

INFLUENCE OF ATTACHMENT STYLES ON ADOLESCENTS' PSYCHOSOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT, AMONG SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM  
BLENDED FAMILIES IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA.

LUCY GACHENIA

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT  
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AND FAMILY THERAPY OF PAN AFRICA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

DECLARATION

This is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree award in any other university.

Signature..... Date.....

Lucy Gachenia

PMFT/6458/16

Approval by supervisors

This dissertation has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.

Signature..... Date.....

Dr. Ruth Kamunyu

Department of Psychology

Signature ..... Date.....

Prof. Nathan Chiroma

Department of Children and Youth Ministry

### DEDICATION

This research dissertation is dedicated to my husband Dr. Charles Gachenia and our three children Brian, Ian and Joan for the support they have accorded me all through my study.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I give glory to God for enabling me complete this work. Secondly, I would like to acknowledge all those people whose contribution made this work a reality. Special appreciation to my supervisors; Dr. Ruth Kamunyu and Pro. Nathan Chiroma for their guidance and mentorship throughout the course of my dissertation writing. Thirdly, my gratitude goes to the principals, counselors and students from schools in Kiambu County who participated in this study.

## ABSTRACT

Attachment styles adopted by parents are essential in development of adolescent psychosocial wellbeing. This phenomenon is more profound in blended families where there are multiple relationships that can lead to many challenges. However, with appropriate attachment styles adopted by step parents such challenges can be mitigated. The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of attachment styles on adolescents' psychosocial development, among secondary school students from blended families in Kiambu County, Kenya. The objective of the study was to establish attachment styles adopted by parents of adolescents in blended family households and evaluate how these attachment styles influence the establishment of adolescents' self-esteem, identity and autonomy development. The study adopted Bowlby (1969) attachment theory, a mixed method approach, mixed method design and pragmatic philosophical paradigm. The sampling method adopted was multi-stage and inclusive /exclusive criteria. Firstly, the study adopted survey method as the sampling technique because the total population of adolescents that came from blended families was unknown. Thereafter, simple random sampling was used to select 9 schools and also determine the 5 classes to be sampled in each of these schools. The 5 classes had a population of 55 students each. A short questionnaire with demographic data of students was issued to 2475 students in a bid to elicit the adolescents from the said classes, that came from blended families in the 9 schools. A total of 208 adolescents from blended families in the 9 schools was elicited and this was considered a sufficient sample size. In addition, simple random sampling was used to sample 24 respondents that formed 4 focus groups. Purposive sampling was used to sample 4 counselors from 9 schools for in-depth interview and the 4 focus groups. Data was collected using questionnaires, counselors' interview schedule and focus group discussions. Standardized tools; Inventory for Parent and Peer Attachment Scale, Rosenberg Scale, Identity scale Inventory and Emotional Autonomy Scale were used as measuring tools. Data was analyzed through descriptive statistics, statistical assumption tests, correlation tests- T-test, ANOVA and MANCOVA analysis while qualitative data was analyzed by use of narrative analysis. Findings were presented in form of graphs, pie charts and tables while interview data was presented in thematic form. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the National Council for Science and Technology and the Kiambu County Government. Ethical review authorization was sought from Daystar University Ethics Review Committee as well as a written informed consent from the school administration. Results indicated 2 categories of attachment styles adopted by step parents as; secure and insecure. In addition, these attachment styles influence the establishment of adolescent self-esteem, emotional autonomy and three identity styles namely information, commitment and diffuse avoidant but not normative identity style. The study results concluded that step parents should adopt secure attachment style which has characteristics of high communication and trust levels but minimal alienation, rather than insecure attachment that comprises of high levels of alienation, minimal communication and trust. The study findings could benefit government entities, Ministry of Education, counselors, parents, families and society.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYM

ANOVA	Analysis and Analysis of Variance
CEO	County Education Office
EAS	Emotional Attachment Scale
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ISN-4	Identity Style Inventory 4
IPPA	Inventory of Parents and Peers Attachment
MOE	Ministry of Education
NACOSTI	National Council for Science and Technology
PD	Psychosocial Development.
SD	Standard Deviation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
EAS	Emotional Autonomy Scale
IERC	Ethics Review Committee

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Attachment :** Refers to an emotional bond with another person for instance step parents (Njoroge & Kirori, 2018).

**Attachment styles:** Denotes secure or insecure styles adopted by step parents of adolescents from blended family households (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018).

**Adolescence :** From a literature perspective, adolescence is a major period characterized by search for attachments and the growth of relationships (Jensen & Harris, 2017).  
The term adolescent in this study is defined as an individual between 13-19 years.

**Emotional autonomy:** This is change in intimate parent adolescent relationship where adolescents recognize the aspect of independence from parents and become individuated (Avey & Jalatat, 2015).

**Identity styles:** Means the different ways in which adolescents process, digest, explore, interpret and utilize identity significant information (Berzonsky, 2013).

**Self -esteem:** Denotes how adolescents evaluate themselves and how they continue to carry those perceptions or assessments across many domains of their lives (Coelho et al.,2017).

**Step-parent :** It is a term used to describe a parent who is not a child's mother or father and can be referred to as 'non biological parent' (Ganong & Coleman,2017).

**Blended family:** Refers to a family unit made up of one or more children raised by a remarried biological parent and a step parent (Jensen & Howard, 2015).

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### Introduction

This chapter acts as a road map where it introduces the research strategy. It begins with the background to the study which puts the problem of the research into appropriate context and gives a wide overview of the research title, by discussing attachment styles, blended families and adolescent psychosocial development variables. In addition, other concepts that are presented include: problem statement, objectives, research questions, justification, significance, scope, limitations and lastly a summary of the chapter.

#### Background to the study

Adolescence is a sensitive time for young people where they question themselves on body image, self-esteem, who they really are, how they can handle parental and societal expectations and deal with emanating challenges that generate stress (Smith et al.,2018). In addition, adolescence is also a time of flexibility where the adolescent is willing to learn new things, acquire global information, attain advanced skills and competencies ;for instance, on how to deal with their own emotions (Gramaje et al.,2019). There are many social determinants connected with adolescent wellness where attachment to parents is prioritized (Gramaje et al., 2019).

Cooke et al.(2018) suggests that parental adolescent connection should be founded on appropriate communication, lack of alienation and trust which in turn results in a healthy parent



adolescent relationship. On the other hand, a parent –child relationship that is based on higher levels of alienation, minimal trust and communication provides an unhealthy base for an individual’s wellbeing (Mohd et al.,2010). This attachment relationship begins in early childhood and is said to affect later mental scheme that adolescents internalize about self and people they interact with and is exemplified by Bowlby’s (1969) Attachment Theory (Allen et al., 2018). Also the relationship between parents and infants is embedded on trust, communication and lack of alienation and these three factors depict secure attachment (Mohd et al., 2010).

According to Cook et al.(2018), an individual feels greatly secured when the relationship with parents is based on trust and communication with less anger and alienation. Similarly Armsden and Greenberg (1987) indicated that trust, communication and feeling of alienation are the three factors that shape the quality of parent- child attachment, and can affect the quality of the mentioned attachment either positively or negatively. This lays the basis of either a secure or insecure parent –child attachment.

Parental-child attachment is perhaps one of the most significant aspects that affect individuals growth of all ages ((Heerden, 2018). In this regard, different attachment styles result in different effects on children’s social and attitudinal outcomes (Heerden, 2018). Moreover, attachment issues become significant as children enter adolescence especially due to the increased involvement of peers. This normally results in the adolescents’ reevaluation of their attachment to parental figures (Magai et al.,2018). Parent-child attachment develops along a continuum of creating bonds- from birth, through infancy, and into early adolescence (Jensen & Howard, 2015). These bonds influence the development of individuals in their entire lifetime and

are known to provide emotional support, connectedness and enhance a continuous growth process in a person's life (Jensen & Howard,2015).

The father and mother attachment are two constructs that comprise parental attachment and have been found to influence how adolescents develop emotionally, cognitively, socially and how they explore their environment (Wambua et al., 2018).The parent and the adolescent determine the nature and degree of their relationship, that is whether it may be close and enduring or distant (Rehman & Butt, 2016). This affection connection is exemplified in physical acts such as warm greetings, smiling broadly and stretching out of arms for instance, in the case of a child receiving a parent (Rehman & Butt, 2016).

Attachment styles are close relationships between adolescents and their care givers or relationships with other people that matter in their lives (Kamza, 2019).For purposes of the study, the researcher examined parental attachment with specific reference to the attachment styles adopted by parents towards their children and especially those in adolescent stage in blended families.Two categories of attachment styles have been variously identified and found to be common in parent-child relationship, these are secure attachment and insecure attachment (anxious-ambivalent attachment, avoidant attachment and disorganized-disoriented attachment) (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018).

Securely attached style manifests itself when the attachment is unconditional. In such cases, children realize that, the caregiver loves, cares, values them and stands by them in times of need, which results in high sense of trust and emotional closeness between the child and the caregiver (Kamza, 2019).Moreover, children whose parents provide a secure base tend to have strong connections with other people during adolescence and adulthood and in case of a conflict or disagreement, they are not afraid of abandonment (Kumar & Mattanah, 2016).

Insecure attachment has four categories; firstly, anxious ambivalent where children are often insecure and crave for continuous affirmation by their caregivers (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018). Such children cannot trust the caregiver, they fear abandonment, and are very apprehensive of their environment especially in the absence of the caregiver (Mikulincer & Shaver 2018). In addition, adolescents who adopt the said style become emotionally dependent on the friends. They expect the friends to be very close to them yet they do not reciprocate, which results to instability in relationship therefore, retaining friendships becomes tough (Davis, 2018). In their adulthood, they are often reluctant to interact closely and worry that such interactions may be unhealthy, they easily breakup relationships and become devastated after the relationship ends (Davis, 2018).

The next category of insecure attachment is avoidant. Essentially, adolescents with avoidant attachment style are independent and are averse to intimacy (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018). They may completely avoid relationships, feel adequate without the assistance of their caregivers, feel unwanted, fail to express emotions and are alienated from other people (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018). They are less concerned with intimate relationship and rarely get stressed if relationships break (Sierra & Moretti, 2020).

The third category is the disorganized attachment style. This style tends to bear attributes of anxious ambivalent and avoidant attachment styles (Granqvist, Sroufe, Dozier, et al., 2017). Parents who adopt the disorganized attachment style respond by being fearful in situations of stress with their adolescents (Granqvist et al., 2017). This makes adolescents reactive, uncontrollable, have poor communication skills, negative towards issues, inability to manage their emotions and get difficulties in connecting appropriately with care givers (Kamza, 2019).

Children have a healthy holistic growth for instance, socially, emotionally and psychologically where parents provide a secure environment for them to grow and mature to adolescence and finally to adulthood (Eagleton et al., 2016). Adolescents who grow in insecure environments have been associated with high degree of worry, depression and involvement in behavioral problems (Doinita & Maria, 2015). While these parental attachment styles may be typical in normal families, they may be challenging in step family settings, where there is increased amount of stress and especially when children are in adolescent stage (Willis & Limb, 2016). The present study sought to find out parental attachment styles that are adopted by step fathers and step mothers in parenting step adolescents and how these attachment styles affect their psychosocial development constructs of self- esteem, identity and autonomy.

Psychosocial development for instance, self-esteem, identity and autonomy in adolescents are crucial developmental tasks. As adolescents advance in age, their self- concept should be more orderly and differentiated (Martiny & Rubin, 2016). Further, this is a period when adolescents are confused of who they really are and face a challenge of establishing equilibrium and congruous sense of self (Martiny & Rubin, 2016). Adolescents at this time focus more on the ideal self which is based on traits that are important to them other than the actual self ;hence, there is a mismatch between the two aspects and this may lead to depressive symptoms and low self-esteem (Suzuki & Tomoda, 2015). This assertion is in line with (Ksenija, 2016) who stipulated that adolescents who depict weak self-concept and instability in the way they describe themselves are prone to depression and anxiety in adolescence stage. In addition, self-concept is enhanced by adolescents' interaction in the home, environment and community (Ksenija, 2016).

Adolescent evaluation of self-concept lays a foundation for global self-esteem (Erdvic et al., 2019). Global self- esteem is a comprehensive judgment of an individual's self- worth and

self-acceptance (Erdvic et al, 2019). Adolescents usually have a low self-esteem due to the changes that they go through during the adolescence period and sometimes because of comparing themselves with peers (Ksenija, 2016). They gauge themselves in regard to many facets and associations for instance friendships, education and athletic capabilities (Erdvic et al., 2019). Adolescents depict high self-esteem when they succeed in what they view crucial to them (Orth & Robin, 2014). While favorable self-assessment is related to positive adaptation and affability in adolescents of all classes, low self- esteem is connected to poor adjustment and depression (Orth & Robin, 2014).

Parents who provide a warm, trustworthy secure base for adolescents are likely to bring up adolescents that depict a high self-esteem (Mineva et al., 2018). On the contrary, if the parent adolescent relationship lacks trust and communication, or is inconsistent, abusive and critical the adolescent has higher chances of developing a low self-esteem. From the above it is clear that parent involvement and parenting strategies are very important in adolescent self-esteem development. It was interesting to find out how step parents related with their adolescent step children and whether these connections influenced their global self-esteem evaluation.

Erickson (1993) identity theory stipulates that it is key for adolescents to develop self-congruency, identity stability and the need to establish a self-value system, to consolidate their identity growth. Further, a strong support system especially from parents or care givers is key for the identity process (Erickson, 1993). This brings to the fore the importance of parents' presence in the lives of adolescents identity construction. Berzonsky (2004) on the other hand, states that the end result of an individual's identity formation can either be strong or weak ,depending on their conflict resolution strategies and appropriate decision making process. This assertion concurs with Erickson's (1993) that, parents are crucial in promoting adolescent identity by

providing a conducive relational environment for them. This may imply that parent-adolescent relationship matters.

The present study sought to explore adolescent identity formation from Berzonsky's (2011) perspective to find out how attachment styles adopted by step parents affected adolescents identity styles development. The study discussed three components of identity styles namely; informational, normative and diffuse avoidant identity styles. Berzonsky (2004) suggested that self-identity styles are salient to the growth of adolescent psychosocial development. Adolescents are focused in finding out their self-identity, explore individual values, beliefs and define their goals (Jensen & Harris, 2017). These aspects had not been fully explored especially from blended families' perspectives and that is why this study was crucial.

The aspect of autonomy growth is equally important in the life of adolescents. According to Holden (2010) the quest for autonomy is a crucial developmental feature of adolescents. It is a period where they obtain autonomy, become more self-driven and detach to a great extent from their parents or caregivers which enhances responsible behavior (Kamza, 2019). The cultural aspect is a major determinant when it comes to matters of adolescent autonomy and parent relatedness and it differs from one cultural group to the other (Bosman & Kerns, 2015).

The main developmental subject matter of attachment in teenagers is the equilibrium between a child's developing autonomy, the desire for connectedness and traditional differences in the growth trends in the attachment, which may be considered in regards to individualism and collectivism alignments within ones cultural contexts (Bosman & Kerns, 2015). For instance, in The United States of America and Western Europe, a lot of emphasis is placed on the need for adolescent independence and autonomy unlike in Japan or China whose culture is more collectivistic; hence, they stress more on inter independence (Bosman & Kerns, 2015).

It was crucial to find out how this aspect of adolescent autonomy was like in the Kenyan context especially in Kiambu County which justified the importance of this study. Further, parents play a major role in assisting adolescents in developing autonomy by ensuring that they provide a secure base, offer guidance and trust them to make independent decisions where necessary (Rote & Smetana, 2017). Autonomy that surfaces during the adolescence period can be classified as emotional, behavioral and value autonomy (Karabonova & Poskrebsheva, 2013). The present study focused on emotional autonomy and sought to explore its components which included; individuation, deidealization, non-dependency and viewing parents as people (Sandhu et al., 2012). It endeavored to find out whether attachment styles used by parents affected adolescent emotional autonomy development from a blended family angle.

Shafer et al. (2017) shows that step families are established when two individuals commit to a relationship either through cohabiting or marriage and come along with a child or children from previous relationships. Research in The United States of America indicates most married spouses are step parents and therefore have step children (Evans & Martin, 2015). The percentage is lower for older couple households than for the younger families as 62% of wedded spouses are below 55 years and have step children relations across three age groups (Moorefield & Pasley, 2013). Also (Monaliza et al., 2020) found out that one characteristic of blended family formation is the presence of children. It has been noted that in The US, when a step family is formed, many step children join this remarriage system when they are below 18 years of age and are prone to destabilizing the family relationship due to attachment problems (Njoroge & Kirori, 2018). The above study was done in the US and it was important to find out the dynamics of blended families in Kenya and more so in Kiambu County.

According to Moorefield and Pasley(2013), step families have been associated with struggles and challenges and are depicted very negatively in comparison to the biological families. However, they have quite a number of benefits ,an assertion in line with (King et al., 2015) who stipulated that step families have not only short term but also long term gains. Members and mentors in the family increase resulting to a stronger family support system, relationship role models and development of resilience (King et al.,2015).

Adolescents in mother-step father households experience less levels of stress especially if they are in a close relationship with their step father(King et al.,2015) a premise that (King & Lindstrom, 2017) concur with. They state that adolescents who connect closely with their step father are able to adjust which lowers depressive symptoms. Equally (Jensen & Howard, 2015) supports the assertion that a step parent adolescents interaction that is favorable reduces adolescents stress and enables adolescents transition into step families bearable.

In addition, a warm supportive environment provided by step parents promotes the adolescents' emotional, psychological and general wellbeing (Kamza, 2019). This literature implied that step families have their strengths and that an adolescent can thrive in it just like their peers in biological households.The current study sought to establish whether a conducive environment provided by step parents was beneficial to adolescents and if it promoted their psychosocial growth.

Adolescents raised in step families are disadvantaged than their counterparts in biological households (Chapman et al.,2016). In addition,mythological narratives about wicked stepmothers have been on the rise (Cartwright & Gibson, 2017). Njoroge and Kirori (2018) stipulates that adolescents experience a myriad of challenges for example; relational issues, lack of trust with their caregivers and feeling alienated which results in noncommittal relationships with step



parents. Other problematic issues include; weak academic outcomes, delinquency, and behavioral problems in comparison to children brought up in intact biological families (Chapman et al.,2016).Challenges noted are; role ambiguity, conflict in co-parenting, poor communication, favoritism of own biological children, managing losses from previous relationship and interference from without (Ganong, et al 2015).

Insecure step parent adolescents' relationship is detrimental to their wellbeing (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018). From the above literature there seemed to be a lot of struggles experienced by adolescents and their step parents as far as relationships are concerned. This may have a negative impact on the adolescent psychosocial development. Research by (Cartwright & Gibson, 2017) alluded to challenges of re parenting and recommended that more research should be done on step families relationships with their adolescents, a concern this study sought to address .

Research studies in Europe have also indicated that step fathers and step mothers who adopt a secure attachment style as a strategy of parenting adolescents have an easier time relating with them, than those stepparents who choose to use insecure attachment methods (Jensen et al., 2019). While children generally accept step parents, it is imperative for the step parent to maintain a positive relationship with the children (Jensen & Howard, 2015). The need for this is more profound during adolescence because they are undergoing transition process in their social relationships and are trying to fit in the newly formed step parent families (Jensen & Harris, 2017).

The initial months of a step parent family existence are the most challenging as the step parents engage with step children or step adolescents in forming new relationships (Jensen & Harris, 2017). These relational problems are heightened by the fact that when step fathers and step mothers enter in a new marriage relationship, they come along with their children. Each of

the parents has to somehow accept the children that the partner brings into the marriage (Golish, 2000). On the other hand, children join a new step parent family unaware of the reality that the parents chose them and this fact makes them anxious of how they are going to cope in this new relationship and several questions on how to address the step parent becomes a struggle within them (Hart, 2009).

Adolescents especially have a problem in using the terms “father” or ‘mother’ verbatim to refer to a step parent who is not their biological parent as there is no attachment between the step parent and step siblings. This results in heightened anger and resentment from the step parent, who develops a feeling that the step children or step adolescents have chosen to disobey; hence, straining the relationship further (Hart, 2009). This may point to the fact that such relationships may be stressful to both the step parents and step adolescents and this underscored the need for this study to establish ways in which step parents attachment styles affected adolescents’ development.

According to King et al.(2015) step mothers have a hard time dealing with step adolescents than the stepfathers which makes them stressed out thereby, increasing the distance between the step adolescents and step mothers (King et al., 2015). Moreover, there is often competition between step adolescents and step parents. For instance, an adolescent who joins a step family relationship where the biological father marries a step mother, the adolescent seeks the attention of the biological father while the step mother also demands for attention with the adolescent biological father who is currently the husband (King et al., 2015).

This makes the adolescent feel abandoned by the father (King et al., 2015). The adolescents hatred for the mother increases, they alienate themselves from the stepmother and shut their communication channels with them (Kumar & Mattanah, 2016). King and Lindstorm (2017)

argues that adolescents who are raised by two biological parents have been rated higher in terms of parental closeness than those brought up in step family households.

Adolescents in blended families are more disadvantaged in terms of their holistic growth than those in unscathed nuclear families (Brown et al, 2015). In The United States for instance, adolescents living with step fathers have been associated with unhealthy development in comparison to those parented by single fathers or raised by two biological parents (Zion et al.,2014). Similarly, studies have established that older step children are affected academically to an extent of failing to join high schools as a result of poor grades especially when a mutual child is born in the step family (Turunen,2014). This was depicted in a Swedish study that analyzed data from 870,000 ninth graders participants who were sampled from step families that had younger mutual children (Turunen, 2014).

It may be presumed that the step father and step mother get more attached to the mutual child because the child becomes a product of the two parents and somehow loosen the attachment to the rest of the elder children, who may be in the adolescent stage, which in turn affects their wellbeing. It was significant to answer the question “how else were the adolescents affected by their parents’ attachment styles with regard to self-esteem, autonomy and identity? This study sought to respond to these questions.

Studies in Sub- Sahara Africa indicate that many families are majorly traditional but are gradually embracing changes that are occurring globally in terms of formation of step families (Dube, 2015). Wamoyi and Wright (2014) emphasize the differences in expectations between adolescents and their parents and how they connect to each other in the Mwanza region of northern Tanzania. Findings indicated that adolescents desired parents that were active listeners and they also expressed the need to be loved and cared for by their care givers. On the other

hand, parents felt that providing basic needs, holding family gatherings where they engaged in conversations with adolescents and respecting their decisions were measures that enhanced their connectedness (Dube, 2015).

Chacha (2015) highlighted a case in Kenya at Githurai Nairobi where angry neighbors stormed into a woman's residence and cautioned her on mistreating her step children. This may be an indication of poor parental attachment between the step mother and step children. Studies on parental attachment in Africa and especially in Kenya are few particularly those involving early and middle adolescents. Evidently missing in most studies were aspects of the adolescents self-esteem, identity and autonomy maturity which created a void that was worth investigation in this study. This study focused on secure and insecure attachment styles and incorporated components of trust, communication and alienation to explain how they influenced adolescents' psychosocial development (self-esteem, identity and self-esteem) in blended families.

#### Statement of the Problem

Conservative family structures where children are reared by natural parents is gradually fading and the society is embracing the notion of blended families which are formed after divorce, death of spouses and separation after spouses choose to remarry. This has resulted to an increase in the number of children living in step parentage households. Joining a step family has been noted to pose a lot of relational, emotional, psychological challenges to especially adolescents who are also experiencing individual changes in their adolescence period (Amato, 2010). This means that, adolescents are struggling with changes that occur during adolescence stage as well as trying to adjust in step families' households. Failure to adjust appropriately may be detrimental to their well-being. Furthermore, scanty literature exists on the crucial role that

parents in blended families play in explaining teenage behavior for instance; adolescent quitting school, criminality, violence, drug abuse and roaming difficulties of Kenyan adolescents as a result of unhealthy psychosocial maturity. Moreover, scarcely any data was obtainable on how parental attachment styles affected self-esteem, identity and autonomy development of adolescents especially those who hailed from blended families in Kiambu County. This therefore made this study significant.

