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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

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Abstract

This study investigates 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. Specifically, the research addresses the ongoing relationship challenges faced by students, including trust issues, ineffective communication, and inadequate conflict resolution strategies. Grounded in family systems theory, the study employs a convergent parallel mixed methods design, integrating cross-sectional surveys as well as phenomenological approaches. The target population comprises 11,306 individuals, from which a sample of 392 respondents was derived using stratified, simple random, and purposive sampling techniques. Furthermore, data collection involved structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews, with validity ensured through both construct and content measures, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. In addition, the analysis encompassed descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, alongside linear regression to evaluate hypotheses. Overall, the findings reveal a statistically significant relationship between family-of-origin conflict resolution styles and the quality of students' romantic relationships ($R = 0.612$, $p < 0.001$). Consequently, the study concludes that conflict resolution practices acquired within families of origin substantially influence romantic relationship outcomes among TVET students. Therefore, it advocates for targeted psychosocial support and counseling interventions for students from conflictual family backgrounds to mitigate the intergenerational cycles of maladaptive relationship behaviors.

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

Introduction

Family-of-origin conflict resolution styles refer to the methods that family members use to manage disagreements, as recalled by individuals (Fernet, Hébert & Paradis, 2016). Importantly, these styles significantly influence children's emotional adjustment, regulation, and interpersonal skills (Tahir & Quratulain, 2024). Dawson (2025) notes that these conflict resolution styles shape behaviors that are later manifested in romantic, social, and professional relationships. In this study, conflict resolution encompasses whether families employed constructive communication, destructive patterns such as violence or child triangulation, or negotiation through affectionate repair. The research was conducted in Uasin Gishu County, which is home to several technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, including the Eldoret National Polytechnic and Eldoret Technical and Training Institute. Notably, this County has experienced a troubling rise in student deaths linked to suicide, crime, and emotionally volatile romantic relationships. For instance, in 2023 alone, over 150 fatalities were reported in Kenyan universities and colleges, including several high-profile murders involving romantic partners (Kimuyu, 2025). Thus, these alarming incidents underscore the necessity of examining family-of-origin dynamics as potential contributors to these issues.

Romantic relationships are crucial for the emotional and psychological stability of young adults. However, unresolved family trauma can adversely affect this stability by influencing emotional regulation, communication, and conflict resolution (Khosraviani, Davarani & Kazemian, 2025). Moreover, dysfunctional family practices—such as neglect, abuse, or parental loss—heighten the risks of trust deficits and insecure attachments (Larson, Taggart-Reedy & Wilson, 2021). In Kenya, Andanje (2022) found that factors such as parental separation, alcoholism, or conflict did not significantly determine dating patterns among students; however, respondents from divorced families exhibited higher levels of relationship anxiety. Additionally, cultural norms that stigmatize mental health and prioritize familial harmony may further suppress unresolved trauma, exacerbating relational instability.

Globally, intimate partner violence (IPV) is a pervasive issue, with one in three women experiencing it in their lifetime (WHO, 2023). Furthermore, approximately 65% of first victimizations occur during adolescence (Lawal & Animashaun, 2025). For example, in North America, 19% of teens report experiencing physical or sexual dating violence (Abrams, 2023), while studies in Africa reveal alarming prevalence rates—31% of Ugandan students report sexual coercion (WHO, 2024a), and 15% of Ethiopian student's report lifetime rape (Central Statistical Agency, 2016). In addition, Kenyan data indicate entrenched gender norms and a rising incidence of femicide, with over 500 cases reported between 2016 and 2023 (Media Council of

