emotional boundary training, and conflict resolution



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skills to promote healthier romantic outcomes among emerging adults.

### Inferential Analysis

The study hypothesis stated that there is no statistical significant relationship between family-of-origin conflict resolution styles and quality romantic relationships among

students in TVET institutions in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The relationship between the independent variables (family-of-origin conflict resolution styles) and dependent variable (quality romantic relationships) was tested using of a simple regression model. As shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.0.658 <sup>a</sup>	.433	.421	.31491

a. Predictors: (Constant), Family-of-Origin Conflict Resolution Practices

Source: Survey Data (2025)

The analysis revealed a moderately strong positive relationship ( $R = 0.658$ ) between family-of-origin conflict resolution practices and the quality of romantic relationships among TVET students. The model explained 43.3% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.433$ ), with the adjusted  $R^2$  (0.421) confirming robustness and ruling out overfitting. The standard error (0.31491) indicated acceptable predictive accuracy. These results highlight that constructive conflict resolution within families significantly shapes how students manage their romantic relationships, supporting both attachment theory and social

learning theory. The findings suggest that children internalize parental conflict resolution patterns, which later influence their relational stability and satisfaction. Practically, the study underscores the importance of family-based interventions, parental training, and psychoeducational programs to equip young people with healthy interpersonal skills. In conclusion, family conflict resolution styles are a strong predictor of romantic relationship quality, emphasizing the enduring influence of early family dynamics on youth and young adult relational wellbeing.

Table 4: ANOVA Results

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	20.358	6	20.358	18.756	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	26.665	241	.112		
	Total	47.023	247			

a. Dependent Variable: Romantic Relationship

b. Predictors: (Constant), Family-of-Origin Conflict Resolution Styles

Source: Survey data (2025)

The significance of the regression model was tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Table 4 presents the results of this test, where,  $F = 18.756$ ,  $p = 0.000$ . From the study the

significance value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 thus the model is statistically significant in predicting how family-of-origin conflict resolution styles predicts romantic



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relationships among TVET students. The F value of 18.756 indicates that the variable in the equation are important hence the overall regression is significant, this shows that the model was significant.



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Table 5: Coefficients of Family-of-Origin Conflict Resolution Styles and Romantic Relationships

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1 (Constant)	5.965	.182		7.668	.000
Conflict resolution styles	.623	.046	.817	13.505	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Romantic Relationships Among TVET students

Source: Survey data (2025)

Results from the regression model above indicated that there was a significant relationship ( $p = 0.000$ ) between family-of-origin conflict resolution styles and romantic relationships among TVET students in Uasin Gishu County. This was interpreted to mean that family-of-origin Conflict resolution styles affect romantic relationships among TVET students in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted. The findings implied that a 1-unit increase in positive family-of-origin conflict resolution styles increased quality of romantic relationships by 0.623 units (B), which was statistically significant ( $t = 13.505, p < 0.001$ ).

### Conclusion

The study concludes that there is a moderately strong, statistically significant positive relationship between family-of-origin conflict resolution styles and the quality of romantic relationships. This implies that improved family conflict resolution corresponds with higher romantic relationship quality. Conflict resolution styles from the family-of-origin significantly predict the quality of romantic relationships among TVET students.

### Recommendations

The study recommends that TVET students should be equipped with structured interventions that promote emotional intelligence, adaptive regulation strategies, and peer support systems to counterbalance the effects of emotional neglect or poor modelling at home. To parents and families, the study recommends the development of parental education programmes that emphasize the importance of healthy conflict management, respectful communication, and modelling positive relational behaviours within the family system.

The study also recommends prioritization of psychosocial support and targeted counselling services for students from conflictual and enmeshed family backgrounds. Additionally, school-family partnerships should be encouraged, enabling institutions to collaborate with families in reinforcing positive conflict resolution practices and accountability within both academic and home settings. The Ministry of Education should formulate and enforce policies that advocate for early interventions in family environments to strengthen emotional resilience among youths. This includes embedding emotional literacy and psychosocial well-being in national education frameworks.

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