While studies have been carried out in Kenya for instance, on defective blended families (Chacha,2015), behavior and emotional challenges experienced by both children and adolescents (Magai et al.,2018), the relationship between family dynamics and adolescent academics in blended family,(Njoroge&Kirori,2018), attachment connectedness and adolescent risky behavior (Wambua et al., 2018), few studies have explored the connection linking adolescent psychosocial growth and attachment in step families particularly where one of the parents is a step mother or a step father.

Although the above mentioned studies offered an overall picture of teenagers cognitive, academic, emotional and societal concerns in Kenya, none explained constructs of adolescents psychosocial development as focused in the current study.

#### Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to assess the influence of attachment styles on adolescent psychosocial development among secondary school students from blended families in Kiambu County, Kenya.

## Objectives of the study

This study was guided by the following objectives, to;

- i. Examine the attachment styles adopted by parents of adolescents among blended families in Kiambu County.
- ii. Evaluate the influence of attachment styles on establishment of self-esteem among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County
- iii. Evaluate the influence of attachment styles on establishment of identity among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County
- iv. Assess the influence of attachment styles on establishment of autonomy among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County.

## Research Questions

- i. Which attachment styles are adopted by parents of adolescents in blended families from Kiambu County?
- ii. How do attachment styles influence self-esteem development of adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County?
- iii. How do attachment styles influence identity development of adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County
- iv. How do attachment styles influence autonomy development of adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County?

### Significance of the study

The research sought to assess the influence of attachment styles on adolescent psychosocial development among secondary school students from blended families in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study was necessitated by evidence of clear inability of step parents to adopt appropriate attachment styles which in turn pose challenges to adolescents' living in blended families and thereby affecting their psychosocial development. In a bid to satisfactorily address this challenge, it was prudent to conduct this empirical study to assess the influence of attachment styles on adolescents' psychosocial development. The study is significant on different levels. First its findings revealed that step parents adopt secure or insecure attachment styles and these have an influence on adolescent psychosocial development (self-esteem, identity styles and emotional autonomy). The findings could sensitize the Ministry of Education to come up with policies that recognize and are friendly to blended families. For instance in schools, role of parents/ guardians should be elaborated to accommodate the unique circumstances of blended families. The Ministry should also mainstream counseling in schools and equip it with appropriate resources both human and financial to adequately address problematic issues in schools which will enhance adolescents' psychosocial development.

The findings may be significant to school counselors in assisting them look out for problematic issues pertaining to adolescents from blended families as opposed to the general school fraternity. The study is important to step parents families in that it brings to the fore the role they play in adolescents' lives and the need to embrace step children as early as possible after joining the blended families so as to enhance their self-esteem, identity styles and emotional autonomy. To the larger society, the findings could create awareness of the importance of embracing blended families households and thereby provide a conducive environment that will

enhance these families well-being. The researcher hopes to share the information gathered from adolescents from blended families with the current Kiambu County Ministry of Education. The study generates empirical information on the importance of adopting appropriate attachment styles for the sake of adolescents' development and thereby filling the gaps in knowledge. Similar studies in other categories of blended families and other educational institutions may also emerge from this research findings.

### Scope of the Study

The study was undertaken in public secondary schools in Kiambu County. The county is diverse in terms of geographical location, social cultural practices and economic empowerment. The county has also a high population of students and this aided in accessing a good number of students from blended families. The study involved students aged between 13- 19 years who lived in blended family households where one of the parent was either a step father and a biological mother or a step mother and a biological father. Further, the study captured students from 9 public boarding secondary schools in Kiambu County. The study used mixed method design to find out how the independent variable affected the dependent variable

### Limitations of the study.

The study was done during the Covid 19 season and this posed a challenge where some institutions were reluctant to allow the researcher in their institutions. After explaining to the school principals that the researcher would liaise with the school counselor, permission was granted. Also, there are many types of blended families but the focus of the current study was on blended family where one of the step parent was either a step father and a biological mother or a



step mother and a biological father. This means that the results could not be generalized to all types of blended families.

In addition, the study was conducted in secondary schools in Kiambu County and for this reason, results could not be generalized across all Kenyan adolescents who come from blended families. Finally, social desirability bias is an important consideration in interpreting results, as questionnaires included questions of a sensitive nature. Students may have answered some questions in a way they felt to be socially right. However, the researcher and the assistants assured the respondents that they were free to participate or not participate in the study. In addition, participants were assured of confidentiality and they were all responsive.

#### Assumptions of the study

The study was based on the following assumptions;

Step parents in blended families use attachment styles that enhance adolescents' psychosocial development. This was confirmed in the study in that step parents attachment that had higher levels of trust and communication and less alienation was found to enhance adolescent psychosocial development. Also attachment styles adopted by step parents in blended families promote adolescents self-esteem. This was found to be true in that adolescents whose step parents adopted secure attachment style reported high levels of self-esteem. Moreover, attachment styles used by step parents in blended families enhance adolescents' identity.

This was confirmed to be true from the study for three of the four identity styles constructs; informational, diffuse avoidant, commitment but not for normative identity style. In addition, attachment styles adopted by step parents in blended families promote adolescents

autonomy. This was found to be true in that adolescents whose step parents adopted secure attachment styles were found to have strong emotional autonomy (deidealization, individuation, seeing parents as people and non-dependency).

#### Justification of the study

Many research studies have explored and supported the notion that attachment in the initial period of the life of children has a bearing on adolescent future growth. Although research stipulates that a close bond that unites the care taker and the children in the early years has an impact on the way children behave as they mature, the pathway of impact is more indirect than direct and often entails mediating variables which happen in the duration between measurement of attachment during the initial period of growth and the assessment of behavioral outcome variable in the later period of growth. Past research has brought to the fore a few mediating variables for instance, environmental, relations, behavior and personal adolescent features. Few studies have been conducted to find out how attachment styles affect adolescent self -esteem, identity styles formation and emotional autonomy especially from a blended families perspective where one partner is a step parent and the other biological parent particularly in Africa and Kenyan context.

The study sought to create more awareness on the effect of attachment styles on adolescents' psychosocial growth in blended family households in a bid to enhance parental adolescent connection in blended families. In addition, when people are sensitized about blended families, they will comprehend better, understand what the necessities of these adolescents are and give support to their step parents so that they can improve adolescents' health. Additionally,

there is scant research to create awareness in this area of research and this made the study significant.

#### Summary Chapter

From the background, various studies found out that parental attachment styles could both be secure or insecure and have an influence on adolescents' wellbeing. Research also stipulates that children and adolescents in blended families experience relationship challenges as they connect with step parents. Lack of proper attachment with significant others may interfere with their psychological, emotional and social growth. All these aspects were established from a blended family perspective in the study. Next chapter discusses methodology.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to bring to the fore past literature that has been reviewed and has a bearing on the current study. It presents the methodology used, the findings arrived at, the conclusions in relation to the gap of knowledge that was addressed in chapter one. The chapter begins by discussing the variables of the study, thereafter, gives a discussion of each of the research objectives; attachment styles and adolescent self-esteem; attachment styles and adolescents identity, and attachment styles and adolescents autonomy. Next it explains the theoretical framework that expounds on the research problem and depicts why it was key to investigate it, and later discusses the conceptual framework which exemplifies the relationships of the variables in order to justify the research problem. Lastly, a brief summary of the chapter is presented. This chapter assisted in identifying the methodology used in chapter 3 and also contributed to the overall findings of this study.

#### Attachment styles adopted by parents of adolescents from blended families

Bowlby (1969) came up with the Attachment Theory and stipulated that earliest connections formed between children and their parents have a huge impact throughout life (Jensen et al.,2017). Bowlby stated that when children are born,they are biologically programmed to create attachments and dependency is formed (Jensen & Harris 2017). Attachment styles begin during childhood as children look up to those who give support, care and protection (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine,2017). Similarly, Jense and Harris(2017) stated that

children who have close relationship with attachment figure receive support, comfort and protection and are more likely to survive to adolescent and adulthood. Attachment is a gradual and natural process that emerges progressively from childhood through to adulthood (Rehman & Butt, 2016).

Appropriate relationship between adolescents and their significant other especially care givers is paramount for healthy living of adolescents. Creating such connection is a two way process where the caregivers and the adolescents make a deliberate effort to make the relationship work (Rehman & Butt, 2016). This assertion is supported by Majimbo (2017) who states that the two parties should strive to strengthen their relation bond, show understanding and be respectful to each other.

According to Cooke et al. (2018) parental adolescent connection should be founded on appropriate communication, lack of alienation and trust which results to a healthy adolescent relationship. A parent-child relationship that is based on higher levels of alienation, minimal trust and communication provides an unhealthy attachment for adolescents (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). According to Allen et al. (2018), adolescent attachment styles are formed in the early years of their growth and are influenced by the connections between the parents and the adolescents.

Akhtar (2011) agrees with this notion that adolescents who develop close relationships with their parents at a young age depict strong attachment bonds in their adolescence period. As much as the study focused on adolescents, it also alluded to some literature review on early childhood attachment because it had a bearing on the current study in that it depicted how early childhood parental attachment affected children either positively or negatively when they transit to adolescence period. Bowlby's Attachment Theory identifies two broad attachment styles

namely, secure and insecure (anxious ambivalent, avoidant and disorganized) and they all affect children's outcomes in life (Bowlby,1969). This study focused on secure and insecure attachment styles to find out how they influence adolescent psychosocial development from a blended family perspective.

### Secure Attachment

A secure attachment is the most appropriate foundation for a healthy emotional, physical, social and intellectual development(Mikulincer&Shaver,2018). During the initial years of development, children with secure parental relationship depict a healthy attachment with their care givers when they warm up to them by smiling, running and stretching out their hands towards the caregivers so that they can hug them which is a sign of affection (Rehman & Butt, 2016). Similarly, other children show appreciation of their care giver by the way they respond for instance, if the caregiver was away for a while and they reunite the child becomes jovial (Granqvist et al.,2017). Moreover, such children explore their environment with confidence because they can count on the parents' support, love and care in case of any predicament (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018).

For instance, they may be playing with new toys or a person they are unfamiliar with but in the presence of the caregivers, they can depict attachment mannerism by weeping or looking for their care givers when they feel distant or alienated from them. The parents immediately respond to their cry and come to their rescue making the child feel protected and secure (Doinita & Maria, 2015). This notion is also supported by Rehman and Butt (2016) who observes that parents have the most power to comfort their children when they find themselves in strange situations or when overwhelmed. Also, a parent- child connection is founded on high levels of communication and trust and lack of alienation which depicts a secure attachment (Koehn &

Kerns,2018). Children whose parents are concerned and sensitive to their needs establish a connection of secure parent –child attachment and consequently foster a basic attitude of trust towards others (DeWinter et al., 2016).

The future mental scheme created by adolescents of themselves is associated by the emotional bonds formed by children and their primary caregivers in early years of life (Monaco et al.,2019). This bond also influences the way the child grows to view the world around them (Monaco et al., 2019). That early parental attachment yields positive effects in adolescents in terms of emotional connectedness, the ability to build safe and secure relationships, enhances development of high self-esteem and lowers the risk of psychological problems (Erozkan et al., 2016). Similarly, Rosen (2016) states that healthy parental adolescent relationship is a key ingredient to adolescents' growth of self-esteem, a premise also shared by Orth and Robin (2014) that adolescents who have great levels of caregivers quality support tend to have high levels of self-esteem. Therefore, parents who are present in their children lives early enough enable them establish trust in relating with other people which is crucial for their well-being (Cooke et al., 2018).

Mikulincer and Shaver (2018) stated that parents who love children in their initial stage in life have a lasting implication on later attachment. In a sample on early adoptees, (Cyr et al.,2020) indicated that there is a correlation between parental support when a child is one year old and secure bond of a child who is fourteen years. In addition, Raby et al. (2015) indicates that early caregiver involvement in children's life predicts fewer behavioral problems in adolescence. Similarly, Majimbo (2017) stated that a secure environment produces adolescents that are less disruptive, more mature and less aggressive. Moreover, Calajat et al. (2014) in a study on adolescents' psychosocial neurosis associates age group impact to lower psychosocial

capability from childhood to later adolescents' years. However, parents continue carrying out their role in providing a secure base for the adolescent to fall back to when they experience challenging psychological problems from their peers (Wambua et al., 2018)

Adolescents who were closely connected to parents in their young age are said to have a constructive outlook of themselves, parents and peers (Akhtar, 2011). A notion that Behrens and Fisherman (2017) agrees with by stating that such adolescents have appropriate relationships with others while Majimbo (2017) adds that they self-regulate emotionally and are aware of who they are. Such closeness with significant others enables an adolescent to face challenges that come their way and are better placed to deal with mental health issues for instance stress (Gaiha et al., 2020). According to Guarnieri et al.(2015), adolescents who have secure relationships with their care givers report more positive affect, greater satisfaction with life, less stress and better interpersonal skills.

Adolescents who develop a secure relationship with their care givers that have high communication levels open up to them about their feelings and therefore comprehend and find out how to cope with such feelings (Koehn & Kerns,2018). Similarly, Guarnieri et al.(2015) found out that adolescents who have appropriate communication with their parents reported greater life satisfaction than adolescents with unhealthy parent communication skills. In addition, good communication and high levels of trust between adolescents and their care givers enhances adolescence ability to willingly talk about their problematic issues with their parents which inturn, allows parents to monitor the adolescents behavior and give the needed support and advice (Koehn & Kerns,2018). These factors strengthen the bond between the parents and adolescents.



Adolescents who have a secure base become autonomous and explore new alternatives (Allen et al., 2018). Additionally, Kaniusonyte and Zukauskiene (2018) indicated that intimate interactions that care givers have with their adolescents enhance the formation of self-identity, a premise that is in line with other scholars for instance; Ratner (2014). These studies on early secure parental attachment form a foundation for adolescent development and underscores the significance of continued parental attachment for adolescents which was a key variable in the current study.

#### Insecure attachment

Mónaco (2019) carried out a study among Spanish adolescents whose findings indicated that adolescents who form an intimate bond of trust with their care givers, report high positive affect, lower stress levels, greater life satisfaction and a strong self-esteem. In contrast adolescents with insecure attachment with primary care givers are likely to experience challenges in regulating emotions, experience low self- esteem and are more prone to engage in negative behavior (Monaco et al., 2019). According to Wambua et al. (2018) adolescents can develop mental illness if they are in insecure relationship with their loved ones.

Care givers who adopt insecure attachment style, are distant with their children, tend to create fear, uncertainty, and insecurity hence predispose them to developing psychopathology when they become adolescents (Tong, 2013). This view is in line with Campbell et al.(2000) who states that lack of support and care of children early in life can result to them developing mental health problems in their adolescent period. A study done among adolescents relationships with parents in Srilanka stipulated that parents are the basic social institution that enhance adolescents' psychological wellbeing (Pathirana, 2016).

The findings of these studies show that parents that respond in an inconsistent manner to the adolescents enhance their insecurity. Moreover, a study carried out to find out how adolescents perceive their relationship with parents depicted that adolescents raised in households where parents are unfriendly are perceived by adolescents as unwelcoming, inhospitable, inaccessible and antagonistic (Newland, 2015).

Parents who adopt insecure attachment style raise infants that show no signs of distress and disregard or keep away from their care giver after they reconvene (Willis & Limb, 2016). Similarly, Oconnor and Boag (2010) suggests that when such infants are exploring new areas, they rarely bother or take notice of their care givers because they assume that these care givers will not come to their rescue even when they are in distress. Moreover, if they are in the company of their parents and unfamiliar individuals, the children do not depict a liking for their parents over that of the strangers (Oconnor & Boag, 2010).

#### Avoidant attachment style

Avoidant attachment may start during early childhood (Shui, 2016). In case children sense that the caregiver or parent may reject them, overtime these children adapt (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018). Children with avoidant attachment style cease seeking connection or expressing how they feel when their inner needs for relationship and physical closeness are unmet (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018). Children with avoidant attachment are likely to develop unsociable and unbecoming behavior as they mature in life (Monaco et al., 2019). As adolescents, they tend to be independent and are less interested in getting into intimate connections with others, they believe that other people despise and undervalue them and avoid under any circumstances to seek help from their significant other (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018).

Similarly, they pose mixed feelings when it comes to relationships in that on one hand they feel the need of being emotionally connected but on the other, they become worried, alienated and nervous when other people come close to them (Akhtar, 2011). This emanates from their childhood where they felt unloved, rejected and uncared for and therefore lost trust in their parents (Allen et al., 2018). Sometimes when parents are confronted with a child's emotions, they may feel overwhelmed or anxious and may block communication with the child, ignore their cry for emotional needs and distance themselves from the child when they seek comfort or affection. This makes the child develop insecure attachment (Jensen & Pace, 2016). Avoidantly attached adolescents suffer in silence because they do not trust their care givers and have poor communication skill. They therefore struggle to verbalize when they have emotional needs (Jensen & Pace, 2016). Parents should avoid shunning from their adolescents.

Anxious ambivalent attachment style.

People that have anxious ambivalent attachment style have difficulties feeling secure in connecting with others. In childhood, they cling to their parents and become inconsolable when the parents leaves the family (Shui, 2016). Children who use anxious ambivalent pattern assume their care givers are inconsistent in the ways they respond to them any time they are in need. In addition, they limit their exploration particularly if the care givers are not with them, depict angry outbursts and feel abandoned (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018). During adolescence, such adolescents do not express or deal with their emotions which results to their inability to regulate these emotions which resulting to aggressiveness, deviancy and behavior problems (Alessandra et al., 2019).

This premise has been supported by Davis (2018) who stipulated that an anxious ambivalent attachment pattern predicts an increase in aggression behavior in adolescents in comparison to those adolescents who are in secure relationships. Also, they become over dependent on other people and this makes them loose friends because they tend to cling and are possessive of friends which makes the latter tired of such relationship (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018). Further Akhtar (2011) concurs that such adolescents worry that other people are hesitant and fail to warm up to their friendship, they are afraid of losing friends and being abandoned and they desire to hold onto friends and relationships for long.

#### Disorganized attachment style

Disorganized attachment style is also called ‘ the forgotten attachment style’ (Cartwright & Gibson, 2017). It is the attachment style that is considered most intense of the four attachment styles. It develops in a dysfunctional family where the child develops trauma, abuse or chaos in the family (Cartwright & Gibson, 2017). This results in the child becoming fearful since they lack a secure base to turn to for stable emotional safety, comfort and support (Cartwright & Gibson, 2017). Disorganized attachment style has been associated with psychopathology both in childhood and in adolescence (Granquist et al., 2017). Children perceive their caregiver as frightening, they have a difficult time associating with them and often appear confused on the return of their parents (Wambua et al., 2018).

In moments of distress, such parents become worried and frightened and this results to their children alienating themselves from them, both in childhood and as adolescents (Kamza, 2019). In addition, adolescents are unable to communicate to them when need arises and this makes them explode in an unhealthy manner because they cannot control or manage their

emotions (Kamza, 2019). This attachment style has also been found to have characteristics of both avoidant and anxious ambivalent styles (Granquist et al., 2017).

People with a disorganized attachment style are ever anxious and often oscillate between primary human need for belonging and their drive for survival (Cartwright & Gibson 2017). They are unable to form relationships with other people because of trust issues (Cartwright & Gibson, 2017). According to Coleman and Holder (2015), few research studies have been carried out on attachment styles in relation to parent-adolescent relationships. Further, fewer studies have established the link between observed behavior outcomes and parental attachment styles (Jain, 2015). Past studies have explored more of mother- children attachment while others do not split paternal and maternal attachment; thus, ignoring the significant responsibilities of a father figure in adolescence development (Monaco et al., 2019). Also the above attachment styles were worth studying because they indicated the pillars of Bowlby Attachment Theory which guided this study. Consequently, when adolescents perceive their parents in negative regard, and they are unwilling to seek audience and compassion from their care giver. This may result in distant relationship which may be unhealthy to both parties.

### Blended families

Blended families have also been referred to as step families, complicated family or reconstituted family unit where one or both spouses have children from a former relationship and have joined to form a new family (Cartwright, 2012). Blended families may also be comprised of people who did not get married but bore a child, divorced people from dysfunctional marriages or those that were deserted or neglected by their former spouses (Turunen, 2014). This study focused on blended families where one or both spouses had children. The blended family has

often been termed as an incomplete institution (Russell & Beckmeyer, 2018). In spite of considerable interest in step families, there are still important gaps in current knowledge in the ability to give enough information for step families (Cartwright, 2012) hence, the significance of this study.

Although blended family households are increasing and may one day outnumber the traditional nuclear families, negative connotations still surround them (Russell & Beckmeyer, 2018). According to Turunen (2014), the concept of blended family has been around for a while but many blended families were not recognized until marriage took place between the parents and there was an agreement from both parents about taking care of the children even if one of the parents was not biologically related to the children (Koehn & Kerns, 2018).

Society acknowledges adults in a relationship bringing up children together but without legal commitment (King et al., 2015). Research has found out that such an approach may cause challenges, especially in regard to children support, medical decisions and other difficult issues that may impact a child's life as an adolescent as well as an adult (Coleman & Holder, 2015). There has been a surge in the number of children living in blended family households due to the high levels of remarriages, divorce rates, cohabitation and single parenthood (Coleman & Holder 2015). Blended families experience a lot of challenges for instance with personal boundaries, adjustment and connecting resulting to a stressful life for everyone in the blended family (Cartwright, 2012). Similarly, Willis and Limb (2016) stipulate that relationships in blended families are difficult for the reason that all members are not related biologically unlike in traditional two-parent families.

The age an individual becomes a member of a blended union matters and can affect how well the individual adjusts in blended families (Jensen & Pace, 2016). When the blended family is constituted at an early age, the child is able to adapt to the transition and face lesser

challenges in step parent/child relationships than during adolescence stage (Willis & Limb,2016). According to Ackerman and Hill (2018), children who are unable to adjust in blended families develop behavioral challenges such as acting out,academic failure, absenteeism from school and may depict symptoms of trauma. Female gender may find it difficult adjusting in step families than the male gender (Wills & Limb, 2016). This opinion suggests that parental attachment styles are gendered so that there exists gender differences in their manifestation.

Empirical studies have shown that adolescents in blended families households are at greater risk of experiencing emotional challenges than those from nuclear families (Kumar & Mattanah, 2016). These adolescents have higher levels of stress, depression, apathy about academics growth as well as low self esteem (Orth &Robins, 2014). Similarly, Jensen and Pace (2016) found out that step parents have challenges than biological parents in parenting step children and that step mothers get more stressed parenting step children than the step fathers. In addition, the relationship between the step mother and step children is usually strenuous especially if the step mothers are anxiously attached; they feel they are putting more into the step parent - step children relationship and getting little in return and as a result they become resentful and angry towards their step children (Forbes et al.,2015). Similarly, a study in Columbia found out that adolescents had more difficulties developing a close connection with their step mothers than step fathers (Jensen & Howard, 2015).

Step mothers have a very high negative attitude towards their step children than the step fathers (Forbes et al., 2015). A study by Njoroge and Kirori (2018) on blended family dynamics found out that step fathers are less warm and less supportive towards the step children and that there is no love amongst them. Research in the United States depicts that step parents who adopt insecure attachment styles contribute to lower connection satisfaction and stability and are likely

to face more difficulties in their role as step parents than those with secure attachment (Jensen & Howard, 2015). Also Kaniušonytė and Žukauskienė (2018) study on blended family stability in Burundi advocated for a healthy parent- children relationship which creates a conducive home environment for the children.