Kenya, 2024). Moreover, high-profile murders, such as those of Sharon Otieno (2018) and Ivy Wangechi (2019), highlight systemic failures in addressing gender-based violence. Romantic relationships among youth in TVET institutions reflect these troubling trends. Indeed, approximately 48% of Kenyan women report experiencing violence in intimate relationships (Obure, Ireri & Menecha, 2021). For students, relational challenges—such as jealousy, poor communication, and financial dependence—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; however, many students in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions in Uasin Gishu County face significant challenges. These challenges include mistrust, poor communication, and ineffective conflict resolution, which are often linked to family-of-origin dynamics. Research indicates that unresolved parental conflicts, negative communication patterns, and inadequate conflict resolution models significantly contribute to trust issues (62%) and relationship conflicts (58%). Consequently, these issues lead 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 availability of institutional counseling services, the rising cases of suicides and intimate partner violence among students underscore the urgency of addressing root causes that are rooted in early family experiences. Moreover, previous research has been limited by methodological and contextual gaps, often focusing on single variables while neglecting the combined effects of attachment styles, emotional support, conflict resolution, and communication patterns. Additionally, underexplored dynamics such as affectionate repair and child triangulation warrant further investigation. Therefore, this study 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

To assess the influence of family-of-origin conflict resolution styles on students' romantic relationships in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

Research Question

To what extent do family-of-origin conflict resolution styles influence students' romantic relationships in TVET institutions in Uasin Gishu County?

Null Hypothesis

H01: There is no statistically significant influence of family-of-origin conflict resolution styles on students' romantic relationships in TVET institutions within Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

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Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Family Systems Theory (FST), developed by Bowen (1978). According to this theory, the family is viewed as an interdependent emotional unit, where patterns of interaction—particularly the differentiation of self and 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, whereas rigid or diffuse boundaries can lead to dysfunction and instability (Dolz-Del-Castellar & Oliver, 2021). The strength of FST lies in its ability to explain how unresolved family tensions, such as emotional cut-off or triangulation, often resurface in young adults' romantic relationships. These dynamics can significantly influence conflict resolution, dependency, and vulnerability to intimate partner violence (Gharehbaghy, 2011). Thus, FST serves as a valuable lens for understanding how family-of-origin dynamics impact students' emotional regulation and relationship patterns. Additionally, it informs culturally adapted interventions aimed at strengthening 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 various parts of the world underscores the transmission of conflict management styles from families of origin into later friendships and romantic partnerships. However, 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 emphasizes the importance of modeling constructive communication within families to nurture healthy interpersonal skills; however, its generalizability to Kenya is limited due to different cultural and familial dynamics.

In China, Ahrsjö, Karadakic, 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. Moreover, 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. Thus, 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.

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 indicated that hostilíty and positive engagement in family interactions predicted similar behaviors 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 conflicts. Adolescents exposed to autonomy-undermining behaviors within families were more likely to engage in accusatory communication in romantic relationships, which was linked to relational aggression. This 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; however, 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 into 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

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, this research was limited to qualitative design and focused on adolescents rather than emerging adults.

In Tanzania, Wondimu and Andualem (2023) combined surveys and interviews to examine the effects of domestic violence on romantic behaviors among 120 university students. Their findings indicated that 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.

Closer to 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; yet, the study excluded broader conflict resolution styles, leaving further avenues for exploration. 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 literature reveals persistent gaps. Many studies are situated in developed countries such as the US, Netherlands, and China, where family dynamics, cultural norms, and romantic expectations differ from those in 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 utilize 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

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to collect measurable data from final-year 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.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, supplemented mainly by a semi-structured interview guide. 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_{01}: There is no relationship between family-of-origin conflicts resolution styles and student's Romantic relationships in TVET institutions in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon \ \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\text{(i)}$$

Where:

Y =Students Romantic relationships

β_0 = Constant (coefficient of intercept),

β_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

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

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

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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, one always compromises	12.6% (31)	12.6% (31)	25.2% (62)	29.7% (73)	19.9% (49)	3.32	1.28
I'm asked to take sides after arguments	28.7% (70)	22.5% (55)	19.7% (48)	15.2% (37)	13.9% (34)	2.63	1.40

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Source: Survey data (2025).