In addition, Kaniušonytė and Žukauskienė (2018) recommends the importance of formulating programs and policies that will look into household issues of blended families. This confirms that there is dire need for studies on blended families. Therefore, this study aimed to progress this literature by exploring the attachment styles used by step mothers' and step fathers' and find out how they influenced adolescent psychosocial development. The current study sought to explore not only attachment styles of step mothers but also those of step fathers and find out how the attachment styles they adopted influenced adolescent psychosocial development.

In the context of the blended family, several challenges have emerged in the interactions between step parents and step children. According to Willis and Limb (2017) when adolescents join a blended household, they begin by associating themselves with the parent they are used to but not the strange parent that comes into the relationship. Research indicates that individuals develop anxious and avoidant attachment patterns if they come from step families that have stressful step family formation (Willis & Limb, 2017). In addition, research has found that the more connected adolescents are with their biological parents, step parents and step family, the less they are likely to use avoidance as a tool to engage in (Jensen & Pace, 2016). In addition, children in step families may resolve to use ambivalent attachment, for instance they can both love and hate their step parents (Ganong et al., 2015). This may imply that the child feels that the parent is sometimes inconsistent in the way they relate to each other. The current study not only



examined children attachment like many studies have done but also explored adolescents associations with their step parents too.

### Self Esteem

Rosenberg (1965) stated that self esteem is a negative or positive attitude of an individual to oneself. Coelho et al. (2017) explained that self esteem is formed when a person evaluates themselves and then continue to carry those perceptions or assessments across many domains of their lives. Shraddha and Agarwala (2015) posit that in the contemporary society, people evaluate their self worth by competing to make their positions strong and struggling to maintain the said position. Therefore, driving a luxurious car, having intelligence, a good house and a prestigious job are all sources of self esteem. Mruk (2013) sought to evaluate their self-worth during adolescence stage (Orth & Robins, 2014). In addition, global self-esteem makes adolescents have a feeling of happiness and general satisfaction. However, it tends to fluctuate in early adolescents around eleven years with its lowest at twelve to thirteen years then it increases (Orth & Robins, 2014). Decrease in global self-esteem happens because of the change and transitions that an adolescent goes through which include body as well as emotions that go hand in hand with these body changes (Hart, 2009).

Even if school transitions are usually associated with temporary lower degree of self-esteem, many adolescents have a high positive view of themselves as they move from early adolescents through secondary school life (Orth & Robins, 2014). For instance, a comparison between adolescents in grade 8- 12 revealed increase in levels of self-esteem as the adolescent

progressed in age for African American, European American, Latino and Asian American (Bachman et al., 2011).

According to Hart(2009) it is during global evaluation of self-worth that adolescents describe their capabilities in a variety of areas for instance relationships which they may either view positively or negatively. Also adolescents develop global self-esteem when they view and evaluate themselves more positively in those areas they regard significant (Wagnsson, et al., 2014). For instance, adolescents with a high academic esteem may be more focused in school work and regard school work highly and therefore strive to excel (Preckel et al.,2013). In contrast, deflated self-esteem in adolescents is related with disorders and sadness (Mónaco et al., 2019)

Lower levels of global self-esteem may be a predictor of unhappiness when adolescents mushroom into adults (Orth &Robin, 2014). For instance, a longitudinal study was carried out where self-esteem was yearly assessed in about 1500 adolescents aged 12-15 years. The findings indicated the age at which an adolescent was, at the level of change in self-esteem were predictors of depression ,when individuals attain ages 16 to 35. Wagnsson et al.(2014) stated children that transited to adolescence with low levels of global self-esteem had their self-worth deflated further, and this was a prediction of unhappiness twenty years later at adulthood. This study sought to find out how attachment styles influence adolescents' high self esteem and low self esteem from a blended family perspective.

### Attachment styles and adolescent high self esteem

Close connection with significant others especially parents are linked to higher degree levels of self-esteem in youths which enhances their self-evaluation (Mruk,2013). For instance a study done on teenagers from China, Germany, Australia and United States as well as Dutch, Turkish, Moroccan and Surinamese adolescents residing in Netherlands indicated that a close intimate teenager parent connection predicted high self-esteem (Martinez et al., 2020). These studies were conducted in Western societies hence it was difficult to indicate the similarities or differences of the said results in the Kenyan context. One would have expected a change considering that parenting would differ. The current study sought to respond to the question ‘Do parental attachment styles influence adolescent self-esteem?’

Similarly, Mruk (2013) stipulates that if the family adolescents grow in and the environment they interact with is conducive, the adolescents tend to have a high self esteem. A study conducted by Perezet et al. (2019), among 13-19 year old spanish adolescents showed that adolescents who have support from care givers have high self esteem, appropriate communication skills with parents and appropriate interpersonal relationships. Leung et al. (2013) stated that having caring and supportive relationships help not only in increasing adolescent self esteem but also improves self concept over many domains. In addition Becht et al. (2017) found out that adolescent self esteem is enhanced by supportive parents who validate them and this leads to less self doubt and increased self concept among the adolescents.

Similarly, high quality parent adolescent connection leads to reduction in adolescent stress, physical health problems and less internalizing, externalizing and fewer health problems (Shafer et al.,2017). Kocayoruk et al. (2014) supports that parental support enhances adolescents

development, self esteem and their general well being. Moonseo et al.(2021) found out that high self esteem is inversely connected to anxiety, fear and depression and positively relates to happiness and life satisfaction.

Xiuyun et al. (2016) stated that members of a family influence adolescents' self esteem which is directly associated with their body image. Xiuyun et al. (2016) found out that clinically assessed adolescents that have high self esteem, experience less symptoms of depression and other attention problems overtime showing that self esteem creates resilience and helps fight such symptoms. Adolescent attachment should be a warm caring connection that includes feelings of trust, appropriate communication, and supported by significant others (Keizer, 2019). Similarly Young (2013) agrees and supports this warm caring relationship (parental adolescent attachment bond) and adds that it gives a conducive environment which leads to high self-esteem in adolescent. Allen and Loeb (2015) concurs that parents who provide a secure base that is characterized by warmth, encouragement and support often bring up adolescents with a high self-esteem.

Adolescents reliance on parental attachment figures lessens as they learn to develop new relationships with peers (Keizer, 2019).Nevertheless, it is argued that secure parental attachments are maintained to give an intimate supporting surrounding for adolescent to enhance liberation in a bid to expose them to the external world which builds adolescents' self-esteem (Allen & Loeb, 2015). These findings concur to some extent with Young (2013) findings which stipulated that at adolescence stage, adolescents develop autonomy but remain emotionally attached to attachment figures for continuity and reliability. Moreover, care givers that permit growth of adolescent autonomy and still main close interactions with them foster more positive feelings of self-worth

than those in insecure relationships (Thompson, 2016). This shows how crucial parental connection is to teenagers.

Father- adolescent attachment style can often act as a secure base for adolescents (Lee et al., 2016). For instance, Allgood et al. (2012) examined how involved fathers were in their adolescent lives as well as their emerging adult daughters in relation to their self-esteem and psychological health. Their study findings showed that those daughters whose fathers were present in their lives had a high self-esteem rating (Allgood et al., 2012). Moreover, daughters who perceived their fathers in a positive light also depicted high self-esteem than those who did not (Allgood et al., 2012). Similarly, Keizer (2019) concurs that fathers' attachment affect their adolescent daughters' self-esteem and out runs that of the mothers. Studies by Zhang et al. (2017) revealed that mothers who are friendly to adolescents enhance their self-esteem unlike mothers whose relationship with adolescents is controlling.

Attachment to both parents by adolescents is crucial for adolescent development. For instance, Mónico et al. (2019) suggest that adolescents that develop a secure relationship with both parents report strong emotional competence, higher satisfaction with life, high self-esteem and less stress (Martinez et al., 2021). Mruk (2013) concurs that such support has a positive influence on adolescents satisfaction with life and their self-esteem. As noted above, most previous studies have dwelt so much on paternal but not maternal attachment. The current study aimed at exploring mother and father attachment with adolescents separately because each parent is necessary in promoting the development of adolescents' self-esteem.

Empirical studies have found that adolescent daughters report higher quality of attachment to both parents than adolescent sons (Zia et al., 2015). Moreover Keizer (2019) indicated that mother- child attachment are associated with higher levels of self-esteem for both

adolescents sons and daughters. Pertaining gender disparities, longitudinal research found that adolescent girls self-esteem levels lower as they mature (Brown et al., 2015) in contrast to boys who tend to have increased self-esteem at adolescent stage (Rosen, 2016). The study sought to find out how mother and father attachment styles to adolescent boys and girls in the family affect their self-esteem.

Strong age group friendship is also related to heightened levels of self-esteem (Oconnor & Boag, 2010). Similarly other studies support this premise that peers also play an important part in that adolescents who feel appreciated and embraced by their peers depict high levels of self-esteem (Rosen,2016). In contrast those adolescents with low self-esteem display poor relationship with peers (Maunder & Monks, 2018). These findings are similar to Bowlby's theory (Bowlby, 1969) that healthy relationships that adolescents have with parents are a manifestation of appropriate development.

Previous empirical studies stipulate that secure step parent child relationship promote the wellbeing of step children and enhance the stability of step families (Jensen & Howard, 2015). These benefits emanate from step parents availability and presence in the adolescents' lives and this allows them to communicate to the parents when they encounter challenges and thereby strengthen the relationship bond (Jensen & Harris, 2017). Similarly, Irankunda and Sitawa (2018) agree with these findings that close step parents' children relationships provide a conducive environment for adolescents to cope better and in turn promote their psychosocial wellbeing. Step families cohesion and appropriate stability are resources that have been attributed to healthy adolescents well being (Jensen & Harris, 2017).

According to Blessings (2016), all that step children require is a positive parent child relationship and not a connection that lacks communication and one characterized by walls and

barriers. The above literature showed how important parent-child relationship is in enhancing adolescent self esteem. Research on how attachment styles affect the self esteem of adolescence in nuclear families is plenty but studies on how parental attachment influence adolescence self esteem from a blended family perspective is scanty, hence, this study was crucial.

#### Attachment styles and adolescents low self esteem

Adolescents whose parents adopt insecure attachment styles suffer from a low self-esteem in comparison to those in secure attachments (Young, 2013). Adolescents begin to experience fluctuation in self esteem when they attain adolescent stage whereby they engage in risky behavior, parental conflicts and mood disruptions (Okunlola et al, 2020). Such attitude influences adolescent emotions and physical interaction with others and consequently enhances low self esteem in adolescents (Moksnes & Reidunsdatter,2019). According to Kawamoto (2020), negative upbringing of children by parents is linked to insecure attachment which can be categorized as attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. Lack of attachment makes children feel rejected, abandoned and fearful and this in turn enhances attachment anxiety (Kawamoto,2020). In addition, adolescents with high avoidance attachment have low self esteem as compared to those in secure attachment(Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018).

Similarly adolescents with avoidant attachment styles tend to feel powerless and bear an inflated self-esteem (Laczkovics et al.,2020) while those that adopt disorganized attachment styles suffer from a negative self-esteem and extremely self-damaging self-talk (Moksnes & Reidunsdatter, 2019). For instance, Rosen (2016) examined association of attachment and self-esteem in late teenagehood. The study findings showed that anxious ambivalent adolescents had a low self-esteem than the secure group.

According to Emery et al.(2018), adolescents that are anxiously attached to parents tend to experience a low self esteem and a negative self view while avoidance attachment is associated with lower self concept. This is because such adolescents are brought up in families where parents do not validate them. This underscores the importance of parents affirming the adolescents which results to enhanced self esteem.Thompson (2016) stipulated that parents that hinder open communication with adolescents and coerce them to follow certain stipulated rules without emotional openness enhance low self esteem. A study by Perez et al. (2019) among 13-19 years old Spanish adolescents found out that adolescents whose parents were unsupportive and controlling had low self esteem. Researchers with common findings stipulated that when behavioral and psychological control are identified, inducing guilt, blackmail and manipulation fail to promote self esteem in adolescents (Oliva et al, 2007).

According to Xiuyun et al.(2016), adolescents that depict low self esteem are at a greater danger of developing severe mental health conditions, engage in delinquent behavior and express suicidal ideations. Similarly, Estevez et al. (2018) found out that adolescents that have low self esteem are aggressive, hostile and have antisocial behavior that are formed in the learning process with their parents. This depicts an insecure adolescent parent relationship. Low self esteem was also found to be negatively related to isolation and aggression among high school students (Marcis, 2017). Empirical findings depict that fathers who adopt insecure attachment in relating to their daughters have negative influence on their daughters psychosocial development than mothers which include; low self-esteem, social abilities and emotional monitoring (Jain, 2015). Fathers' attachment is needed by children throughout their life time (Santrock et al., 2015) because this may guard adolescent from acquiring characteristics of low self-esteem (Anggraenni, 2019).



Peer relationships are associated with adolescent self-esteem (Keizer,2019) For instance, in a study on perceived quality of parental attachment connection and adolescent self-esteem, Keizer (2019) found out that changes in peer relationships had no relationship with adolescent self-esteem and that even though adolescents increase the time they spend with peers, parental attachment are highly significant. This concurs with other earlier studies that report that the care giver continues to take up responsibility of creating a warm environment that fosters teenagers' growth in relation to self-worth and identity even when peer relationships become salient during adolescence stage (Laible et al., 2005).

According to Blessings (2016), children in blended families experience cognitive, emotional, behavioral and academic difficulties compared to children brought up in biological families. Shui (2016) embraces these findings but emphasizes that many studies examining blended families have dealt with cognitive, educational and psychological outcomes during childhood and adolescence. Willis and Limb (2017) stated that step parent' children attachment enhances adolescents stress level, a finding that Jensen and Howard (2015) concurs with in that step parent children relationships are stressful and have an effect on attachment outcomes on children. On the other hand Njoroge and Kirori (2018) found out adolescents with delinquent behavior come more from step mothers' families than within step fathers' families. This is in line with (Jensen et al.,2019) findings that majority of the youth with delinquent behavior come from step family background but adds that 60% of such youths have a low self-esteem compared to those with a high self-esteem. Amato (2010) concurs with this view on adolescents experiencing behavioral difficulties in step family relationships.

.While the issues dealt with above are pertinent to the current study, they fall short of addressing the blended family and only concentrate on the nuclear family set up. A literature review on blended families show some advancement in exploration of family dynamics and processes that enhance step children adjustment (Jensen & Harris, 2017). However, some gaps exist; for instance, many studies on blended family focused more on wellbeing of young and pre-adolescent children with few having dealt on adolescent step children (Amato, 2010). In addition, few blended family studies have incorporated longitudinal data on self-esteem of step children and more so adolescent. Moreover, step parent –children attachment had often been overlooked as a predictor of step adolescent self-esteem development (Jensen & Harris, 2017). To curb this void the objective of parental attachment on adolescent self-esteem development in blended family became a key objective in this study. Children in blended families have a lower sense of wellbeing than those from two biological parents' households (King & Lindstrom, 2016).

These studies used the term wellbeing in rather an ambiguous manner hence the current study focused specifically on self-esteem as a construct of psychosocial development. For instance, King et al. (2014) researched on step families characteristics and adolescent perception of belonging to step families but did not find out how this perception affects adolescent self-esteem. The current study looked at this void by narrowing down on adolescent self-esteem which was an aspect of the dependent variable; psychosocial development. From the above studies it was evident that few studies had explored parental attachment and adolescent self-esteem development and this study was therefore significant

## Identity

Identity is a crucial psychosocial task during adolescent stage where adolescents seek to establish self- values, beliefs and goals to be pursued in future (Bosch & Card, 2011). In addition, adolescents are expected to develop a consolidated and appropriate identity structure that helps in sustaining individual continuity in different situations across time (Heerden, 2018). According to Duriez and Soenens (2012) development of identity in adolescents equips them with a personal frame of reference which enables them make reasonable decisions and interpret self-relevant information. The advantage of identity development process is that it enables teenagers avoid getting carried away by friends in making wrong choices easily because they have developed appropriate identity (Dumas, Ellis & Wolfe 2012).

In contrast, when adolescents fail to develop identity, they are prone to lack of beliefs, related goals and values which may enhance confusion in decision and choice making process (Dumas, Ellis & Wolfe, 2012). This idea of adolescents' confusion due to lack of identity development is supported by Bosch and Card (2011) who also adds that such an adolescent is reluctant to make important life choices and this may subject the individual to personal and behavioral problems. This underscores the importance of identity formation in adolescence.

Adolescent identity development has been explained from three perspectives: Erickson (1993), Marcia (1980) and Berzonsky (1989). Erickson (1993) psychosocial growth has been viewed as a key development task of adolescents' identity formation. However, previous studies indicate that Erickson's ideology lacks support of empirical research methods. Marcia (1980) extended Erickson's model for adolescents and came up with a four identity status paradigm which comprises of diffusion, moratorium, fore closure and identity achievement but failed to

look at identity formation as an outcome and failed to capture the core development process. This is the gap in literature that this study aimed at filling by examining Berzonsky's identity styles.

#### Attachment and adolescent identity styles

Berzonsky (1989) came up with a social cognitive model of identity as an alternative model with the following components; informational, normative, and diffusion avoidant style. These explain the different ways in which adolescents' process, digest, explore, interpret and utilize identity significant information (Berzonsky, 1992). In addition, self-identity is in essence a self-theory which is a summary of experiences and assumptions of the relevant self and function as problem solving and explanatory frameworks (Berzonsky, 1990). According to Berzonsky (1992), in a bid to maintain a consolidated identity, adolescents' experience the monitoring and rehearsing of self-constructs differently. The focus of the current study was on identity styles because this study sought to find out how adolescents used the social cognitive strategy to process identity key information, negotiate identity significant problems and make personal decisions.

#### Informational identity style.

Informational identity style is where an adolescent explores, synthesizes, and thoroughly evaluates identity significant information from many different sources (Berzonsky et al., 2013). Adolescents with informational identity style are said to make concrete identity decisions after they explore, digest, interpret and process relevant information needed for the said decisions (Cicognani et al., 2013). Such adolescents do not negotiate identity conflicts or form commitment

without processing self-relevant information. As a result, the commitment that they make is grounded on appropriate involvement, desire to self-explore and are open to change (Berzonsky, 2011). They depict the following characteristics; cognitive complexity, autonomous, cognitive persistence, decisional vigilance, mature interpersonal relationships, problem solving oriented, focused to meet their goals, a high educational performance standard and a high sense of integrity (Berzonsky, 2011). Informational oriented adolescents are willing to re-access aspects of their identity when discrepant information concerning them occurs, which should lead to a well differentiated and integrated sense of individual identity (Berzonsky, 2011).

#### Normative identity style

A normative identity style is where an adolescent adopts the ideas of significant other for instance, parents and family without questioning or putting any exploratory efforts. They seek opinion of others before making decisions, attach a lot of importance to core values and beliefs that were impacted by others and this makes them less open to information that may threaten these ideologies; hence, they strive to preserve their existing organized and committed identities (Berzonsky, 2011). In addition, they embrace need for cognitive closure, cultural conservatism, need for structure, purpose for education and they emphasize collective components for instance religion and family (Dollinger, 2010). These result to the development of a dependency syndrome which curtails them from creating their own values (Berzonsky, 2004).

#### Diffuse avoidant identity style

Adolescents who adopt diffuse avoidant identity style procrastinate and tend to push ahead decisions associated with identity, delay in handling conflicts and dealing with related

individual challenges as much as possible (Berzonsky, 2004). In addition, they never engage in self-reflection, use maladaptive methods in making decisions, panic in situations, display high levels of passive identity formation, are likely to harbor feelings of shame, depict conduct disorders and hyperactivity challenges (Adams & Fitch, 2001). Moreover, such adolescents are said to have a low self-esteem, limited self-control, associated with an exterior locus of control and rely mostly on their emotions (Berzonsky 2008). They possess a fragmented, loosely integrated identity structure (Berzonsky, 2011). According to Berzonsky et al.(2013) adolescents adopt various identity styles as a way of formulating a sense of identity.

#### Commitment identity style

Commitment is also a key aspect in identity style formulation and entails providing adolescent with a sense of purpose (Berzonsky, 2004). It also involves making a deliberate firm choice of an identity orientation and being part of important activities that enhance the implementation of that choice (Crocetti & Shokri, 2010). Hatano, Sugimura and Klimstra (2017) concurs with the latter that exploration and commitment represent exploring a variety of alternatives and commitment as the actual making of choices respectively. Similarly, Ntooumanis et al. (2014) states that when adolescents are able to resolve their issues by being committed towards pursuing their goals, beliefs and values after exploration of a variety of areas, identity consolidation and achievement occurs. This brought to the fore the importance of adolescent identity style development which was addressed in the study.

Previous research studies stipulate that adolescents with informational and normative identity styles are optimistic and have a high self-esteem (Phillips & Pitman, 2007), and there is a positive correlation of the two identity styles with the adolescents reports of their psychological

development (Crocetti & Shokri, 2010). This finding concurred with a study that sort to find out the relationship between identity styles and adolescent development. The findings indicated that informational identity style was highly associated with all components of positive adolescent wellbeing (Crocetti et al., 2014) and added that on the contrary, diffuse avoidant identity style had the lowest adolescent development levels (Crocetti et al., 2014). This was a crucial aspect that the study intended to find out.

Gender differences is in consistent with identity, for example a previous study depicted that adolescent boys tend to use less informational identity style than adolescent girls (Soenens, 2008). In contrast to a study by Smits et al. (2008) indicated that adolescent boys adopt more of informational identity style than adolescent girls (Smits et al., 2009), while adolescent boys tend to have a higher diffuse avoidant style than adolescent girls (Berzonsky, 2004)). However, there was no gender difference in informational and normative identity styles (Berzonsky, 2008). Similarly, Smits et al.(2009) concurs with the former findings that adolescent boys adopt a greater diffuse avoidant style than adolescent girls. The study explored identity styles that were adopted by both boys and girls. In addition, the study sought to establish the relationship between parental attachment styles and adolescent identity style.

Empirical research studies have indicated enough evidence that the relationship between parents and adolescents greatly enhance exploration and formation of identity during adolescent years (Kiralp, 2017). This is line with earlier studies by Smits et al. (2009) who indicated that an open, flexible and exploration of identity is enhanced by parental nurturance. According to Cassidy et al. (2013) adolescents with a secure attachment develop an internal working model, positive feelings of worth and a high sense of identity which enable them build relationships with

others in future. This finding supports the concept of Attachment Theory that states efficient parenting enhances adolescents' sense of self and relationship with others (Benson et al., 2013).

Similarly, Kiralp (2017) stated that the attachment style adopted by an adolescent depicts itself in their self-identity and in relationships with others. The opposite is true that when parent child relationship is insecure, the child formation of internal model is affected and has a detrimental impact in adolescents and future relationships (Cassidy et al., 2013). Secure parent adolescent attachment encourages feelings and belief that contributes to life meaning and a stable coherent identity (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018), while insecure parent adolescent relationship is detrimental to the formation of a stable adolescent self-identity (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018).

Imtiaz and Naqui's (2012) study on parental attachment and identity styles among adolescents in Pakistan indicated that it was positively associated with adolescents' informational, normative identity styles and commitment. On the other hand, parental attachment was negatively correlated with adolescent diffuse avoidant identity style. Likewise, an earlier study was done on perceived parenting patterns and identity styles among 674 Dutch adolescents (Smits et al., 2009). The findings indicated a significant relationship between parental attachment and adolescent identity styles development, while Smits et al. (2009) found out that family relationships had an impact on adolescents' identity style development in a study done among Iran adolescents.

Kaniusonyte and Zukauskience (2017) did a study with 153 adolescents in Lithuanian on relationships between parents' identity styles and positive adolescent development. The findings indicated that parents' positive parental attachment with adolescents play a significant role in adolescents' successful adjustment, enhance adequate identity management and overall



adolescent development. Further studies done among adolescents in South Africa on the effect of parental involvement on adolescent identity styles are in line with previous findings that informational identity style is positively enhanced by parental support (Heerden, 2018). The above reviewed literature seemed to emphasize the significance of parental attachment to adolescents' identity style development and this was explored in the study,

There are differences between fathers and mothers in the way they individually relate to adolescents (Samoulis et al., 2001) and how each of them influences the adolescents identity styles (Samoulis et al., 2001). Mothers enhance adolescents' information identity by encouraging broad exploration by their maturing adolescent, while fathers discourage the adolescent from commitment and making definite choices (Sesito & Sica, 2014). Likewise, maternal attachment predicts the informational and normative identity styles in adolescents (Ratner, 2014).

Similarly, Heerden (2018) concurs with this findings that maternal modelling and instruction is a positive predictor of informational identity style development in adolescents. This premise was earlier supported by Smits et al. (2008) study that sought to establish the relationship between vital dimensions of perceived parenting support and psychological control and identity styles among adolescents. However, Ratner (2014) study recommended further research to investigate the variables that keep fathers from embracing a significant relationship with identity styles. Heerden (2018) concurs with the suggestion by stating that a lot of studies should be conducted on father involvement and adolescent identity style development. This gap was filled in the current study because it explored separately how mother and father attachment styles influence adolescent identity style development.

Research studies in Kenya on parental attachment on adolescent's identity styles in both traditional biological families and blended families are scanty. Most studies have related parental adolescent attachment with variables like academic performance, social adjustment, psychological wellbeing, conduct disorders, social behavior and other behavior problems while others have discussed Marcia identity status and Erickson Ego identity. For instance, the above studies were pertinent to the current study in that they indicated the importance of parent adolescent relationship. However, none had explored how parental attachment influences adolescent identity style development more so from blended families. This was a key objective of the study.

### Autonomy

Adolescence is a transition period from childhood through adolescents where adolescents develop autonomy and reorganize and redefine family connections (Sandhu & Kaur, 2012). Moreover, Holden (2010) agrees that seeking autonomy is a major developmental characteristic of adolescents. Autonomy is a key component that adolescents should develop and be in a position to regulate themselves and their behavior even when their parents are not around, and consult less with parents when challenges arise (Bureau & Mageau, 2014). Meeus (2016) concurs that adolescents who are autonomous are confident and are able to make independent choices without the parents input. This premise is supported by earlier theory that adolescents should be in a position to relinquish the dependability on others and make sound decisions (Silverberg & Steinberg, 1986).

According to psychoanalytic perspective, adolescent detachment from family of origin enhances a healthy autonomy development and enables the adolescent to relinquish childish dependency syndrome and become disillusioned with their parents (Bloom, 1980). In addition,

neo-analytic theory of individuation indicates that adolescents need to be individuated, depend on own resources and depict maturation and competence. However, other researchers have taken the above premise seriously and given importance to connection ties and support from family as part of autonomy and depict that adolescents can acquire independence without having to pull off from parents (Sandhu & Kaur, 2012). Young (2013) concurs with this concept that parents that permit for autonomy development while still stressing on close connectedness are likely to enhance positive feelings of self among adolescents.

Parent adolescent connection should incorporate the process of balancing between individuality development and self-reliance on one hand and relationship and parental guidance on the other (Sandhu & Kaur, 2012). In line with this idea, parental autonomy support is a situation where parents encourage their adolescents to express their emotions freely, embrace other people's opinions, feelings and emotions (Lansford et al., 2013). In addition, parents should take into account areas where adolescent require guidance and trust them to make independent decision where need be (Rote & Smetana, 2014).

According to Garcia and Peralbo (2014) autonomy that emerge during adolescent stage can be categorized into three groups namely: emotional autonomy where changes in intimate parent adolescent relationship is noted, behavioral autonomy which focuses on adolescents' ability to make own decisions and value autonomy where adolescents develop principles about what is right and wrong that govern their thought process. The current study focused on emotional autonomy which was one of the objectives.

### Attachment styles and adolescent emotional autonomy

One of the main milestones of adolescent growth is to form an emotional autonomy that is acquired from caregivers (Aveh & Jalatat, 2015). This means recognizing the aspect of independence from parents and becoming individuated (Sandhu & Kaur, 2012). A suggestion that Steinberg (2014) agrees with in that emotional autonomy is enhanced by means of disconnection and individuation. According to Silverberg and Steinberg (1986) there are four components of emotional autonomy which include: individuation, parental deidealization, non-dependency and perceiving ones parents as people.

The process of individuation follows a developmental pathway (Silverberg & Steinberg 1986). In the initial years the parents take care of the individual physical and emotional needs (Avey & Jalatat, 2015). At three years, the child can engage in self representation if the development process was successful and begins to experience the parents as separate entities therefore the earliest stage of individuation begins (Sandhu & Kaur, 2012).

Individuation then proceeds to adolescence and this calls for a change in the parent-teenager relationship (Branje, 2018). The adolescents begin to separate themselves from the parents who initially sustained them through earlier stages of development and turns to relationships from without and this facilitates these changes (Sandhu & Kaur, 2012). The adolescent becomes cognizant of the fact that care givers are distinct persons who are prone to making errors (Sandhu & Kaur, 2012). Additionally, they renounce their childhood mannerism in terms of clinging to parents (Silverberg & Steinberg ,1986). Similarly, Jimenez and Romomera (2014) add that adolescents should be ready to own any of their actions and consequences that come with it. According to Pace and Zapulla (2014), lack of appropriate growth of emotional autonomy is detrimental to their health and predisposes them to mental

issues for instance depression. Individuation is a key aspect of growth which happens in phases from the time the child is young and through to adolescence and into adulthood (Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002).

When individuals fail to individuate accordingly, they are prone to having personal challenges, are unable to connect with others and have identity issues (Aslan & Gelbal, 2016). Individuation is possible only in a functional family setting where adolescents are given an opportunity to express their views, and are not psychologically controlled to embrace all the norms and rules in the family without questioning (Comtois et al., 2013). This aspect of questioning makes them begin the process of deidealizing of their parents where they realize that the parents are not omnipotent ; all knowing, question past parental value systems they had internalized(Fosco et al., 2012), and perceive them both positively and negatively (Ahmad et al.,2018). Deidealization is the greatest challenge that adolescent face but it is a process that gives an individual a chance for development of higher separetendness and self directendness (Fosco et al., 2012).

Deidealization seems to have similar characteristics as viewing parents as a people, but there is a slight difference in that in viewing parentst as people , the adolescent ought to deidealize the care giver but also reconnect later with the parent for social interaction just like the interaction they would have with friends (Fosco et al., 2012). In viewing the parent as a person, the parent must be willing to accept advice and perceive the adolescent as mature, for their relationship to thrive (Fosco et al., 2012)

It would appear that deidealization like individuation has a connection with viewing parents as people. Individuation enables adolescents to acquire a sense of self direction in addition to enhancing psychological separateness from parent and in turn become more liberated

(Aslan & Gelbal, 2016). As the adolescent gains greater levels of individuation and mental disconnection from care givers, they gradually change and view their parents as people (Silverberg & Steinberg, 1986). This means that the child finds out who the care giver is, how they came to be, who they are and how the world is, from the parents perspective (Silverberg & Steinberg, 1986). Children lack capability of viewing their care givers as people when they are between 10 -16 years (Silverberg & Steinberg, 1986).

This however has differed from other researchers who have given 21-24 years as the age when children look at parents differently (Anderson, 2000). This study sought to find out whether adolescents aged (13-19) were in support of this premise or not Silverberg & Steinberg (1986) theory suggest that persons must be strongly individuated to come to that point where they look at parents as very separate individuals with their discreet ideas and way of thinking. This will require minimizing dependency on the care givers (Jimenez & Romomera, 2014). All the above elements of emotional autonomy are propelled by care givers right from when children are young and therefore parenting predicts the growth of emotional autonomy in adolescents (Sandhu & Kaur, 2012).

Similarly, Kocayoruk et al. (2014) indicates that a close parent adolescent connection has all characteristics of a secure attachment which include: warmth, effective communication, development of emotional autonomy and low conflict levels. Likewise Deeder et al. (2015) stipulated that supportive and close parent adolescent connections enhances adolescents autonomy which results to fulfilling perceptions of self and depicts greater self-reliance than those adolescence with lesser autonomy. According to Lansford et al. (2013) parenting that is effective provides warmth and respects adolescence autonomy and privacy. Similarly Ingoglia et al. (2011) confirms that parental warmth enhances emotional autonomy and confidence in

adolescents. Patterns of heightened parental warmth and involvement, combined with less levels of control create a conducive environment for adolescent psychosocial growth (Fosco et al., 2012). This brings to the fore the importance of parental warmth which may in essence provide a secure base for adolescent emotional autonomy.

Globally and across racial and social economic groups, many studies have indicated that parenting increases self-esteem, emotional autonomy, academic competence and a positive view of self among adolescents (Wairimu et al., 2016). This may be as a result of parents providing a secure base for these adolescents. On the other hand, nonwestern culture are more collectivists and tend to focus less on autonomy and insist on greater dependence and connection to family than their western counterparts (Corsano et al., 2013).

Likewise, there is a higher relationship of family connection in Southern European countries (Seiffge, 2013). This enhanced aspect of family connection would mean that the negative connection between family relationship and emotional autonomy increases in Southern European Countries for instance (Seiffge, 2013). Cultures that emphasize on interpersonal relationships and emotional autonomy may be lower than in those cultures that give room for interpersonal separation and independence (Manzi et al., 2012). Such variations in norms may be detrimental to adolescence autonomy development and appear like cultural variance between adolescents and others especially parents (Manzi et al., 2012).

As much as Manzi and colleagues do not specifically analyze emotional autonomy, their findings could indicate that culture moderates the influence of autonomy on adolescent wellbeing and depicts the need for researching on autonomy from parents in various cultures. This is the more reason that the study was significant as it sought to find out from adolescent perspective how family especially parents relationships hindere or enable them develop emotional autonomy.

Empirical research has suggested that insecure parental adolescent attachment hinders the adolescent emotional autonomy growth (Hoang, 2015). In addition, adolescents who adopt avoidant attachment style are less tolerant and have a lower emotional autonomy in comparison to those that are securely attached to parents (Hoang, 2015). Similarly adolescents that are unstable in academics, lack emotional autonomy, have low self-esteem and may suffer depression (Pace & Zapulla, 2014). Psychological control in parent adolescent relationship hinders adolescent autonomy development and has been connected with adolescents' poor academic competence, negative self-image, behavioral problems and depression among adolescents from Africa, Asia, Europe, America and the Middle East ( Lanford et al., 2005).

Research by Goossens (2007) supports this assertion that parenting that has characteristics of too much parental involvement and control interferes with significant children developmental tasks which include individuation and maturation development in contrast to adopting autonomy parental support which strengthens adolescents maturation. Similarly Fosco et al. (2012) supports the latter that parents that are intrusive and domineering become a barrier to adolescents' emotional autonomy growth. From these studies it was assumed that adolescents had insecure attachment styles with their step parents which hinder their emotional autonomy development.

Adolescent development occurs in a conducive environment where autonomous parents give support and meet adolescents' needs for autonomy, positive relationships with others and a feeling of competence (Smorti et al.,2014). Similarly, when parents provide stability and autonomous environment for adolescents, they explore just like infants and use their parents as a secure base (Fosco et al., 2012). Autonomy supportive parents take the initiative to encourage



adolescents to focus on their goals and resolve problems on their own thereby enhancing their emotional autonomy and self-identify development (Young, 2013).

Parents who bring up adolescents that are autonomous motivate them in taking up responsibility and being decisive (Young, 2013). Hoang (2015) carried out a study with Vietnamese adolescents together with their parents in Ho Chi Minh City School to assess their perception on autonomy and parents supporting autonomy. Findings showed that participants perceived autonomy as an individual communication, self-adequacy and accountability. Smorti et al. (2014) indicate that connections with parent autonomy support is a significant context for adolescent positive growth.

According to Little and Garber (2001), adolescents strive for greater autonomy to achieve personal objectives and this sometimes cause conflict with parents but push for more autonomy can be possible through negotiations with parent over rules and through victorious resolutions of parent adolescent conflicts. Moreover, parents' restrictions can be communicated in an autonomy supportive way to the adolescent rather than a controlling and coercive manner (Marusak et al.,2017). An autonomy supporting parent communicates to the adolescents by giving meaningful reasons and demonstrating awareness of the adolescents perspective in contrast to parenting that is controlling, emotionally manipulative and involves threats of punishment (Luebbe et al.,2014).

Smorti et al.(2014) confirmed that adolescents depicted high internalization and lower oppositional defiance towards mothers prohibitions when the mothers communicated to them in an autonomy supportive other than controlling manner even when the resulting outcome to the adolescent were the same. Rote and Smetana (2017) stipulated that adolescents disapprove mothers that criticize them instead of criticizing their behavior. In addition, adolescents raised in

autonomy supportive background indicated they would respond with lower oppositional defiance and with greater negotiation to parenting requests conveyed in a controlling way (Rote & Smetana, 2017). These findings were suggestive of the significance of parent adolescent attachment and it was key to find out if parental attachment influenced adolescents emotional autonomy or not.

Gender differences in development of emotional autonomy are inconsistent. For instance early research Silverberg and Steinberg (1986) found out that during adolescence, girls have a higher emotional autonomy than boys. In contrast, (Anderson, 2000) indicated that adolescent boys emotional autonomy develops more rapidly than girls. Sandhu and Kaur (2012) findings concur with Silverberg and Steinberg (1986) in that on the total emotional autonomy, female score higher than the males. On the contrary, Queija and Oliva (2015) findings indicated no gender differences in emotional autonomy development. The study sought to explore gender difference of both males and females. Queija and Oliva (2015) findings suggested that high emotional autonomy during the first years of adolescents may indicate problematic parental relationship. It is only when such parents' adolescent toxic relationship issues are resolved that the said adolescents are able to decrease their levels of emotional autonomy. This underscores the significance of parents' adolescent relationship in the establishment of adolescent emotional autonomy. An aspect that the study sought to explore.

When adolescents are given too much freedom to make decisions without some caution, they are prone to getting involved in drug taking and disobedience of rules (Van Petegem, Beyers, Vansteenkiste, & Soenens, 2012). Also there are adolescents who complain that their care takers disregard their need for autonomy and instead become controlling and this makes the adolescents become problematic and fail to attain appropriate autonomy (Vansteenkiste et al.,

2014). In contrast, when parents create an avenue for their adolescents to discuss aspects of autonomy in an amicable manner, the adolescent becomes more receptive to parental guidance on autonomy decision making (Wray-Lake et al., 2011).

Adolescence stage is a time when parental supervision lessens as adolescents become more autonomous (Wray-Lake et al., 2011). In addition, adolescence personality and seeking for parental attention sometimes makes the process of balancing supervision more challenging (Beijersbergen et al. 2012). As a result, general parenting guidelines may not necessarily address specific needs of all adolescents in the family (Beijersbergen, et.al. 2012). What is referred to as sensitively attuned parenting provides an alternative to a one size fits all approach to defining optimal care for adolescents (Vaughn et.al, 2016).

As children get to adolescence period, parents should learn to adjust the tough rigid rules and permit the adolescents to have some degree of freedom in making choices in a variety of situations (Beijersber, et. al. 2012). Additionally, care givers should learn to bear with some adolescents who have specific needs and adapt where possible in a bid to assist these teenagers accordingly (Beijersber, et al.,2012 According to Vaughn et al.(2016) during the initial years of growth , parents tend to control their children and notes that such control should be minimized as children get to teenage hood. This will enable them interact more with other people which in turn boosts their confidence in others (Vaughn et al.,2016). Parents that create room for autonomy, accompanied by appropriate guidance bring up adolescents who are healthy, more satisfied with life and holistic growth (Njoroge & Kirori ,2018).

Wray-Lake et al.(2011) emphasize that care takers parenting should lead to motivating adolescents into developing autonomous decision making skills which would result in enhancing

their self-worth (Rote & Simetana, 2014). While the above literature was very relevant to the current study, it did not discuss adolescents' emotional autonomy development in blended families who were key participants in the current study. Research has proposed the need to study blended families from a family perspective to bring to the fore complexities in these families relationships (Shapiro, 2014). On the other hand, research into meaning and development of emotional autonomy in adolescence has been encouraged because it is scant (Corsano et al., 2013). This made this study very significant. A few studies have been conducted on blended families' relationship. For instance, Jensen and Howard (2015) study focused on the quality of step parents relationship with step children and Cartwright (2012) on blended family children relationships.

Few studies have been done in Kenya on blended families and of those none focuses on parental attachment and adolescent emotional autonomy development . Chacha's (2015) study was on blended families drama, and Njoroge and Kirori (2018) study in Kiambu on blended family and its impact on adolescent social behavior. From these few it was clear that there was need to explore the attachment and adolescence emotional autonomy in these complex blended families which was a key aspect explored in this study.

### Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the original Attachment Theory by Bowlby's (1969). Attachment is described as a long lasting psychological connection with a meaningful person that causes pleasure while interacting and soothes during stress (Bowlby, 1969). Bowlby continues to say, its quality has a critical effect on development, and has been linked to various aspects of positive functioning, such as psychological well-being.

According to Bowlby (1969), a healthy brain development is built on a secure attachment relationship. Attachment Theory describes how the attachment relationship develops, why it is crucial to later healthy development, and what the effects of early maltreatment or other disruptions in this process may result to. Bowlby proposed that, within an individual's internal working model of the world, working models of self and attachment figure are significant (Bowlby, 1969). From Bowlby ideas, the discussion will focus to the theoretical assumption of the working model in attachment and its relevance in the life of the adolescent psychosocial development. Working model is a cognitive framework comprising of mental representations for understanding the world, the self and others (Bowlby, 1969). Having a healthy 'internal working model' is thus important for three main reasons: sense of self, sense of others and the relationships with self and others (Bowlby, 1969).

Attachment theory focuses on the crucial relationships between care giver and infant that is key to development and survival. Reserchers describe attachment theory as one that describes adolescents and parental relationships which influences trtheir expectations of care givers behaviors (Doyle & Cicchetti, 2017). Similarly to Bowlby's theory, step parents and adolescent step children have internalized the lack of attachment in their step parents relationship to the relationship. This refers to the quality of attachment that is important in the well being of of childhood and adolescents (Lai & Carr, 2018). This is based on the secure and insecure attachments between step adolescents and stepparents. According to Jensen and Haris (2017) the nature of relationship between the step parents and their step dadolscents is dependent on the level of attachment with each other. Bowlby (1969) asserts that the significance of attachment is primarily because good attachment allows the development of a well-functioning internal

working model, in addition, a secure attachment is characterized by the trust that the attachment figure will provide.

This theory was found appropriate for the study because it explains how secure and insecure attachment styles influence adolescents' psychosocial development. Parents that adopt secure attachment styles that are founded on appropriate communication, lack of alienation and trust in their relationship with adolescents enhance their self-esteem, autonomy and identity. However, parents that adopt insecure attachment styles where there is low trust, low communication and high alienation promote low self-esteem unhealthy identity formation and unhealthy formation of adolescent autonomy. In addition, attachment theory indicates that adolescents that are securely attached develop a healthy internal working model unlike those adolescents that are insecurely attached (Bowlby, 1969). A healthy internal working model enhances adolescents psychosocial development while a weak internal working model is detrimental to the psychosocial development of adolescents. This underscored the importance of this theory in guiding the study.

### Conceptual Framework

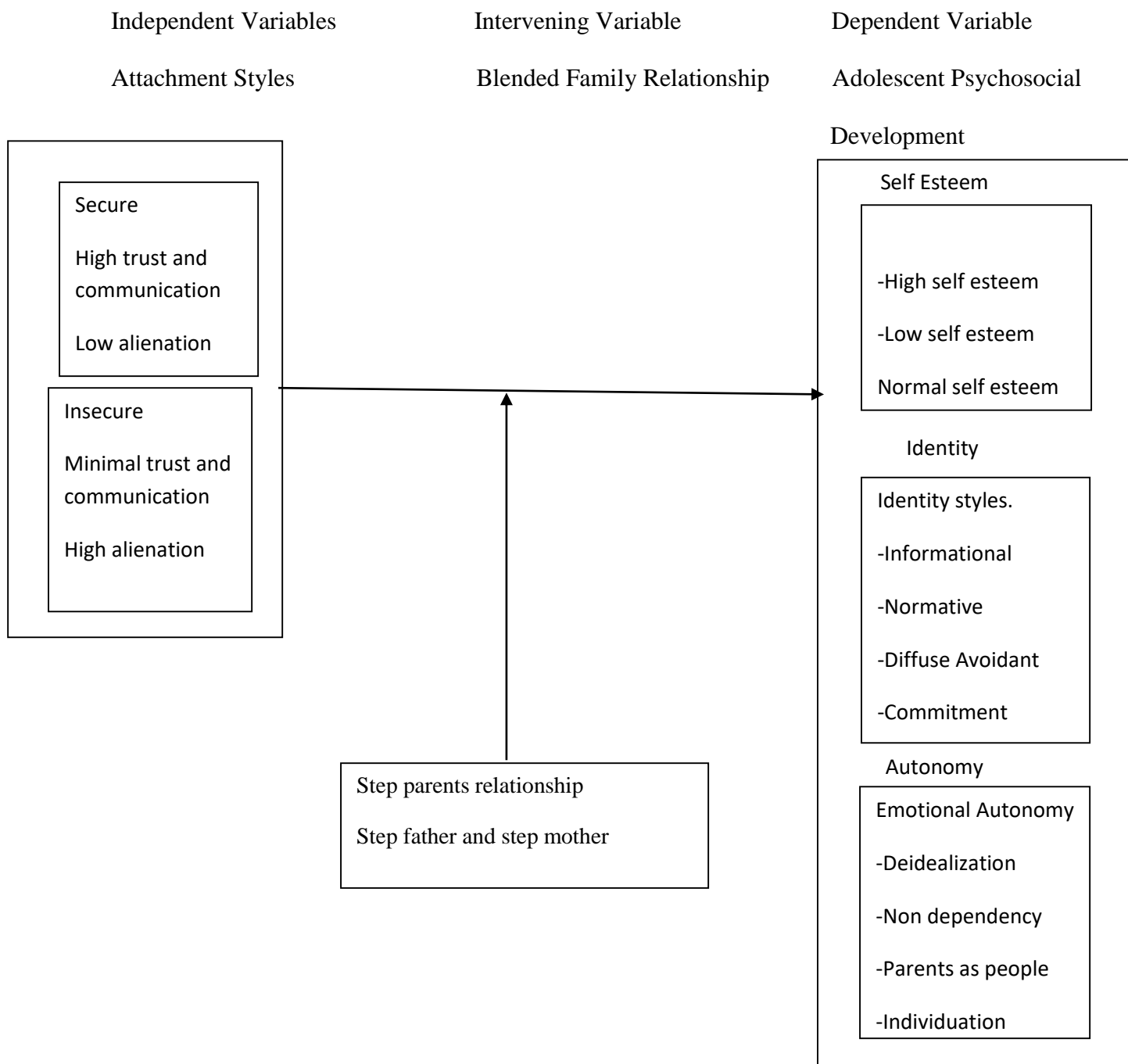
The conceptual framework below aimed at explaining the interrelationships of different variables based on empirical and theoretical considerations noted in the literature review. It captured the interconnections between independent, dependent and intervening variables in the study. The relationship is linear in the sense that attachment styles are meant to enhance adolescents' psychosocial development which include self-esteem, self-identity and autonomy. These attachment styles are realized through parents' relationships with adolescents. The

attachment styles that parents employ as they relate with adolescent, could promote or weaken the psychosocial development of adolescent.

The study was guided by the conceptual framework below. It was adapted from Mikulincer, Shaver and Pereg (2007). The conceptual framework represents a diagrammatic interaction of variables of the study. The model used for the study linked the variables involved in influencing attachment styles (independent variable) and adolescents psychosocial development (dependent variable) among secondary school students from blended families for the study was attachment styles. The independent variable has two main categories; secure and insecure attachment styles.