Grounded in Social Learning Theory and the intergenerational transmission of conflict framework, the findings **indicate that** a substantial proportion of TVET students were socialized within family-of-origin environments characterized by dysfunctional conflict resolution practices. **Specifically,** more than half of the respondents (54.9%) reported witnessing parental aggression during disagreements, **while** 53.5% indicated that their parents routinely avoided conflict. **Together,** these patterns model conflict as either threatening or undesirable, **thereby** limiting children's exposure to constructive problem-solving. **In addition,** 43.3% of respondents observed that one parent frequently conceded to terminate disputes, **whereas** 42.5% reported power asymmetries in which one parent dominated conflict interactions, **thus** reinforcing unequal relational dynamics as normative. **Furthermore**, between 35.9% and 51.2% of respondents reported being drawn into parental disputes through triangulation, **a process that consequently** disrupts emotional boundaries and burdens children with adult relational roles. **Consistent with** intergenerational transmission perspectives, these early conflict scripts were **subsequently** internalized and reproduced in romantic relationships, **manifesting in** conflict avoidance, emotional withdrawal, insecurity, and the normalization of hostility. **Moreover,** the reliance on non-verbal reconciliation without explicit apologies (39.9%) **further** constrained the development of accountability and constructive dialogue, **thereby** weakening the relational competencies required for healthy conflict management in adulthood.

Interview Results

Interviews were conducted with counsellors and Students' Affairs support staff in various TVET institutions to explore the influence of family-of-origin conflict resolution practices on students' romantic relationships. Overall, the data indicate that students tend to internalize and reproduce the conflict patterns they observed in their families.

A counsellor in one of the institutions stated: "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).

Similarly, one Students' Affairs Support Staff observed:

"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 member added:

"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).

In line with this, a Students' Affairs support staff highlighted the role of safe emotional expression in the family:

"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 students are denied the chance to express their emotions constructively, they often develop avoidance behaviour in their own romantic relationships, which affects how they express their emotions." (Student's Affairs Support Staff 001, Oral Interview, 2025).

Another staff member reinforced the influence of attachment and caregiving patterns:

"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. This shows up in constant partner-checking or mistrust. It greatly affects their romantic relationships, and you will observe that they are in constant fighting, which can be attributed to their family-of-origin attachment styles." (Student's Affairs Support Staff 002, Oral Interview, 2025).

Further, maladaptive coping strategies were noted among students 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).

A counsellor also emphasized the mirroring of parental conflict behaviour:

"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).

Finally, another Students' Affairs support staff summarized the impact of family stability:

"I have observed that students from a stable home environment with regulation keep relationships stable, while those from volatile homes often get easily 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

Romantic Relationships among Students in TVET Institutions

The study aimed to investigate TVET students' perspectives on conflicts in romantic relationships. Specifically, various statements characterizing romantic relationships, the nature of conflicts, and students' responses to these conflicts were proposed. Accordingly, a structured questionnaire was used, which required the students to indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a five-point Likert scale: 5 – strongly agree, 4 – agree, 3 –

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undecided, 2 – disagree, and 1 – strongly disagree. This approach enabled the systematic assessment of students'

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

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belittles my opinion, feelings, and accomplishments

Source: Survey data (2025).

The analysis of the ten relational statements revealed a diverse range of emotional and relational patterns among participants. Notably, 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. This was closely followed by, "I do not really need to worry where my lover is all the time" (M = 3.49, SD = 1.30), which suggests high relational trust. Similarly, 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 more 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), highlighting emotional dependency and insecurity.

Overall, the mean scores suggest that while many participants display secure attachment traits, including independence, trust, and mutual respect, a notable proportion still experience emotional vulnerabilities, such as jealousy, fear of abandonment, and over-pleasing behaviours. In particular, the relatively high means for autonomy-related items align with Bowen's (1978) concept of self-differentiation, underscoring psychological stability and emotional maturity. By contrast, the lower scores on items reflecting dependency reveal traces of

anxious or preoccupied attachment. Taken together, these results indicate that participants are divided between relational security and relational insecurity, reflecting both resilience and lingering vulnerabilities in their romantic experiences.

Furthermore, when placing the findings within Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love, the higher means for trust and self-completeness suggest a balanced integration of intimacy, passion, and commitment—elements essential for secure romantic bonds. However, the lower scores associated with abandonment fears, jealousy, and unreciprocated love point to imbalances, such as passion without intimacy (infatuated love) or commitment without closeness (empty love), which are often linked to insecure family-of-origin dynamics. This finding echoes existing 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 skills to promote healthier romantic outcomes among emerging adults.

Inferential Analysis

The study hypothesized that there is no statistically significant relationship between family-of-origin conflict resolution styles and the quality of romantic relationships

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among students in TVET institutions in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. To test this hypothesis, the relationship between the independent variable (family-of-origin conflict resolution styles) and the dependent variable (quality of romantic relationships) was examined using a simple regression model. As presented in Table 3, the analysis provides insight into the extent to which family-of-origin conflict patterns predict the quality of students' romantic relationships.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.0.658^a	.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. Furthermore, the regression model explained 43.3% of the variance (R^2 = 0.433), with the adjusted R^2 (0.421) confirming the robustness of the findings and ruling out overfitting. In addition, the standard error (0.31491) indicated acceptable predictive accuracy. These results underscore that constructive conflict resolution within families significantly shapes how students manage their romantic relationships, thereby supporting both attachment theory and Social Learning Theory. Specifically, the findings suggest that children internalize parental conflict resolution patterns, which later influence relational stability and satisfaction. From a practical perspective, the study highlights the importance of family-based interventions, parental training, and psychoeducational programs as means of equipping young people with healthy interpersonal skills. In conclusion, family conflict resolution styles emerge as a strong predictor of romantic relationship quality, emphasizing the enduring influence of early family dynamics on the relational wellbeing of youth and young adults.

Table 4: ANOVA Results

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	20.358	6	20.358	18.756	.000^b
	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 further tested** using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). **As shown in Table 4**, the results indicate F = 18.756, p = 0.000**. Since** the significance value (p = 0.000) is less than the 0.05 threshold, the model **is considered** statistically significant in predicting how family-of-origin conflict resolution styles

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influence romantic relationships among TVET students. **Moreover**, the F value of 18.756 **demonstrates** that the variables included in the regression equation are important, **confirming** the overall significance of the model. **Therefore,** these findings **validate** that family-of-origin conflict resolution practices are meaningful predictors of students' romantic relationship quality.

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

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
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).

The results from the regression model **indicated** a significant relationship (p = 0.000) between family-of-origin conflict resolution styles and the quality of romantic relationships among TVET students in Uasin Gishu County. **This finding suggests that** family-of-origin conflict resolution styles **directly affect** romantic relationship quality among these students. **Consequently,** the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted**. Specifically**, the results **demonstrate that** a one-unit increase in positive family-of-origin conflict resolution styles **corresponds to** a 0.623-unit increase in the quality of romantic relationships (B = 0.623), which was statistically significant (t = 13.505, p < 0.001). **Overall,** these findings **highlight** the important predictive role of early family conflict management on students' relational outcomes in emerging adulthood.

Conclusion

The study concludes that there is a moderately strong and statistically significant positive relationship between family-of-origin conflict resolution styles and the quality of romantic relationships. In other words, constructive family conflict resolution corresponds with higher quality romantic relationships among students. Furthermore, family-of-origin conflict resolution styles emerge as significant predictors of the quality of romantic relationships among TVET students, underscoring the enduring influence of early family dynamics on youth relational wellbeing.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, TVET students should be equipped with structured interventions that promote emotional intelligence, adaptive regulation strategies, and peer support systems, thereby helping to counterbalance the effects of emotional neglect or poor conflict modelling at home. Second, for parents and families, the study recommends the development of parental education programmes that emphasize the importance of healthy conflict management, respectful communication, and the modelling of positive relational behaviours within the family system. Third, there should be a prioritization of psychosocial support and targeted counselling services for students from conflictual or enmeshed family backgrounds, ensuring that their relational vulnerabilities are adequately addressed. Additionally, school-family partnerships should be encouraged, enabling institutions to collaborate with families in reinforcing positive conflict resolution practices and accountability in both academic and home environments. Finally, the Ministry of Education should formulate and enforce policies that advocate for early interventions in family environments, with the aim of strengthening emotional resilience among youths. This may include embedding emotional literacy and psychosocial well-being within national education frameworks. Collectively, these recommendations highlight the need for a multi-level approach—targeting students, families, schools, and policy to promote healthier relational outcomes and emotional stability among emerging adults.

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