The constructs of secure attachment were high levels of communication and trust, and low levels of alienation while those for insecure attachment were low communication and trust and higher alienation. The dependent variable is adolescent psychosocial development whose constructs are self-esteem, identity and autonomy while step father and step mother are the intervening variables that influence the outcome of adolescent psychosocial development. Adopting appropriate attachment styles by parents could enhance adolescents' psychosocial development.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Source: Adapted from Mikulincer, Shaver and Pereg (2007)



## Chapter Summary

From the reviewed literature it was apparent that parental attachment styles employed by parents in their relationship with adolescent have a bearing on adolescent development throughout their lives. It was also noted that those parents who provide a secure base may enhance the adolescent self-esteem, self-identity and autonomy in contrast to those from insecure parental background. From literature, there was none that had explicitly focused on the two variables that this study intended to conduct. Through adopting the Attachment Theory with its concepts on attachment styles, a conceptual framework was adopted and modified to explain the relationship of the said variables

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEACH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This chapter brings to the fore the description of methodological choice that was used to guide the research process, give a justification for the use of the chosen method and discuss the impact that the selected methodology had on the research process and outcome. It also depicts how the relevant data and information were tackled in a bid to respond to the research objectives and questions. In addition, the researcher explains the different parts of the research namely; the research design, target population, the study locale, sample and sampling techniques and appropriate assessment tools for the study. The chapter will explain how pilot study was done while examining the reliability and validity of the results. In addition, methods of data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations will be described.

#### Research Design

According to Kombo and Tromp (2013), a research design is a structure, a scheme, outline or plan that is used to generate responses to research problems. It constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Creswell, 2018). The study adopted mixed method research approach. A mixed method was used because it follows pragmatism as a theoretical approach and this was the philosophical paradigm that was adopted for the study. In addition this design was used to triangulate results from both the quantitative and qualitative data. The motive of integration in convergent design was to develop results and interpretations that expanded understanding, were comprehensive, validated and confirmed as stipulated by

(Creswell, 2018). The study adopted pragmatism as a research paradigm. According to Creswell (2018) a research paradigm is a philosophical position about the world or the nature of reality and how researchers approach it to understand it (Creswell, 2018). Pragmatism draws from both qualitative and quantitative assumptions when conducting research (Creswell, 2018). The study adopted pragmatic paradigm because it opens the door to multiple methods, different world views and different assumptions as well as different forms of data collection and analysis rather than using only one way (Creswell, 2018). This made it possible for the researcher to use both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis.

#### Location of the study

The study was done in Kiambu County in Kenya. It is comprised of (12) sub-counties namely; Limuru, Kikuyu, Kabete Lari, Gatundu South, Gatundu North, Githunguri, Kiambu, Kiambaa, Ruiru, Juja and Thika Town. It was an appropriate geographical area of study because the participants came from a variety of cultural, social economic and religious background. A few studies dealing with different topics had been done in this locality but had not captured aspects on self esteem, identity and autonomy hence the significance of the current study. Kiambu County comprises of 303 secondary schools, 227 are public secondary schools while 76 are private secondary schools (KNEC, 2019).

#### Target Population

Target population refers to all the subjects of an actual or theoretical set of events, objects or people, having shared noticeable characteristics which a researcher intends to generalize the findings of the study (Creswell, 2018). In this study, the target population comprised of school

counselors and adolescents from blended families aged 13 to 19 years. The counselors interviews were important to the study because they provided depth in the research inquiry and assisted the resecher gain a deeper insight into the phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2018). The respondents were sampled from 3 sub counties namely; Kiambaa, Thika and Limuru. Simple random sampling was used to sample the three sub-counties from a total of 12 sub counties in Kiambu County

#### Sample size and Sampling Design

Sampling is a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire group (Kombo & Tromp, 2013).

The study employed multistage sampling technique comprising of simple random sampling, survey method of sampling, purposive sampling and also inclusive/exclusive criteria. In the first stage simple random sampling was used to sample 3 Sub Counties these were; Limuru, Thika and Kiambaa out of the 12 sub counties in Kiambu County.

Orodho (2013) state that a representative sample ought to constitute at least 30% of the population when the population of the study is small and 10% if the population is large. In order to acquire a fair representation of sub counties a sampling index of 0.3(30%) was used to select the 3 sub counties. In addition lists of all public secondary schools in the three sub counties were obtained from the respective education offices in Kiambu County and simple random sampling was used to select a total of 9 schools from the 3 sub counties.

The second stage entailed selecting students to be included in the study. Survey sampling technique was adopted because the total population of adolescents that came from blended

families was unknown. Prior to the actual data collection day, the researcher did an exploratory study and visited the 9 sampled schools to determine the population of adolescents from blended families with the assistance of school counselors. Simple random sampling was used to determine the 5 classes to be sampled in each of the 9 schools. The 5 classes had a population of about 55 students each. A short questionnaire with demographic data of students was issued to all the students (2475) in a bid to elicit the adolescents from the said classes that came from blended families in the 9 schools. A total number of 208 adolescents from blended families in the 9 schools was elicited and this was considered a sufficient sample size. In Marriage and Family research studies, a sample size of 150 to 200 is enough for a study (Sprenkle & Piercy, 2005). All the 208 students were issued with questionnaires based on the standardized tools. The inclusion/exclusion criteria was;

- i) The students were 13-19 years of age
- ii) The student should be from a blended family household where one of the parent was either a step father or a step mother.

The third stage of the sampling process involved selecting of focus group members and school counselors. Simple random sampling was used to sample 24 participants to form 4 focus groups comprising of 6 participants each (Johnson & Chistensen, 2014) 4 focus groups were purposively selected from 4 of the 9 sampled schools this is consistent with (Sutton,2015) who recommended that 3 to 6 groups are adequate to bring out most prevalent themes within any given data set. Two of the focus groups comprised of females/ males who live with step mothers while the other two groups were comprised of female/ male students who reside with step fathers. The focus groups members were grouped as homogenous groups to enhance communication. Also 4 professional counselors were purposively selected from the 9 schools for

in-depth interview schedule. The counselors were purposively sampled to elicit professional counselors because not all counselors in schools are normally trained in counselling.

#### Data collecting instruments

Data for the study was collected using four types of instruments these were; questionnaires for students from blended families, an in-depth interview schedule for the school counselors and a focused group interview schedule for group respondents.

#### Students Questionnaire

Primary data was collected using structured interview administered questionnaires. The questionnaire had sections that covered the demographic information of the respondents to ascertain the actual age, whether the adolescent had either a step mother or a step father which were critical aspects of the study. The questionnaires were administered to 2475 students in the 9 sampled schools in a bid to elicit students that come from blended family households. A total of 208 students were sampled for the study. This information was required prior to actual data collection period.

#### Standardized Test

These are tests that have a consistency and uniform procedures for administering, scoring and interpreting the behavior of subjects (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2006). Since the subject of the current study related to personal and individual experiences, interviews and self-report methods were used to elicit data on the variables of the study. Interviews were used to assess an individual's state of mind in regard to attachment and assists in overcoming a person's defenses,

evaluates internal working models by use of narratives whose objectives is to bring to the fore attachment representations that an individual is unaware off (Main, 2013). Further self-report assessment tools measure fundamental components of the subjective experience while taking care of the respondents' confidentiality (Cresswell, 2018). The study used Armsden and Greenberg (1987) Revised Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) to measure parental attachment, Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale to measure adolescent self-esteem, Berzonsky (2011) Identity Style Inventory to measure identity and Silverberg & Steinberg (1986) Emotional Autonomy Scale (EAS) to measure autonomy. The above reasons prompted the researcher to adopt the above instruments for the study.

#### Revised Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) Armsden & Greenberg (1987)

This is the only tool that has been found to be effective in assessing adolescents' attachment to peers and parents (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). This tool was meant to assess the perceptions of adolescents and how they relate with parents and peers. IPPA assesses two categories of attachment; for parents and that of the peers (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). The first version of IPPA was designed to assess parental attachment as one entity however, the tool was revised where mother and father attachment would be explored separately (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). The revised version of IPPA was used because the study seeks to find out the attachment style of adolescents to each of the parents but did not include the peer attachment since it had been exempted from the study.

The IPPA parent version has 25 items each for mother and father which assess three categories of attachment relationship and also global score of security relationship. These dimensions are trust where adolescents feel that their parents understand, meet their needs and

accord them respect, communication where adolescents feel that their parents respond to their inner desires and evaluates the degree of their verbal expression and lastly alienation which indicates adolescents' withdrawal, unhappiness and distant relationships with their care givers (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). IPPA is a self-report and response items are presented on a 5 likert scale ranging from 1 (never true) to 5 (Always true).

Internal reliability of this instrument as measured by Cronbachs alpha shows attachment to mother and father as 0.87 and 0.89 respectively (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). On this account IPPA has been depicted to be a reliable tool to assess adolescent attachment to their mothers and fathers and therefore an important tool for the current study. IPPA tool has also been proven to have appropriate validity. The construct validity of the tool was first demonstrated by indicating its convergent validity.

The constructs in its inventory have been depicted to have crucial correlations with construct from other inventory assessment tools that sought to assess same characteristics (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). For example there is a key correlation between parental attachment in the IPPA and family self-worth (which finds out how individuals view themselves in relation to family attachment) in the Tennessee self-scale:  $r(53) = .78, P < 0.001$ . This is an indication that IPPA has convergent validity and it can be used for conducting a research study and this made it a crucial tool for the present study. Some strengths of IPPA are; it is reliable for indicating levels of parental attachment (Ying & Tsai, 2007). Also the three dimension model of attachment highlighted in IPPA; trust, communication and alienation provide a significant outline of the aspects that compromise relationship attachment than a single or double factor model (Pace & Zappulla 2011).



On the contrary some scholars have argued that these three aspects of IPPA are interrelated and this hinders each construct from being assessed independently from the rest and therefore becomes a limitation (Pace & Zappulla 2014). As much as this limitation should be acknowledged, research still suggests that IPPA is a reliable and valid self-report tool used to assess parental and peer attachment and it is on this strength that the present study was conducted. In regard to classification procedure, adolescents who report having close connection, high trust and appropriate communication and low alienation from parents are categorized as having a secure attachment while those adolescents who report that relationship with parents is characterized by high alienation, low communication and low trust are classified as having an insecure attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987).

The study therefore used IPPA to measure secure and insecure attachment styles to find out how they influenced psychosocial development of adolescents from blended families.

#### Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Self-esteem assessment was done by use of Rosenberg, 1965 self-esteem scale. It was developed by Rosenberg in 1965 to assess global self-esteem and consists of ten individual-response declarations. The statements gave results concerning the degree of self-esteem a person measured against. The test serves as a measure of global self-esteem. The test is content free and does not have specific attributes but focuses on general feelings of self-respect, self-acceptance and positive self-evaluation” (Rosenberg, 1986).

Half of the items are worded in a positive direction “on the whole am satisfied with myself”; the other half worded on a negative direction “all in all I am inclined to be a failure” (Rosenberg, 1965). For Scoring purposes the items are assigned a value to all of the 10 items as

indicated below; firstly items 1, 2, 4,6,7: Strongly agree=3, Agree = 2, Disagree= 1 and Strongly disagree=0. Secondly items 3, 5, 8, 9, 10 are reversed. Strongly agree= 0, Agree= 1, Disagree= 2 and strongly disagree= 3. The scores across the 10 items are added, the total scores should fall between 0 and 30. Higher numbers indicate high esteem while low numbers indicate low esteem. This scale has depicted high reliability with a Cronbach alpha for various samples ranging from 0.77 to 0.88.

Convergent validity of Rosenberg Self-esteem scale has been correlated with depression ( $r=0.71$ ) in an ABI population (Cooper et al., 2008). In addition, Robins et al. (2001) examined construct validity of two global self-esteem assessment measures which are Rosenberg self-esteem and the single item self-esteem scale in four studies. Findings indicated that Rosenberg self-esteem scale has a higher convergent validity for both adolescents and college students also men and women from various ethnic groups ( Robin et al. 2001).Some of the strengths of this tool are that it is easy to administer, broadly used in a variety of areas for instance, and within populations with brain injury and it is a tool in the public domain.

Limitations include the fact that many people are familiar with aspects of self-esteem hence the scale may probably not reveal anything unusual to the respondents that they are unaware of. Also the response to intervention does not change. It is crucial to acknowledge the weaknesses but they do not water down the strengths of this instrument in terms of reliability, validity and the fact that a lot of researchers have used it in their studies. It is on these strengths that this instrument was adopted for the present study.

### Identity Style Inventory (ISI-4)

Bezonsky (2011) developed the Identity Style Inventory (ISI-4) to evaluate the degree that individuals use these styles. The ISI has a subscale designed to measure identity commitment strength. There are many versions of identity styles ISI-5 being the latest. This study did not use ISI-5 although it is one of the most recent measure because it had been proven to have low alpha scores which is a major weakness (Heerden, 2018). This researcher had initially adopted ISI-5 scale in a study which sought to find out the relationship between parental involvement and adolescent identity style development, the participants that were involved in the pilot study filled in questionnaires from ISI-5 and after the pilot study it was discovered that this scale was not suitable for the study because the Alpa scores were very low and therefore the main study adopted ISI-4 which was found to have an internal reliability higher than 0.70 (Berzonsky, 2011).

The current study adopted ISI-4 in order to find out the influence between parental attachment on adolescent identity styles development which was one of its objectives. It adopted ISI-4 on the strength of Heerden (2018) who proved the tool appropriate in the study as stated earlier. In addition, the current study had similar characteristics with the study that this researcher carried out. The ISI-4 consists of 48 items which include four scales; informational identity style (13items), normative identity style (13 items), and diffuse-avoidant style (13 items), as well as identity related commitment (9 items).

The 48 items are scored on a 4 point likert with a scale that ranges from 1 to 4 with options such as; 1= not at all like me, 2= not like me, 3= somewhat like me, and 4= very much like me, in responding to the questionnaire items. For instance; ‘I know what I want to do with my future, ‘My life plans tend to change whenever I talk to different people (Berzonsky, 2011).

The other items are scored in between the said extremes. This scale has been used by several researchers who have found it reliable for instance, Berzonsky (2011) found out that internal reliability estimates were found to be greater than 0.70 a premise that Heerden (2018) concurs with in a study where he found the Cronbach Alpha for the identity styles; informational, normative diffuse avoidant to be 0.76, 0.75, and 0.71 respectively.

Other researchers who have used ISI-4 have found Cronbach alpha for subscales to be informational 0.73, normative, 0.66, diffuse avoidant, 0.76 (Smits, 2009). This concludes that the scale is reliable and internally consistent. This instrument was crucial in establishing the influence between parental attachment and identity styles development among adolescent from blended families.

#### Emotional Autonomy Scale

Emotional Autonomy Scale (EAS; Silverberg & Steinberg, 1986) is a self-report that measures 4 constructs of emotional autonomy namely; deidealizing the parents(deidealization), being responsible of own behavior (non- dependency), awareness of an individual that parents have other roles besides parental status(parents as people) and establishment of self as a separate individual (individuation). It is made up of 20 items which are categorized as: 5, 4, 6 and 5 items that assess deidealization, non- dependency, parents as people and individuation respectively. Items are presented in a declarative form where respondents are asked to indicate their degree of agreement with listed items on a 4 likert scale ranging between strongly agree(1) to strongly disagree(4). For instance, ‘Even when my parents and I disagree, my parents are always right’(reverse coded, deidealization), ‘It is better for kids to go to their best friends than to their parents when things do not work out for them’( non- dependency), ‘I might be surprised to see

how my parents act at a party' (parents as people) and 'There are things I will do differently from my mother and father when I become a parent' (individuation). Half of the items are designed in a way to elicit a 'strongly agree' response that indicate higher emotional autonomy in contrast to the other half which is worded in the opposite direction (Silverberg & Steinberg 1986).

The internal consistency as determined by Cronbachs alpha was found to be 0.75 (Silverberg & Steinberg ,1986). Further the subscales reliability coefficient was found to be 0.61, 0.63, 0.51 and 0.60 for perceives parents as people, deidealization, non-dependency and individuation respectively, although the authors agree that less items pose challenges in determining the instrument internal consistency three of the four subscales depict reliability greater or equal to 0.60 therefore implicating the efficacy of the tool (Silverberg & Steinberg 1986). In addition these authors report high validity score for Emotional Autonomy Instrument. Some shortcomings of Emotional Autonomy Scale have been highlighted by some authors. For instance, some have questioned the tools construct validity, and stated that some aspects of the instrument assess detachment instead of autonomy (Schmitz & Baer,2001). Others argue that some EAS aspects are only adaptive in family context (Little & Garber, 2001).

Further, authors have stated that various versions, samples and divergent ways of analyses have been used in many studies and these pose a challenge in interpretations and study findings (Beyers & Goossens, 1999). Despite these limitations of EAS , it has its strength in that most of the studies assessing adolescent autonomy have used it as the measuring tool therefore indicating its suitability and appropriateness as an instrument (Sandhu & Tung, 2006). The current study adopted this instrument to find out the influence between parental attachment styles and emotional autonomy development of adolescents from blended families.

### Counselors' Interviews schedule

Interviewing is a research method that entails the researcher asking questions and expecting the concerned participants to respond to them. The researcher used an indepth interview schedule that comprised of semi-structured questions to elicit information from trained counselors in four of the nine sampled schools in relation to adolescents from blended families.

### Focus group interview schedule

The researcher used indepth interview schedule that comprised of open ended questions . This enabled the researcher derive information from the respondent that was based on the objectives of the study. That is, how attachment styles affect their self esteem, identity styles and emotional development. There were four homogenous focus groups and eachgroup had six members.

Mugenda and Mugenda (2006) stipulates that piloting assists to establish that the tools are free from mistakes during the actual day of data collection. Before proceeding to the sampled schools to administer questionnaires, the researcher pretested the tools in one secondary school, which was not involved in the final study. The instrument was administered to 2 counsellors 6 members of a focus group and 30 students from blended families. Pilot study indicated a cronbach alpha of 0.7 and above for all subscales in all the standardized tools. This concluded that the scales were reliable and internally consistent and were therefore appropriate for the study. It was also established during the pilot study that there was an error with two questions in the counselors interview schedule. One that was numbered incorrectly and the other was a duplicate of the same question. It was highlighted by one of the counselors. No ammendments were done on the focus group interview schedule.

## Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of an instrument to produce similar results after repeated trials (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2006). An instrument is considered reliable if it provides dependable and trustworthy results (Creswell, 2018). Cronbach's Alpha is widely used and measure internal consistency indicating the relatedness of the items in a group (Goodwin et al., 2012). According to Creswell (2018) stipulates that acceptable measure of reliability in social sciences research when it is found to be 0.7 or above. In the research all the instruments yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above which was in line with the acceptable reliability coefficient of 0.7 and above (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2011)

## Validity

According to Orodho (2013) validity of a research study tool is the scope by which the instrument can achieve the research objectives. Face validity was used to check whether the items in the instrument were relevant, reasonable, unambiguous and clear (Goodwin et al 2012). Content validity was used to check the content of the items closely if it actually measured the concept assessed in the study. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2006) the application of content validity is crucial in enhancing the validity of research instruments. In addition content validity is sort of judgment applied by professionals and experts in a specific field (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2006).

In the current study, the researcher liaised with the supervisors, lecturers and peers in the Department of Counselling Psychology to evaluate content structures of the instrument to ensure the variables under study were captured. Criterion validity was also used for this study since it measured what it was supposed to measure.

### Data Collection Procedure.

The researcher obtained a letter of introduction from Post Graduate Studies, Pan Africa Christian University. The letter was used to acquire research authorization from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Further authorization was sought from County Directors of Education in Kiambu County. The principals of the sampled schools were presented with the letters to facilitate data collection. Then, the researcher visited all the schools that were part of the study for familiarization purposes, this included sensitizing the principals and counselors about the intended study so that appropriate arrangements could be made before the main study. In addition, before administering the questionnaires, the researcher established a cordial relationship with the participants and clarified the purpose of the research and assured them of confidentiality.

Research assistants (school counselors) were recruited and trained on how to administer the questionnaires, this enabled them to internalize and explain concepts in the questionnaires. Prior to the actual data collection day, the research assistants administered the questionnaires to 2475 students in order to elicit participants that were required for the study. The research assistant then used the inclusive/exclusive criteria to come up with the participants from blended families that were required for the actual study. The research assistants also assisted in issuing questionnaires on the actual day of data collection to the sampled respondents.

The questionnaires were later collected. This enhanced independent responses and higher return rate. The respondents were assured of complete anonymity; they were not expected to write their names on the questionnaires and only those who signed the consent form were



allowed to participate in the study. Discussions with respondents in the focus groups was done with the use of semi-structured questionnaires where notes were taken and audio recording was done as per the conversations. The 4 counselors that took part in personal interview were engaged with the use of semi- structured questionnaire and themes captured through writing.

### Data Analysis

The data collected was processed and analyzed. According to Creswell (2018) this is the indispensable procedure for scientific studies as it ensures pertinent data for making expected assessment and analysis is accessible. Reasons for analyzing data is to covert statistics into a more elaborate way so that it becomes comprehensible to grasp the relationship of the study problem (Creswell, 2018).

### Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis entails obtaining in-depth information concerning a phenomenon being studied and establishing patterns and trends from the information given (Frank & Nachmias, 2006). Qualitative data analysis entails assigning meaning to the data collected by organizing it into groupings and themes. In this study data analysis was done in two cycles of coding as depicted by Miles et al. (2013). To begin with, the researcher interacted with the raw data from focus group and counselors' interview schedule by reading, listening to the audio and reflecting on it. It was afterwards condensed and the most important themes were retrieved. In cycle two, provisional coding method was applied to assist the researcher cluster the codes into relevant themes in line with the research objectives.

Miles et al.(2013) suggests that provisional coding procedure permits the qualitative researcher to come up with trial codes applicable to their studies from the theoretical framework or reviewed literature to form the initial skeleton for analysis. These two aspects informed the provisional coding in this study. To come up with conclusive themes, provisional codes were corrected, adjusted, some expunged or expanded to include new codes based on the information emanating from the data.

### Quantitative Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to evaluate the data. As such, percentages, frequencies and means were used for the examination. The T-test was used to determine the statistical significance of each variable based on blended family (intervening variable), Correlation test to determine the statistical significance relationship between the variables, ANOVA to determine the statistical significance difference between the attachment style (independent variable) and self-esteem and the attachment style and Regression to determine the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The computer software, Statistical Package Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0 facilitated the data analysis.

### Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained permission to carry out the research study from National Council for Science and Technology (NACOSTI) and from Kiambu County Government. The ethical approval was sought from an accredited IERC (Institutional Ethics Review Committee) prior to application to NACOSTI. The researcher also got clearance from Post Graduate Board of Pac University before obtaining a permit from the Ministry of education (MOE) and there after

sought clearance from the County Education Officer (CEO) where the researcher presented the letter to the school principals and explained to them the purpose of the research. In addition, the researcher was aware of the ethical code of conduct required during the research process as well as the ethical principles that were to be adhered to such as confidentiality and informed consent. A school informed consent from parents through the school principals was acquired for those respondents below 18 years of age.

Also the principals gave authorization through signing of the said consent form. The informed consent also captured details on confidentiality, purpose of the study, risks and benefits, contacts of the researcher, the right of participants to choose to participate in the study or not and declaration of consent. In addition, the researcher organized with the counselors how debriefing sessions were to be done with the respondents who participated in the study. This was done through focus groups in each of the sampled schools. Benefits to the students' participants was that they engaged with the rest of the students in the focus group which was therapeutic. For the counselors the findings of the study could be beneficial in that it could enhance their knowledge on issues pertaining adolescents from step families therefore become better counselors in handling problematic issue from such families. After the results of the study the researcher intends to share them through school forums where the school counselors with permission from the principals will organize a day when the researcher can disseminate the results to the participants. The researcher will in addition share contact that respondents may use in request for findings.

## Chapter Summary

The chapter has spelt out the methodology that was adopted to guide the study. This includes; research design, target population ,study locale, sample and sampling procedure, appropriate tools for the study, data collection strategies, piloting, how reliability and validity was achieved, data analysis strategies and finally ethical considerations that were taken into account when conducting the study. This methodology assisted in data presentation and analysis and also in the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### Introduction

This chapter comprises of presentation of results, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and discussion. It also gives an overview of the demographics of the sample used in the study. The study sought to establish the influence of attachment styles on adolescent psychosocial development among selected secondary school students from blended families in Kiambu County, Kenya. The specific objectives of the study were to: examine the attachment styles adopted by parents of adolescents among blended families in Kiambu County, evaluate the influence of attachment styles on establishment of self-esteem among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County, evaluate the influence of attachment styles on establishment of identity among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County and assess the influence of attachment styles on establishment of autonomy among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County. The findings are presented as per the objectives where quantitative data is presented followed by qualitative data and lastly discussions. The last section presents the chapter summary.

#### Response Rate

Using the survey method, a total number of 208 adolescents' students from blended families in 9 schools met the inclusion criteria to participate in the study. All the 208 adolescents' students participated in the study by filling standardized tools giving 100% response rate. This

sample was adequate for the study since the response rate for the questionnaire was 100% as indicated on table 1.

Table 1.

*Response Rate*

School	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
1	30	0	30	14.40%
2	18	0	18	8.70%
3	22	0	22	10.60%
4	20	0	20	9.60%
5	0	32	32	15.40%
6	0	20	20	9.60%
7	0	29	29	13.90%
8	0	18	18	8.70%
9	0	19	19	9.10%
	90	118	208	100.00%

For the qualitative data, 4 counselors were purposively selected from the 9 schools for in-depth interview schedule. Additionally, 24 adolescents' students were randomly selected to form 4 focus groups comprising of 6 participants each. This section describes the participants, give a detailed report of the findings and examples to support the findings. Simple random sampling as used to sample a total of 24 participants who were sampled from 4 secondary schools that were part of the sampled 9 schools involved in the study. These students formed four focus groups that were made up of 6 students each as shown below.

Table 2.

*Characteristics of Participants for FGD*

Schools	Males	Females	Adolescent Relationship with Stepparent
A	6 aged 15,14,16, 13, 15, 17		Step fathers
B		6 aged: 15, 16, 16, 13, 14, 17	Step fathers
C	6 aged: 15, 16, 15, 13, 16, 17,		Step mothers
D		6 aged: 14, 14, 16, 16, 15, 13	Step mothers

## General Information

The general information captured on the respondents informed the inclusion and exclusion criteria met. Key information captured were the type of school, the gender of respondents, the type of step parent and the age of the respondents. The descriptive results of these were:

## Gender of Respondents

As presented on figure 2, the female respondents were 56.7% while the male respondents were 43.3%. This was expected since five girls' schools was sampled in the study compared to four boys' schools.

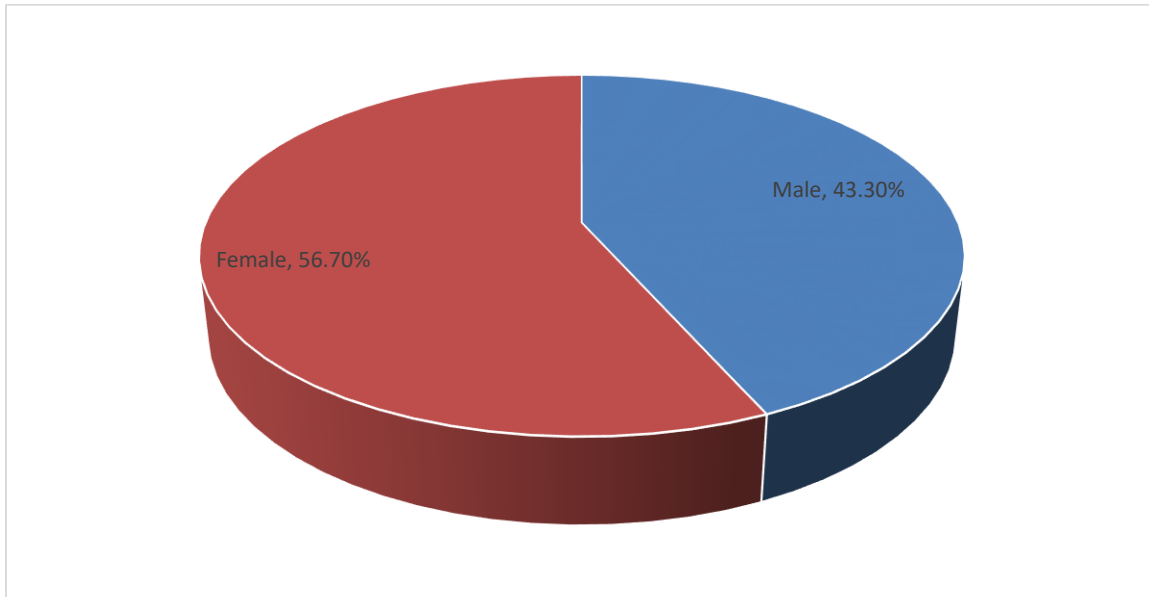


Figure 2: Gender of Respondents

### Step Parents

As presented on figure 3, 58% of the respondents in blended families were living with their step father while the remaining 42% were living with their step mother. This shows in the blended families, families with step father are more than families with step mother.

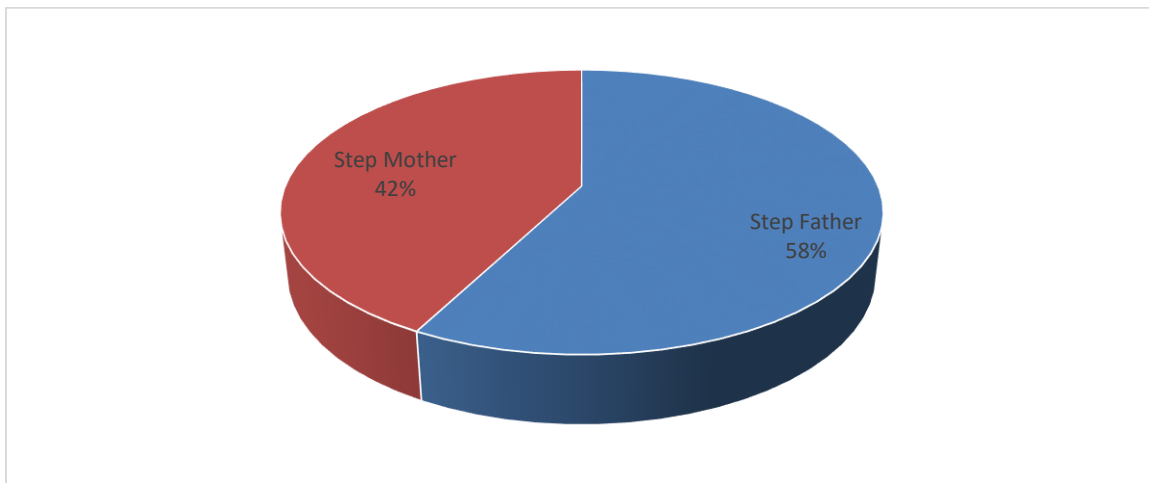




Figure 3. Respondents Step Parents

#### Age of Respondents

The research targeted respondents aged 13-19years. The mean age of respondents was 16.26 years with SD of 1.32. On the specific age, the 16 years old were the most at 29.4%. They were followed by the 17years old at 22.1%, 15 years old at 20.6%, 18 years old at 14.7%, 16 years old at 7.8% and 19 years old at 4.9%. The least respondents were the 13 years old at 0.5%. This validates the data since the respondents were within the inclusive age group as indicated on Figure 4.

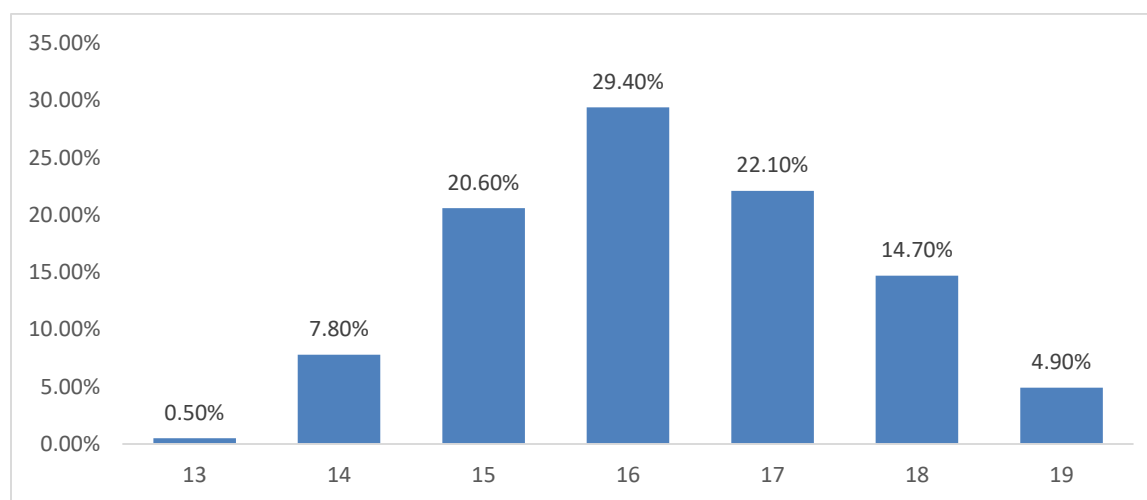


Figure 4. Age of Respondent

Attachment styles adopted by parents of adolescents in blended families.

The first objective of the study sought to examine the attachment styles adopted by parents of adolescents among blended families in selected secondary schools in Kiambu, County. The

respondents were required to discuss their step parent-step adolescents relationship. Both quantitative and qualitative data are discussed.

### Quantitative findings

This section presents the first objective of the study. It presents the descriptive statistics of each variables of study; one independent variable; attachment style and three dependent variables; self-esteem, identity style, and autonomy. The descriptive statistical tests conducted were Mean (M) and Standard deviation (SD). The descriptive results have further been divided into three clusters of parents; the step father, the step mother and the combined (all parents) for each of the variable of study. This will be followed by findings and discussions of each of the variables of the study.

### Descriptive Statistics of Attachment Styles as the Independent Variable

The main independent variable of study was the attachment style which was measured by Armsden & Greenberg (1987) Revised Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA). The IPPA has 25 questions measured in five likert scale; 1 to 5. The mean value result for each question was categorized as follows:  $M < 1.5$  = Never true,  $M > 1.5, < 2.4$  = rarely true,  $M > 2.5, < 3.4$  = Sometimes true,  $M > 3.5, < 4.4$  = Often true, and  $M > 4.5$  = Always true. The result for the attachment style; parental trust, parental alienation and parental communication has been presented as follows.

The first descriptive findings on attachment style is parental trust which was derived from question number; 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 12, 13, 20, 21, 22 and the result presented in Table 3. Generally, adolescents rated items on parental trust differently. The items rated as 'often true' ( $M > 3.5$ ,

<4.4) regarding parental trust on all the parents were; 'I would not desire to have a different person as my mother/father'  $M=3.65$ ,  $SD=1.65$  and 'my mother/father takes me as I am'  $M=3.76$ ,  $SD=1.51$ . Only one item was rated as 'rarely true' ( $M >1.5$ ,  $<2.4$ ); 'my mother/father expects a lot from me'  $M = 1.82$ ,  $SD=1.39$ . Other items were rated as 'sometimes true' with  $M >2.5$ ,  $<3.4$ .

On comparing the trust that adolescents have on their step parents, adolescents living with their step mother had higher level of trust on many items compared to those living with their step-father. In chronological order, items that step mothers had higher trust than step father based on mother adolescent relationship were; 'I would not desire to have a different person as my mother'  $M=3.98$ ,  $SD=1.57$ , 'My mother takes me as I am'  $M=3.97$ ,  $SD=1.36$ , 'I have faith in my mother'  $M=3.74$ ,  $SD=1.55$ , 'My feelings are respected by my mother'  $M=3.59$ ,  $SD=1.39$ , 'My mother understands me'  $M = 3.30$ ,  $SD=1.58$ , 'My mother trusts my opinion'  $M = 3.28$ ,  $SD=1.44$ , 'When I am troubled about something, my mother tries to be understanding'  $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD=1.65$ , and lastly 'When we talk about issues with my mother she regards my opinion'  $M=3.22$ ,  $SD= 1.50$ .

On the other hand, there was only two items on parental trust that the adolescents living with their step father had higher mean ranking than those living with their step mother; 'I am not sure who I can rely on these days'  $M=2.86$ ,  $SD=1.68$  and 'My father expects a lot from me'  $M=1.97$   $SD=1.44$ .

From these findings, there was varied rating on parental trust for both parents, step mother and step fathers. However, the adolescents living with their step mother had higher level of trust on

many items compared to those living with their step-father. This shows dominance of trust as an attachment style among the adolescents living with their step mother than adolescents living with their step fathers.

Table 3.

*Mean and Standard Deviation for Parents Trust*

		Step Father		Step Mother		All parents	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
p1	My feelings are respected by my mother/father	3.18	1.48	3.59	1.39	3.35	1.45
p2	I am not sure who I can rely on these days	2.86	1.68	2.56	1.64	2.71	1.68
p3	I would not desire to have a different person as my mother/father	3.41	1.67	3.98	1.57	3.65	1.65
p4	My mother/father takes me as I am	3.62	1.60	3.97	1.36	3.76	1.51
P10	My mother/father expects a lot from me	1.97	1.44	1.63	1.31	1.82	1.39
p12	When we talk about issues with my mother/father regards my opinion	2.97	1.63	3.22	1.50	3.07	1.58
p13	My mother/father trusts my opinion	2.94	1.57	3.28	1.44	3.09	1.52
p20	My mother/father understands me	2.82	1.59	3.30	1.58	3.02	1.60
p21	When I am troubled about something, my mother/father tries to be understanding	2.84	1.61	3.23	1.65	3.00	1.64
p22	I have faith in my mother/father	3.10	1.64	3.74	1.55	3.37	1.63

The second descriptive finding on attachment style is parental communication which was derived from question number; 5, 6, 7, 14, 15, 16, 19, 24, 25 and the result presented in Table 4. Generally, adolescents rated all the items on parental communication as ‘sometimes true’ with  $M > 2.5$ ,  $< 3.4$ . On comparing the parental communication that adolescents have on their step parents, adolescents living with their step mother had higher level of communication on all the items/questions compared to those living with their step-father.

In chronological order based on the mean value, items that step mothers had higher communication ranking than step father based on their relationship with adolescents were; 'If my mother realizes that something is troubling me she enquires about it'  $M=3.60$ ,  $SD=1.48$ , 'My mother motivates me to talk about my problems'  $M=3.42$   $SD=1.59$ , 'My mother aids me in appreciating myself better'  $M=3.37$ ,  $SD=1.60$ , 'I do not bother my mother with my issues because she has her own problems'  $M=3.19$ ,  $SD=1.57$ , 'I can depend on my mother when I need to disclose something that is troubling me'  $M=3.10$ ,  $SD=1.68$ , 'My mother can feel when I am disturbed by something'  $M=3.06$ ,  $SD=1.55$ , 'I like to get my mother's view on things that have to do with me'  $M=3.03$ ,  $SD=1.58$ , 'I share with my mother my problems and concerns'  $M=2.92$   $SD=1.59$  and lastly, 'I feel it is of no value in letting my feelings show'  $M=2.65$ ,  $SD=1.52$ .

From these findings, there was clear rating on parental communication for both parents, step mother and step fathers. Generally, all the items on parental communication were rated as 'sometimes true' while the adolescents living with their step mother rated all the items on parental communication highly than adolescents living with their step fathers. This shows dominance of communication as an attachment style among the adolescents living with their stepmother than adolescents living with their step fathers.

Table 4

*Mean and Standard Deviation for Parents Communication*

		Step Father		Step Mother		All parents	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
p5	I like to get my mother/father's view on things that have to do with me	2.96	1.72	3.03	1.58	2.99	1.66
p6	I feel it is of no value in letting my feelings show	2.47	1.54	2.65	1.52	2.54	1.53
p7	My mother/father can feel when I am disturbed by something	2.50	1.57	3.06	1.55	2.74	1.58
p14	I do not bother my mother/father with my issues because she has her own problems	2.58	1.55	3.19	1.57	2.84	1.58
p15	My mother/father aids me in appreciating myself better	3.02	1.67	3.36	1.60	3.16	1.64
p16	I share with my mother/father my problems and concerns	2.43	1.58	2.92	1.58	2.64	1.59
p19	My mother/father motivates me to talk about my problems	2.82	1.72	3.42	1.59	3.07	1.69
p24	I can depend on my mother/father when I need to disclose something that is troubling me	2.57	1.63	3.10	1.67	2.79	1.67
p25	If my mother/father realizes that something is troubling me she enquires about it	2.82	1.71	3.60	1.48	3.15	1.66

The third descriptive findings on attachment style is parental alienation which was derived from question number; 8, 9, 11, 17, 18, 23 and the result presented in Table 5. Generally, adolescents rated the items on parental alienation as 'sometimes true' with  $M > 2.5$ ,  $< 3.4$  and 'Rarely true' with  $M > 1.5$ ,  $< 2.4$ . On comparing the parental alienation that adolescents have on their step parents, adolescents living with their step father had higher level of alienation on many items/questions compared to those living with their step mother.

In Chronological order based on the mean value, items that step father had higher alienation than step mother based on their relationship with adolescents were; 'I feel ashamed or foolish when I share my challenges with my father'  $M=3.19$ ,  $SD=1.67$ , 'I get distressed many times but my

father does not know about it'  $M=3.33$ ,  $SD=1.65$  and 'My father does not acknowledge what I am going through these days'  $M=2.83$ ,  $SD=1.62$ .

Items with similar mean ranking on step-father and step mother on parental alienation based on their relationship with adolescents were; 'I feel annoyed with my mother/father'  $M=2.34$ ,  $SD=1.53$  and 'I get less attention at home'  $M=2.42$ ,  $SD=1.37$ . Lastly, only one item had higher rating on parental alienation among the step mother compared to the step father 'I get troubled easily at home'  $M=2.92$ ,  $SD=1.56$ . From these findings, there was varied rating on parental alienation for both parents, step mother and step fathers. Generally, all the items on parental alienation were rated as 'sometimes true' and 'rarely true' while the adolescents living with their step fathers rated most items on parental alienation highly than adolescents living with their step mothers. This shows dominance of parental alienation as an attachment style among the adolescents living with their step fathers than adolescents living with their step mother.

Table 5.

*Mean and Standard Deviation for Parents Alienation*

		Step father		Step mother		All parents	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
p8	I feel ashamed or foolish when I share my challenges with my mother/father.	3.19	1.67	2.88	1.60	3.06	1.64
p9	I get troubled easily at home	2.53	1.48	2.92	1.56	2.70	1.52
p11	I get distressed many times but my mother/father does not know about it	3.33	1.65	3.18	1.59	3.26	1.62
p17	I feel annoyed with my mother/father	2.34	1.53	2.34	1.48	2.34	1.51
p18	I get less attention at home	2.42	1.37	2.42	1.32	2.42	1.35
p23	My mother/father does not acknowledge what I am going through these days	2.83	1.62	2.38	1.53	2.63	1.59

The last descriptive statistics on attachment style is on each of the three constructs and the results are presented on Table 6. Generally, all the adolescents rated the parental trust as the highest attachment style ( $M=3.08$ ,  $SD=0.90$ ), followed by the parental communication ( $M=2.88$ ,  $SD=1.21$ ) and the least was the parental alienation ( $M=2.74$ ,  $SD=1.11$ ).

The mean comparison based on the type of blended family showed adolescents living with step father rated the parental trust as the highest ( $M=2.97$ ,  $SD=0.93$ ), followed by the parental alienation ( $M=2.74$ ,  $SD=1.11$ ) and the least was parental communication ( $M=2.68$ ,  $SD=1.20$ ). Similarly, adolescents living with step mothers rated parental trust at the highest ( $M=3.24$ ,  $SD=0.83$ ). However, unlike the adolescents living with their step father who rated alienation as the second and communication as the least, the adolescents living with their step mother rated parental communication as the second highest attachment style ( $M=3.15$ ,  $SD=1.17$ ) and parental alienation as the least attachment style ( $M=2.69$ ,  $SD=1.13$ ).

Table 6.

*Mean of Attachment Style for all Parents*

	All parents		Step father		step mother	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Parental trust	3.08	0.90	2.97	0.93	3.24	0.83
Parental communication	2.88	1.21	2.68	1.20	3.15	1.17
Parental alienation	2.74	1.11	2.78	1.10	2.69	1.13



### Correlation Test for Attachment Style

Correlation test was performed to understand the attachment style based on the three component; parental trust, parental communication and parental alienation. The test checks for significant relationship between the three elements based on the classification of attachment and adolescents step fathers and step mothers.

As indicated in Table 7, parental trust had positive and significant relationship with parental communication; step father  $r = .799, p < .05$  and step mother  $r = .787, p < .05$ . But negative relation with parental alienation; step father  $r = -.452, p < .05$  and step mother  $r = -.594, p < .05$ . This shows an increase in parental trust positively increases the parental communication with highly rate for the step father than the step mother. While the increase in parental trust reduces the parental alienation with highly rate for the step mother than the step father. Similarly, parental communication had negative and significant relationship with parental alienation; step father  $r = -.628, p < .05$  and step mother  $r = -.715, p < .05$ . This shows an increase in parental communication reduces the parental alienation with highly rate for the step mother than the step father. This also reflects on the type of attachment as secure or insecure where the secure attachment has high correlation with Parental trust ( $r = .310, p < .05$ ), Parental communication ( $r = .402, p < .05$ ) and negative correlation with Parental alienation ( $r = -.496, p < .05$ ). In comparison to the parents, secure attachment has higher correlation with adolescents living with step mother than step father in all the components of attachment: parental trust, step father  $r = .306, p < .05$  and step mother  $r = .312, p < .05$ . Parental communication, step father  $r = .382, p < .05$  and step mother  $r = .427, p < .05$  and parental alienation, step father  $r = -.422, p < .05$  and step mother  $r = -.583, p < .05$ .

From these findings, parental trust, and parental communication have positive and significant relationship especially to adolescents living with their stepmothers than step fathers. But parental alienation has negative and significant relationship with parental trust, parental communication but generally, the secure attachment has positive and significant relationship especially to adolescents living with their step mothers than step father.

Table 7.

*Correlation Test for Attachment Style*

		Secure or insecure attachment	Secure or insecure attachment		parental trust		parental communication		parental alienation	
			step father	step mother	step father	step mother	step father	step mother	step father	step mother
Parental trust	Pearson Correlation	.310**	.306**	.312**	1	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.003						
Parental communication	Pearson Correlation	.402**	.382**	.427**	.799**	.787**	1	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000				
Parental alienation	Pearson Correlation	-.496**	-.422**	-.583**	-.452**	-.594**	-.628**	-.715**	1	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).										
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).										

*Attachment Style and Demographic Information*

To understand the attachment style based on the demographic information of the respondents, a mean comparison and T-test was conducted on gender and blended family. The mean comparison results are presented on Table 8. Generally, all the adolescents rated the parental trust as the highest attachment style (M=3.08, SD=0.90), followed by the parental communication (M=2.88, SD=1.21) and the least was the parental alienation (M=2.74, SD=1.11).

The mean comparison based on the type of blended family showed adolescents living with step father rated the parental trust as the highest ( $M=2.97$ ,  $SD=0.93$ ), followed by the parental alienation ( $M=2.74$ ,  $SD=1.11$ ) and the least was parental communication ( $M=2.68$ ,  $SD=1.20$ ). Similarly, adolescents living with step mothers rated parental trust at the highest ( $M=3.24$ ,  $SD=0.83$ ). However, unlike the adolescents living with their step fathers who rated alienation as the second and communication as the least, the adolescents living with their step mothers rated parental communication as the second highest attachment style ( $M=3.15$ ,  $SD=1.17$ ) and parental alienation as the least attachment style ( $M=2.69$ ,  $SD=1.13$ ).

On comparison of the attachment style based on the gender of the respondents, the parental trust was rated as the highest by both male adolescents ( $M=3.14$ ,  $SD=0.88$ ) and female adolescents ( $M=3.04$ ,  $SD=0.91$ ). However, parental communication was rated as the second highest by male adolescents ( $M=3.09$ ,  $SD=1.20$ ) but the least by female adolescents ( $M=2.72$ ,  $SD=1.19$ ). Similarly, on the parental alienation the female respondents rated it as the second highest ( $M=2.90$ ,  $SD=1.12$ ) but the male respondents rated it as the least ( $M=2.52$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ).

Table 8.

*Mean of Attachment Style*

	Step Father		Step Mother	
	M	SD	M	SD
Parental trust	3.0343	.84502	3.2912	.82083
Parental communication	2.7317	1.17704	3.1853	1.19376
Parental alienation	2.8308	1.05575	2.7098	1.12493
Attachment Style	1.9750	.81439	2.0455	.88290

To identify if the mean difference was significant, a T-test was conducted. As shown in Table 9, the adolescents living with step mother had statistically significant higher parental trust ( $M=3.24$ ,  $SD=.83$ ) compared to adolescents living with step father ( $M=2.97$ ,  $SD=.93$ ),  $t(206) = -2.17$ ,  $p=0.03$ . Similarly, the adolescents living with step mother had statistically significant higher parental communication ( $M=3.15$ ,  $SD=1.17$ ) compared to adolescents living with step father ( $M=2.68$ ,  $SD=1.20$ ),  $t(206) = -2.80$ ,  $p=0.01$ . However, there was no statistical significant difference on parental alienation between adolescents living with step mother ( $M=3.15$ ,  $SD=1.17$ ) compared to adolescents living with step father ( $M=2.68$ ,  $SD=1.20$ ),  $t(206) = 0.57$ ,  $p=0.57$ . This shows the parental trust and parental communication attachment styles were significantly higher for adolescents living with their step mothers than step fathers but there was no difference on the parental alienation.

Table 9.

*T-test on Attachment Style**Independent Samples Test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Mean, p-trust	Equal variances assumed	.688	.408	2.185	204	.030	-.25693	.11758	-.48875	-.02510
	Equal variances not assumed			2.194	190.421	.029	-.25693	.11708	-.48787	-.02599
mean, p-comm	Equal variances assumed	.049	.825	2.725	205	.007	-.45366	.16649	-.78191	-.12541
	Equal variances not assumed			2.719	186.130	.007	-.45366	.16684	-.78280	-.12452
mean, p-alienation	Equal variances assumed	.994	.320	.792	205	.429	.12096	.15264	-.17997	.42190
	Equal variances not assumed			.785	180.715	.433	.12096	.15410	-.18310	.42503
Attachment style scale; Secure (3), insecure (1), neutral (2)	Equal variances assumed	3.460	.064	-.595	206	.553	-.07045	.11845	-.30399	.16308
	Equal variances not assumed			-.587	178.602	.558	-.07045	.11994	-.30713	.16622

The above quantitative findings indicated that step parents should adopt a secure attachment style that has high trust, high communication and less alienation than insecure attachment which depicts low levels of trust, communication and higher alienation in relating to adolescents from blended families.

Table 10

*Themes and sub themes of attachment Styles*

Themes	Subthemes
Step Parent Secure Attachment	Communication
Step Parent Insecure Attachment	Trust
	Alienation

Results from thematic analysis indicated two attachment styles namely; secure and insecure attachment styles and the sub themes were parental trust, parental communication and parental alienation.

Step parents secure attachment style

During the focus group discussions respondents were asked to state the age they joined blended families and share their experiences. 6(25%) indicated that they became part of the blended families when they were below 6 years of age. 4(67%) said they had a secure relationship with their step parents to date, while 2(33%) were less attached (insecure) to step parents since they were young to date. These findings underscore the fact that step parents who become part of step families when the step children are young tend to have a secure relationship with them during adolescent stage and beyond and especially if they showed them love and care just like their biological children.

This premise was also affirmed by the following respondents:

(Respondent FGD1) response;

*“I have had a good relationship with my step dad though I am not his biological son, since I was 5years old. I am now 15 and we are still friends, I do not know who my biological father is because my mother avoids this question but it does not bother me much because he abandoned us”.*

( Counselor I) response;

*“I had a girl who said that she loved her step mother because she brought her up from an early age of 6 years when the parents separated and the mother abandoned her. She said she cannot remember how her mother looked like and she would love to meet her because she has questions for her. She said the step mother loves and cares for her and that she will never leave her for her biological mother”.*

( Respondent FGD 6) response

*“ I have a wonderful relationship with my step father although he came into my life when I was 17 years. He is loving, caring and we have outings together. He has taught me many positive aspects and has inspired me to pursue medicine and surgery degree after I sit for my KCSE. He is the dad I never had and I love him very much”.*

The findings showed that a secure step parent adolescent attachment can develop whether the step parent joined the blended family when the adolescent was young or during adolescence

stage. This depends on the attachment style that the step parent adopts if they adopt a secure attachment the bond tightens but if the relationship is insecure the relationship becomes distant.

#### Step parents insecure attachment styles

Study findings established that insecure attachment styles that are adopted by step parents are detrimental to adolescents step parent relationships, because they block communication channels. Findings indicated that adolescents whose parents adopt insecure attachment style do not express themselves and fail to trust their step parents because they are inconsistent. Due to communication problems and lack of trust, adolescents' needs by their parents are rarely met. During the focus group discussion 13(54%) of adolescents reported that step parents meet their basic needs for instance, paying school fees, food and shelter but not emotional needs, while 11(46%) stated they find it difficult to communicate directly especially to the step parent so most of their needs are unmet. In addition, 20(83%) of the 24 students reported that they fall back to friends for solace and consolation in order to meet their emotional needs because they do not trust their step parents to the extent of sharing their personal issues with them.

This was also confirmed by (Respondent FGD 8) who said,

*“Sharing personal problems with my step father would be a big joke! I hardly talk to him leave alone sharing my personal problems after all I am not his son. Let his children tell him their challenges. I have friends who I turn to when I am sad”.*

This is an indication of how strenuous this type of relationship can be to adolescents who live with step parents where communication is a challenge. The study noted that step fathers

especially ought to improve their communication with the step adolescents. Over reliance on friends may be detrimental to such adolescence because they can be easily recruited into unbecoming behavior and this could affect their psychological wellbeing.

The findings noted that step parents who use insecure style have less time with the step adolescents and this makes them have a distant relationship. Such step parents rarely communicate with them, instead they alienate themselves from the adolescents. In addition, step adolescents do not communicate to step parents unless when it is absolutely necessary, they do not trust them, withdraw from them and feel independent. Also, they hardly disclose to their friends their problems and avoid relationships as much as possible, they actually alienate themselves from other people and make no effort to bond with either the step parents or other people even as they grow up. This makes them fail to seek for assistance and may develop antisocial and unbecoming behavior. As depicted by:

(Respondent, FGD 18)

*‘I remember a time we argued with my classmate and it escalated into a fight. I bit her and pulled her hair then we landed in the principal’s office and I was sent home, my step mother gave me a thorough beating. We have never been friends and I spend most of my time in my bedroom during the school holidays. My classmate is still my enemy to date.’*

(Counselor 4) response

*“I was in therapy with a step father whose stepdaughter had been sent home from school because of in discipline and he felt that he was not recognized by this girl as a father and she could not take correction positively. She concluded that the step father is harsh because she was not his biological daughter and their relationship has grown distant”.*



Counselor 2 stated that step families are complex and it becomes a challenge for her in dealing with adolescents from these families. This was when she was responding to the question on the challenges counselors dealing with adolescents from blended families face.

*‘I feel challenged in counseling adolescents from step families’*

This shows the importance of professional counselors in schools because they assist adolescents from blended families in dealing with their challenges.

(Respondent FGD 9)

*“My step father generally hates me right from when he married my mother may be because I opposed the idea of the marriage. He insults me and often reminds me that I am not his son especially when my mother is not around. I have learnt to spend time with myself and because of boredom I carry some spirit sachets to take in my room to release stress and forget my problems no none knows that I take alcohol”.*

From the above findings it was clear that step parents who adopt insecure attachment styles make adolescents avoid interacting with them which leads to parental alienation, lack of mistrust and lack of communication. This in turn enhances unbecoming behavior of adolescents taking alcohol and may be aggressive and violent. Step parents should strive to work on their relationship with adolescents to better their relationship.

Study findings indicated that step parents’ relationship with step children especially adolescents can be very stressing and toxic in some blended families and this enhances conflict between the step parents and step adolescents. The step parents who adopt insecure attachment styles have a distant relationship with their step adolescents. In return such teenagers have trust

issues, poor communication skills, fail to manage anger and other emotions and feel alienated from the rest of the blended family members. Some of their responses were from:

(Respondent FGD13)

*“We all get stressed up when there is conflict because it takes a long time to resolve it especially among siblings because we wait for our parents to solve our problems”.*

(Counselor 4)

*“I counseled a boy who had a hostile relationship with the step father, he claimed that the biological mother was employed and was responsible for the house bills while the step father did not bother to search for a job but sat in the house all day long doing a lot of nothing. The boy told the step father that he is misusing the mother and a heated argument arose. Since then he does not heed to any advice or punishment given by the step father. He expressed his disappointment in the mother because she has refused to send his good for nothing father away. He avoids engaging in any conversation brought up by his lazy step father”.*

This shows how challenging it is for adolescents living in step families that are dysfunctional and toxic. The findings stipulate the need for parents to adopt secure attachment styles other than insecure attachment so that they can build strong connections with adolescents and lessen conflict because it can be detrimental to the adolescent psychosocial development.

The study established that step mothers insecure attachment styles enhance conflict and distant relationships among blended family members which in turn affects adolescents' their psychosocial development. 4(33.3%) adolescent girls reported that they had a distant relationship with their step mothers because they interfered with the close relationship they initially had with

their biological fathers. They reported that they felt loved and cared for by their biological fathers and this made them disclose their personal issues to them .

They retaliated how lonely they are these days because their biological fathers spend most of their time with the step mothers or mutual children. Though they somehow meet their basic needs, they wished their step mothers left so that they could enjoy the initial relationship they had with the biological fathers. This shows that there is competition between the step mothers and step adolescents. The step mother curtails the husband from accessing his daughters and this causes conflict because the daughters feel they have a right to their biological fathers. When such avenues are blocked the adolescents suffers in silence and this affects their psychosocial development as depicted by;

*(Respondent FGD 18)*

*‘There is no secret I would not tell my biological father but these days I keep my problems to myself because I fear he could disclose them to my step mother’. I am not close with her at all.*

However, 8(66.7%) of female respondents reported that they had a cordial relationship with their step mothers. This relationship was enhanced by the fact that adolescents living with their step mothers had opened communication channels with the adolescents and the adolescents trusted them to a certain extent. It was also noted that 5(41.7%) of boys had a distant relationship with the step mothers though 7(58%) preferred their step mothers to their biological fathers. Also 4(33.3%) of girls had a good relationship with their step fathers than the boys although this relationship could not be compared to that of their biological fathers.

*(Respondent FGD 6) response*

*“I have a wonderful relationship with my step father. He is loving, caring and we have outings together. He has taught me many positive aspects and has inspired me to pursue medicine and surgery degree after I sit for my KCSE. He is the dad I never had and I love him very much”.*

However, 2(16.7%) of the boys reported having a strenuous relationship with their step fathers. This implies that step fathers have high levels of alienation, low trust and communication which lead to dysfunctional relationship between them and adolescents.

The above findings from both the quantitative and qualitative concur that step parents should adopt secure attachment styles that have high levels of communication and trust but minimal levels of parental alienation. These findings were in line with Cooke (2018) who confirmed that parental adolescent connection should be founded on appropriate communication, lack of alienation and trust which in turn results in a healthy parent adolescent relationship or secure attachment.

Similarly further studies stipulated that a securely attached style manifests itself when the attachment is unconditional. In such cases, children realize that the caregiver loves, cares and values them and will stand by them in times of need, which results in high sense of emotional closeness between the child and the caregiver (Kamza, 2019). Additionally, Kaniušonytė and Žukauskienė (2018) study on blended family stability in Burundi advocated for a healthy parent- children relationship which creates a conducive home environment for the children.

The study findings found that most step mothers had a closer relationship with step adolescents because they adopt a secure relationship with them than the step fathers. Similarly, a study by Njoroge and Kirori(2018) on blended family dynamics found out that step fathers are

less warm and less supportive towards the step children and that there is no love amongst them. This contrasts Pasley (2013) studies that step mothers have a very higher negative attitude towards their step children than the step fathers. It also underscores the importance of stepparent adopting secure attachment styles that have high levels of trust and communication and low levels of parental alienation in order to establish close relationship with adolescents. Step fathers should strive to create close relationships with their step adolescents.

Insecure attachment styles that comprise of high parental alienation, low communication levels and low trust levels create a distant and unhealthy relationship with adolescents from blended families. This is line with Kamza (2019) study that noted that such adolescents are unable to express themselves when need arises and this makes them explode in an unhealthy manner because they cannot control or manage their emotions. Research in the United States depicts that step parents who adopt insecure attachment styles contribute to lower connection satisfaction and stability and are likely to face more difficulties in their role as step parents than those with secure attachment (Jensen & Howard, 2015).

According to Kamza(2019) adolescents in blended families experience a lot of challenges as a result of inappropriate insecure attachment adopted by step parents. This was in line with (Cartwright & Gibson, 2017) studies that found out that adolescents in blended families experience a lot of challenges for instance with personal boundaries, adjustment and connecting resulting to a stressful life for everyone in the blended family. Also,empirical studies have shown that adolescents in blended families households are at greater risk of experiencing emotional challenges than those from nuclear families (Kumar & Mattanah, 2016). Similarly, research in the United States depicts that step parents who adopt insecure attachment styles contribute to

lower connection satisfaction and stability and are likely to face more challenges in their role as step parents than those with secure attachment (Jensen & Howard, 2015).

Step parents that adopt insecure attachment styles enhance unbecoming behavior in adolescents who in turn seek solace from friends because they fail to trust and communicate to their step parents. The step parent adolescent relationship is distant. The findings were similar to (Abtahi & Kerns, 2017) study that indicated that children with insecure attachments are likely to develop unsociable and unbecoming behavior as they mature in life. Similarly Davis (2018) stated that adolescents who adopt this style become emotionally dependent on friends. This study concludes that step parents should adopt secure attachment styles that have high levels of communication, high levels of trust and minimal alienation and shun the use of insecure attachment styles which have high levels of alienation and low levels of communication and trust.

#### Influence of Attachment Styles in Blended Families on Adolescent Self-Esteem

The second objective of the study sought to evaluate the influence of attachment styles on adolescent self esteem among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu, County. The research question for this objective required respondents to discuss how their relationships with step parents enhance their high self esteem or low self esteem. Both qualitative data and quantitative data are discussed.

#### Descriptive statistics of Self-Esteem as Dependent Variable

The second dependent variable of study was the self-esteem which was measured by Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The Rosenberg self-esteem scale has 10

questions measured in three likert scale; 0 to 3. The descriptive statistical tests conducted were Mean (M) and Standard deviation (SD). The mean value result for each question was categorized as follows:  $M < 0.5$  as strongly disagree,  $M \Rightarrow 0.5, < 1.5$  as disagree,  $M \Rightarrow 1.5, < 2.5$  as agree and lastly  $M \Rightarrow 2.5$  as strongly agree. The results were divided into three clusters of parents; adolescents living with step father, the adolescents living with step mother and the combined (all parents) as presented in Table 11.

Generally, adolescents rated most of the items on self-esteem as agreed ( $M \Rightarrow 1.5, < 2.5$ ). In chronological order, items ranked as agreed (rounded  $M=2$ ) were; 'I am able to do things that other people can do'  $M=2.24$ ,  $SD=.917$ , 'As a person I feel I am worthy and at par with others'  $M=2.11$ ,  $SD=0.965$ , 'I surely feel useless at times'  $M=1.99$ ,  $SD=1.064$ , 'I am mostly satisfied with myself'  $M=1.96$ ,  $SD=1.033$ , 'I feel I have a few good qualities'  $M=1.69$ ,  $SD=0.985$ , 'I take a hopeful attitude towards myself'  $M=1.56$ ,  $SD=1.121$ , and lastly, 'I feel I have little to be proud off'  $M=1.47$ ,  $SD=1.109$ . Only three items were ranked as disagree (rounded  $M=1$ ); 'All things considered I am likely to feel I am a failure'  $M=1.08$ ,  $SD=0.956$ , 'I hope I could have more respect for myself'  $M=0.70$ ,  $SD=.928$  and 'Sometimes I feel I am not good enough'  $M=0.56$ ,  $SD=.801$ .

On comparing the self-esteem of the adolescents based on the type of their blended families, most of the items were rated as agreed ( $M=2$ ) by both adolescents living with step father and adolescents living with step mother. Only one item was rated by adolescents living with their step fathers as strongly agreed ( $M=4$ ); 'I take a hopeful attitude towards myself' ( $M=3.54$ ,  $SD=.719$ ) but rated as agreed by adolescent living with their step mother. The items rated as

disagreed by adolescents regardless of their who their parents were; ‘I hope I could have more respect for myself’, ‘I surely feel useless at times’ and ‘Sometimes I feel I am not good enough’.

Table 11.

*Mean and Standard Deviation for Self-Esteem*

		Step Father		Step Mother		All parents	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
SE1	As a person I feel I am worthy and at par with others	2.11	0.94	2.12	1.00	2.11	0.97
SE2	I feel I have a few good qualities	1.26	0.99	1.36	0.99	1.31	0.98
SE3	All things considered I am likely to feel I am a failure	1.92	0.97	1.92	0.95	1.92	0.96
SE4	I am able to do things that other people can do	2.18	0.97	2.32	0.83	2.24	0.92
SE5	I feel I have little to be proud off	1.28	1.10	1.72	1.08	1.47	1.11
SE6	I take a hopeful attitude towards myself	1.42	1.14	1.47	1.10	1.44	1.12
SE7	I am mostly satisfied with myself	1.99	1.03	1.92	1.04	1.96	1.03
SE8	I hope I could have more respect for myself	0.63	0.89	0.80	0.97	0.70	0.93
SE9	I surely feel useless at times	1.96	1.09	2.04	1.03	1.99	1.06
SE10	Sometimes I feel I am not good enough	2.52	0.72	2.33	0.89	2.44	0.80

Using the computation of the Rosenberg (1965) self-esteem scale, the summation of the respondents ranged from 0-30. From the summation, the self-esteem was categorized into three; low self-esteem, normal self-esteem and high self-esteem. The computation was modified from the original scale ranges of 0-30 with Scores between 15 and 25 are within normal range; scores below 15 as suggest low self-esteem and score above 25 as high self-esteem. Table 12, shows the distribution of the self-esteem of the respondents; 76.4% had normal self-esteem, 13% had low self-esteem and 10.6% had high self-esteem.



Table 12.

*Distribution on Self-Esteem*

	Frequency	Percent
Low self esteem	27	13
Normal self esteem	159	76.4
High self esteem	22	10.6
Total	208	100

## Correlation Test for Self-Esteem and Attachment Style

Correlation test was conducted to test for significant relationship between the self-esteem as dependent variable and attachment style as the independent variable of study. Table 13, shows the correlation between attachment style components and adolescents self-esteem based on the step parents.

Adolescents had positive and significant relationship with all the attachment styles; parental trust ( $r = .265, p < .05$ ), parental communication ( $r = .375, p < .05$ ) and parental alienation ( $r = -.246, p < .05$ ). On comparison with the step parent, adolescents with step fathers had statistical significant with parental trust ( $r = .275, p < .05$ ), parental communication ( $r = .335, p < .05$ ) but was not significant with parental alienation ( $r = -.246, p > .05$ ). Lastly, adolescents with step mothers had statistical significant with parental trust ( $r = .257, p < .05$ ), parental communication ( $r = .431, p < .05$ ) and parental alienation ( $r = -.439$ ).

Table 13.

*Correlation Test for Self-esteem and Attachment Style*

		Self-esteem		
		All Parents	step father	step mother
Parental trust	Pearson Correlation	.265**	.275**	.257*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.002	.016
	N	208	120	88
Parental communication	Pearson Correlation	.375**	.335**	.431**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	208	120	88
Parental alienation	Pearson Correlation	-.246**	-.070	-.439**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.450	.000
	N	208	120	88
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

*Mean and T-test on Self-Esteem and Attachment Style*

The mean comparison of the adolescents' self-esteem based on the step parent showed adolescents living with step mother had higher self-esteem ( $M=27.14$ ,  $SD=6.58$ ) compared to those living with step father ( $M=26.81$ ,  $SD=5.42$ ). Table 14, shows the mean of self-esteem.

Table 14.

*Mean of Self-Esteem and Step Parent*

	step mother or step father	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Self-esteem	Step Father	120	26.8083	5.42372	.49512
	Step Mother	88	27.1364	6.58312	.70176

However, a T-test result showed the mean difference on the self-esteem between adolescents living with step mother ( $M=27.14$ ,  $SD=6.58$ ) compared to adolescents living with step father ( $M=26.81$ ,  $SD=5.42$ ), was not statistically significant  $t(206) = -.39$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . This shows there was

no significant difference on the self-esteem of adolescents based on their step parent. Table 15, shows these results.

Table 15.

*T-Test for Self-esteem and Step Parents*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Self esteem	Equal variances assumed	2.22	0.14	-0.39	206.00	0.69	-0.33	0.83	-1.97	1.32
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.38	165.24	0.70	-0.33	0.86	-2.02	1.37

The ANOVA was conducted to determine the statistical significance difference between the self-esteem and the attachment style (self-esteem \* attachment style). As indicated on Table 16, there was a statistically significant difference between attachment style components and self-esteem as indicated on one-way ANOVA; parental trust ( $F(2,205) = 3.659, p < .05$ ), parental communication ( $F(2,205) = 9.721, p < .05$ ) and parental alienation ( $F(2,205) = 8.549, p < .05$ ).

Table 16.

*ANOVA on Influence of Attachment Style on Self-Esteem*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Parental trust	Between Groups	576.002	2	288.001	3.659	.027
	Within Groups	16134.416	205	78.704		
	Total	16710.418	207			
Parental communication	Between Groups	2129.802	2	1064.901	9.721	.000
	Within Groups	22457.462	205	109.549		
	Total	24587.264	207			
Parental alienation	Between Groups	705.497	2	352.748	8.549	.000
	Within Groups	8458.580	205	41.261		
	Total	9164.077	207			

A Tukey post hoc test revealed that parental trust significantly influence an adolescent with high self-esteem ( $M=33.2$ ,  $p <.05$ ) and low self-esteem ( $M=26.8$   $p <.05$ ) but not an adolescent with normal self-esteem ( $p >.05$ ). This shows parental trust as an attachment style has higher significant influence on adolescents' high self-esteem ( $33.2 \pm 7.9$ ) and adolescents' low self-esteem ( $26.8 \pm 11.3$ ) but not normal self-esteem.

The second attachment style was parental communication which statistically influenced adolescents level of self-esteem on all levels; high self-esteem ( $M=32.5$ ,  $p <.05$ ), Normal self-esteem ( $M=26.1$ ,  $p <.05$ ) and low self-esteem ( $M=19.3$ ,  $p <.05$ ). This shows parental communication as an attachment style has higher significant influence on adolescents' high self-esteem ( $32.5 \pm 10.6$ ), followed by normal self-esteem ( $26.1 \pm 10.6$ ) and the least influence was the low self-esteem ( $19.3 \pm 9.5$ ).

Lastly, the parental alienation as an attachment style was significant to adolescents at low self-esteem ( $M=20.9$ ,  $p <.05$ ), Normal self-esteem ( $M=15.9$ ,  $p <.05$ ) and high self-esteem ( $M=14.4$ ,  $p <.05$ ). However, it was not statistically significant difference on the level of influence between the normal self-esteem and high self-esteem ( $p >.05$ ). This shows parental alienation as parental attachment style has higher significant influence on adolescents' self-

esteem chronologically from adolescent low self-esteem ( $20.9 \pm 7.0$ ), normal self-esteem ( $16.0 \pm 6.3$ ) and high self-esteem ( $14.0 \pm 6.9$ ). There was no statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ) difference on the way parental alienation influence normal self-esteem and high self-esteem. Table 17, shows this.

Table 17.

*ANOVA Tukey HSD on Influence of Attachment Atyle on Self-Esteem*

	(I) SE categorized	(J) SE categorized	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Parental trust	Low self esteem	Normal self esteem	-4.36129*	1.84661	.050	-8.7209	-.0017
		High self esteem	-6.36700*	2.54803	.035	-12.3826	-.3515
	Normal self esteem	Low self esteem	4.36129*	1.84661	.050	.0017	8.7209
		High self esteem	-2.00572	2.01804	.582	-6.7700	2.7586
	High self esteem	Low self esteem	6.36700*	2.54803	.035	.3515	12.3826
		Normal self esteem	2.00572	2.01804	.582	-2.7586	6.7700
Parental communication	Low self esteem	Normal self esteem	-6.77987*	2.17861	.006	-11.9233	-1.6365
		High self esteem	-13.16667*	3.00613	.000	-20.2637	-6.0696
	Normal self esteem	Low self esteem	6.77987*	2.17861	.006	1.6365	11.9233
		High self esteem	-6.38679*	2.38085	.021	-12.0077	-.7659
	High self esteem	Low self esteem	13.16667*	3.00613	.000	6.0696	20.2637
		Normal self esteem	6.38679*	2.38085	.021	.7659	12.0077
Parental alienation	Low self esteem	Normal self esteem	4.96366*	1.33705	.001	1.8071	8.1203
		High self esteem	6.88047*	1.84492	.001	2.5249	11.2361
	Normal self esteem	Low self esteem	-4.96366*	1.33705	.001	-8.1203	-1.8071
		High self esteem	1.91681	1.46117	.390	-1.5328	5.3664
	High self esteem	Low self esteem	-6.88047*	1.84492	.001	-11.2361	-2.5249
		Normal self esteem	-1.91681	1.46117	.390	-5.3664	1.5328

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 18.

*Themes and sub themes of Self Esteem.*

Themes	Sub themes
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Attachment styles (communication, trust, alienation)	Adolescent high self- esteem Adolescent low self- esteem
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The theme that emerged from respondents from focus group and school counselors was attachment styles while the sub themes were adolescents high self esteem and low self esteem as shown in Table 18.

#### Attachment styles and adolescents high self esteem

Findings indicated that step parents that have secure relationships with adolescents and where there is trust and appropriate communication, such adolescents develop a high self- esteem as depicted by:

(Respondent FGD I)

*“I have a close relationship with my step father even if he is not my real father and this has increased my level of self-esteem”.*

(Responent FGD 6) response

*“Before my step dad came into my life I had a low self- esteem because I had no relationship with my biological mother. My step father has raised my self -esteem by inspiring me to achieve great heights especially in academics. I am working hard so that I can pass my examination and pursue Medicine and Surgery at the University of Nairobi. My step dad is my hero”.*

(Respondent FGD 7)

*'I think I have no challenges in relating with my step mother because she is very understanding. I was brought up in urban areas and then we moved to rural areas when dad remarried. Adjusting to rural life was a challenge to me but I thank my step mother because she has held my hand and I can now milk cows something I never thought I would do. She is patient with me and encourages me in a variety of areas and this has raised my self-esteem'.* The step mother has a cordial relationship with this step son, she does not alienate herself from him and this has strengthened their bond.

*(Counselor 3)*

*'I counseled a student from a blended family who had a 'B' grade in her academics and wanted to improve the grade to an 'A'. She felt sad because her step father takes care of her and meets all her needs which includes paying school fees. She says that the step dad keeps encouraging her and has asked her if he could engage other teachers to tutor her in chemistry and physics. The fact that the step father encourages her even when she does not do so well in her academics uplifts her spirit.* The counselor said that this girl is lucky to have such a caring step father because she rarely encounters clients that have a close relationship with step parents.

The above responses depict that step parents that adopt secure attachment styles with adolescents promote their self-esteem and build a strong step parent step adolescent relationship.

Step parents attachment styles and adolescent low self esteem

Study findings indicated that adolescents in blended family households experience a variety of challenges where step parents adopt insecure attachment styles which results to these adolescents

developing distance relationship with step parents and a low self esteem as explained by respondents from focus groups as well as a counselor.

(Respondent FGD18).

*“My mother treats me like a house maid and this makes me feel sad and low”.*

(Counselor 4) response;

I was in therapy with a male adolescent from a blended family and exploring how he related with his step father and his response was;

*‘I despise my step father because he always compares my academic performance with that of my step siblings and calls me a failure and this has lowered my-self-esteem’.*

Step fathers were noted to have a challenging relationship with step sons and this has impacted negatively on their self-esteem. This findings stipulated that step fathers should improve their relationship with step sons.

(Respondent FGD 9) response;

*“I used to come home from visiting friends as late as 7 pm when I was not in school and my biological mother was okay with it but when she was married, my step father told me that I should not report home later than 5:30 pm. An argument arose and he slapped me in the presence of my younger step sibling and I felt angry and very low”.* Since then I have no relationship at all with him’ This finding depicts that conflict can be enhanced because of insecure attachment styles that step parents adopt which results to unnecessary conflict and this promotes low self esteem in step adolescents.



These findings indicate that secure attachment styles enhance high- self- esteem as compared to those step parents who adopt insecure attachment styles. It also underscores the role played by step fathers in enhancing their step daughters' high self-esteem and a call to them to improve on their relationship with step sons.

The study findings also showed that early step mother child secure attachment right from childhood enhances adolescent self-esteem as noted from response given by;

(Respondent FGD 4)

*“My step mother brought me up since I was young after my biological mother abandoned my younger brother and I. I am not her biological son but she loved and treated me so well and never mistreated me, I believe she contributed in building my self- esteem as I grew up”.*

It was noted that girls had a difficult relationship with their step mothers unlike with the step fathers. 3(25%) of female participants reported that they experience challenges relating with step mothers, they are overworked and step mothers taint them badly to their biological fathers leading to a strenuous relationship with the biological fathers.

(Respondent FGD 18)

*My mother treats me like a house maid and I feel angry and low”She scolds me over very minor issues and when I try to explain to her, she evades me and this has resulted to distant relationship with her.*

Most of the participants noted their step parents were discriminative when it came to discipline issues and this was demoralizing. This was in response to the question on how adolescents'

relationship with step parents affect their self- esteem. Participants stated that each step parent supported their biological children most of the times at the expense of the step children even when the later were on the wrong. Other participants felt that when on the wrong, their biological parents punished them but when step siblings are in disciplined they did not seem to care much about them. They wondered why there is so much disagreement and hatred among step siblings and why parents take sides instead of treating all parties equally.

*(Respondent FGD 24).*

*“I remember a day my biological mother beat me senseless for having slept out, yet my elder step sister had sleep overs many times but my mother never bothered. I felt devastated and this really lowered my self- esteem”. I thought of discussing these issue with my step father but he took no action instead he told me to respect my mother and exclude my step sister from my wrangles with my mother. I wondered why none of them understood how I was feeling. I have developed a distant relationship with them since then.*

This depicts how insecure relationships with parents whether step or otherwise can lower adolescents’ self esteem. This depicts how crucial it is for step parents to treat all children fairly regardless of whether they are biological or step children in order to enhance their self- esteem.

Participants disliked the way step parents come to their household and change the rules of the house and expect the step children to follow the rules. They stated that before the step parents joined their households they had their own tradition of doing things for instance; what to cook, where to eat from, time to come back home after visiting friends, who to visit and so on. They hated the way the step parents introduced their own rules without their consent yet they are the

strangers in the household and should in actual sense follow the rules of the household they join.  
(Respondent FGD 9).

*“I used to come home from visiting friends as late as 7 pm when I was not in school and my biological mother was okay with it but when she was married my step father told me that I should not report home later than 5:30 pm. An argument arose and he slapped me in the presence of my younger step sibling and I felt sad and very low”. My step siblings keep reminding me of that incidence and this lowers his esteem. I have become my step father’s worst enemy and often tells my biological mother to quit the marriage for my sake.’*

This depicts how toxic a step parent-adolescent relationship can be when step parents adopt insecure attachment styles. It was also noted that step parents compare their biological children academic performance to that of step children and it does not matter the level of education their children are and this lowers the adolescents’ self- esteem.

*(Respondent FGD 20).*

*‘You are in form 3 and your performance in mathematics is terrible a grade D- is just bad. Why don’t you score a grade A like John who defeats all standard 5 pupils in his class? You better pull up your socks”. These were sentiments from my step father, I have no ties with him.’*

It emerged from the study that some male participants had minimal relationship with their step fathers who cannot permit them to visit or spend some time with their biological mothers. In some other instances few sons have gone to visit their mothers where they are currently married and the step fathers who married them have been very hostile to them for no apparent reason.

This hostility has made them feel unwanted and worthless. This depicts some of the challenges that adolescents from blended families encounter.

*(Respondent FGD 11).*

*“Next time you set your feet in this house in pretense of checking on your mother I will teach you a lesson get out and leave” I never went back there though I miss my biological mum and had longed to be spending some time with her though she was married elsewhere. I realized my step father would harm me so I kept away.*

*(Respondent FGD 2) response*

*“Your father does not pay your school fees and does not feed you why do you want to visit him anyway? Why look for someone who abandoned you and mistreated me? You are such a disgrace”.*

A few participants felt betrayed by the biological parent who does not live with them and this has lowered their self esteem. Some felt they were a burden to them, or they got tired of them and others felt they may have been the cause of their parent’s separation. This makes them feel stressed, unworthy and rejected. It is worse if the step parents become hostile which was the case to most of the participants. They keep wondering why some parents chose to leave them behind and disown them yet their names still appear in their birth certificates and in school as parents but they are nowhere to be seen. This study brings to the fore that adolescents should be allowed to access the other biological parents regardless of whether they are living in the same household or not. The biological parent who does not live with the biological children should

also reach out to them although they have separated with the spouse and this would promote their self esteem.

Study findings indicated that some step parents decline to meet the needs of the step adolescents especially in payment of school fees, shopping and pocket money. This lowers the adolescent self- esteem because the biological parents disagree who should support them in the said areas. It was noted that they get devastated when their names keep appearing in the list of students whose parents default school fees payment. Sometimes, the school principals melt their frustrations to them as if they are responsible for their school fees payment. They get frustrated when one biological parent asks them to call the other and inform them on the support they require especially when step parents refuse to meet their needs and this leads to low self esteem.

*(Respondent FGD 15)*

*“I hate the way my biological mother keeps asking me to call my real father so that he pays my school fees or shop for me because my step father refuses to meet my financial needs. In addition, students in my school know that I struggle with school fees payment because I am often sent home for lack of school fees. Other times my shopping is over before the term ends and they assist me because I am a needy student yet I have parents who can meet these needs. This makes me feel unwanted, sad most of the times and rejected. This has made me have a low self- esteem and a distant relationship with my step father and my biological parents”*

This underscores the importance of step parents embracing their step children’s responsibilities by meeting their needs. It is also important for both biological parents to meet the needs of their

adolescents whether they are living with them or not. This will help reduce adolescent stress thereby enhance their high self-esteem.

Participants in the FGD agreed that step and mutual siblings contribute to their low self-esteem. 17(75%) of the respondents supported this assertion. They felt that mutual children are favored and they have a better relationship with their parents. It was noted that step children are given more attention and this strains relationships in the house hold. Most of them felt it is difficult to live with step siblings and wished they would leave with their step parents. They stated how they experience loneliness because their biological mothers are busy with mutual children and forget about them. Female respondents who are last borns in their biological families before their fathers re married felt that mutual children took over their positions as the last born and this makes them despise them.

The fact that all the love and attention they initially enjoyed as the last borns was transferred to these children made them dislike them. It is worse if the step children happen to be in the same age bracket especially in the adolescent stage. There are constant arguments and there are times when they take sides against each other. These complications of relationships lead to the participants' low self-esteem. 24(100%) participants said the step parents should treat all the children equally. *(Respondent FGD 21)*

*“My biological mother forgot about me and when I complain she asks me if I want her to abandon my younger step siblings (mutual) so that she can take care of me on the other hand my step father sarcastically tells me to grow up”.*

About 22(91%) of the participants felt their biological parents never explained to them about remarrying especially if the step parents joined their house hold when they were adolescents. They wondered how a step parent becomes part of the family without their knowledge. Some said that these step parents would be spotted with their biological parents once in a while then all of a sudden they joined the family. It was also noted that their biological parent expects them to call them dad or mum which they find impossible. Some participants felt their biological parents remarried so fast and felt that they betrayed the other parent.

These step parents come in with new demands and forget they are total strangers. Some of the participants felt the step children intruded their privacy, by sharing their bedrooms, others felt the house was too full and the environment was not conducive any more. If they raise their concern the biological parent reprimands them and concludes they are out to ruin their relationship with the step parent and their children.

They often find themselves on the receiving end and this makes them frustrated and it affects their self- esteem. It is crucial for parents to discuss their intentions to remarry to their biological adolescents instead of waking up one day and bring in a step father. The adolescents are still mourning the loss of their other biological parent and care must be taken so that remarriage of the parent may not be a cause of pain which then affects the adolescent self-esteem. It is also crucial for the step parent to trend with care when they remarry and avoid implementing changes without consulting other family stake holders.

From the data, it was noted that some participants struggle in relating with their new step parent because they had not completely healed from their real parents separation. They were not ready to accept a step parent especially if the other parent is alive and many times they are

uncertain of how to behave around the stranger and the step children. So when they are reprimanded for behaving contrary, they get hurt and withdraw or avoid any interactions with the family members. It was noted that those participants whose step parents joined the families when they were younger did not have many issues with the step parent. They learnt to address them as father or mother and this has not changed even at the point they discovered they were not their biological parents. Actually some agreed that step parents raised their self- esteem as affirmed by (Respondent FGD 1).

*“I have a good relationship with my step father even if he is not my real father and this has increased my level of self-esteem”.*

All the four counselors concurred with the findings that adolescents from blended families face a variety of challenges living with step parents and this has resulted in many seeking counseling services due to low self esteem.

The results from qualitative and qualitative data concur that step parents attachment styles influence step adolescents self esteem. In addition, step parents that adopt secure attachment that comprises of high communication levels, high levels of trust and minimal alienation enhance adolescents' high self esteem. This results concur with those of (Keizer, 2019) that adolescents' attachment should be a warm caring connection that includes feelings of trust, appropriate communication, and support by significant others. Similarly, (Young, 2013) agrees and supports this warm caring relationship (parental adolescent attachment bond) and adds that it gives a conducive environment which leads to high self-esteem in adolescent. Likewise, Colpina and Veuschueren (2013) concur that parents who provide a secure base that is



characterized by warmth, encouragement and support often bring up adolescents with a high self-esteem.

These results are also supported by Bi (2018) studies that stipulated that close connection with significant others especially parents are linked to higher degree levels of self-esteem in adolescents. Similarly a study conducted by Jensen & Harris (2015) on teenagers from China, Germany, Australia and United States as well as Dutch, Turkish, Moroccan and Surinamese adolescents residing in Netherlands indicated that a close intimate teenager parent connection predicted high self-esteem. Also, a study conducted by Perez (2019), among 13-19 year old Spanish adolescents showed that adolescents who have support from care givers have high self-esteem, appropriate communication skills with parents and appropriate interpersonal relationships. Leung et al. (2013) stated that having caring and supportive relationships help not only in increasing adolescent self esteem but also improves self concept over many domains.

Results of the study found out that fathers secure attachment styles are instrumental in enhancing their daughters self esteem. This is line with (Lee et al, 2016) studies that found out that father- adolescent attachment style can often act as a secure base for adolescents (Lee et al, 2016). Similarly, Santrock et al. (2014) stipulated that fathers attachment is needed by children throughout their life time because this may guard adolescent from acquiring characteristics of low self-esteem (Anggraenni, 2019).

Allgood et al. (2012) examined how involved fathers were in their adolescent lives as well as their emerging adult daughters in relation to their self-esteem and psychological health. Their study findings showed that those daughters whose fathers were present in their lives had a

high self-esteem rating (Allgood et al., 2012). Moreover, daughters who perceived their fathers in a positive light also depicted high self-esteem than those who did not (Allgood et al., 2012).

Study results show that step mothers who adopted secure attachment styles enhanced their adolescents self esteem. This assertion concurs with studies by Zhang et al.(2017) which revealed that mothers who are friendly to adolescents enhance their self- esteem unlike mothers whose relationship with adolescents is controlling.

The study also found out that step parents adopt insecure attachment styles that have high levels of alienation and low levels of communication and trust and this promotes adolescents low self esteem. Similarly, (Young,2013), found out that adolescents whose parents adopt insecure attachment style suffer from a low self-esteem in comparison to those in secure attachments. In addition adolescents with high avoidance attachment (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018) avoidant attachment (Georgia, 2017) disorganized attachment (Bockarova, 2019) anxious attachment (Rosen, 2016) which are categories of insecure attachment had a low self-esteem. Also Emery et al.(2018) supported this assertion that adolescents that are anxiously attached tend to experience a low self-esteem and a negative self-view while avoidance attachment is associated with lower self-concept.

The study found out that step parents that adopt insecure attachment styles enhance adolescents unbecoming behavior such as alcohol abuse and aggressive behavior. Likewise, Xiuyun et al. (2016) found out that adolescents that depict low self-esteem are at a greater danger of developing severe mental health conditions, engage in delinquent behavior and express suicidal ideations. Similarly, Estevez et el, (2018) found out that adolescents that have low self-

esteem are aggressive, hostile and have antisocial behavior that are formed in learning process with their parents. This depicts the adolescent parent relationship is insecure.

According to Kamza(2019) all that step children require is a positive parent child relationship and not a connection that lacks communication and one characterized by walls. This study found out that step parent secure attachment style enhances adolescents self esteem while insecure attachment styles adopted by step parents is detrimental to their self esteem development.

### Influence of Attachment Styles on Establishment of Identity among Adolescents from Blended Families

The third objective of the study sort to evaluate influence of attachment styles on establishment of adolescent identity styles among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County. The research question required the focus group participants to discuss how their relationships with step parents affected their social cognitive strategy to process identity key information, negotiate identity significant problems and make personal decisions. The counselors were expected to explain the challenges that hinder identity styles development in adolescents and the effect these challenges have on them. Both quantitative and qualitative data was discussed

### Descriptive statistics of Identity Style as Dependent Variable

The second dependent variable of study was the identity style which was measured by Identity Style Inventory (ISI-4) Bezonsky (2011). The Identity Style Inventory (ISI-4) has 48 questions measured in four likert scale; 1 to 4. The descriptive statistical tests conducted were Mean (M) and Standard deviation (SD). The mean value result for each question was categorized as follows:  $M < 1.5$  as Not at all like me,  $M \Rightarrow 1.5, < 2.5$  as Not like me,  $M \Rightarrow 2.5, < 3.5$  as

somewhat like me and lastly  $M \Rightarrow 3.5$  as Very much like me. The results were divided into three clusters of parents; the step father, the step mother and the combined (all parents) for each of the four components presenting identity of the adolescents.

As indicated on Table 19 there was similarity at which the four component presenting identity were ranked by adolescents living with a step father, step mother and the combination of the two. The rate of each of the component was obtained by summation of the response. Generally, informational orientation had the highest ranking ( $M=34.7$ ,  $SD=5.0$ ), followed by commitment ( $M=28.3$ ,  $SD=4.4$ ), normative orientation ( $M=25.6$ ,  $S=4.0$ ) and lastly, diffuse orientation ( $M=23.5$ ,  $SD=5.3$ ). This was similar ranking by adolescents living with step fathers and adolescents living with step mothers.

Table 19.

*Mean of Identity Style*

	Step Father		Step Mother		All Parents	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Informational Orientation	34.6175	4.48891	34.8937	5.60301	34.7344	4.97967
Normative Orientation	25.8763	3.80429	25.2249	4.29324	25.6007	4.02130
Diffuse Orientation	24.1193	5.22221	22.6864	5.27621	23.5130	5.28030
Commitment	28.0174	4.07213	28.6447	4.70360	28.2828	4.35060

The third objective was to examine the influence of attachment styles on establishment of edentity among edolescents from blended families. Identity was measured by the use of Berzonsky (2011), Identity Style Inventory with 48 questions. The parameters were measured by use of four Likert scale 1 being not at all like me and 4 Very much like me. To answer this question, the statistical analysis conducted were descriptive statistics, statistical assumption tests, correlation tests, T-test and MANCOVA.

## Correlation Test for Identity Style and Attachment Style

Correlation test was conducted to test for significant relationship between the identity as dependent variable and attachment style as the independent variable of study. Table 20, shows the correlation between attachment style components and adolescents identity based on the step parents of adolescents. Informational orientation of adolescents living with their step mother had significant relationship with all the attachment styles; positive relation with parental trust ( $r = .288, p < .05$ ) and parental communication ( $r = .266, p < .05$ ) but negative relation with parental alienation ( $r = -.212, p < .05$ ). However, the informational orientation of adolescents living with their step fathers had no significant relationship ( $p > .05$ ) with all the attachment styles. Similarly,

commitment of adolescents living with their step mothers had significant relationship with all the attachment styles; positive relation with parental trust ( $r = .278, p < .05$ ) and parental communication ( $r = .348, p < .05$ ) but negative relation with parental alienation ( $r = -.399, p < .05$ ). However, the commitment of adolescents living with their step fathers had no significant relationship ( $p > .05$ ) with all the attachment styles. Adolescents living with step fathers had only significant relation on diffuse orientation and parental alienation ( $r = .191, p < .05$ ) but not significant with parental communication and trust. Normative orientation of both adolescents living with step mothers and those living with step fathers had no significant relationship ( $p > .05$ ) with all the attachment styles.

Table 20.

*Correlation test for Identity Style and Attachment Style*

		Informational Orientation		Normative Orientation		Diffuse Orientation		Commitment	
		step father	step mother	step father	step mother	step father	step mother	step father	step mother
Parental trust	Pearson Correlation	.034	.288**	-.066	.144	-.069	-.207	.104	.278**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.714	.006	.475	.181	.454	.053	.257	.009
	N	120	88	120	88	120	88	120	88
Parental communication	Pearson Correlation	.108	.266*	.072	.194	-.096	-.208	.146	.348**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.240	.012	.434	.070	.296	.051	.111	.001
	N	120	88	120	88	120	88	120	88
Parental alienation	Pearson Correlation	-.026	-.212*	-.120	-.186	.191*	.308**	-.156	-.399**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.776	.047	.193	.082	.037	.004	.090	.000
	N	120	88	120	88	120	88	120	88
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).									
* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).									

## T-test and MANCOVA on Influence of Attachment Style on Identity Style

The mean comparison of the adolescents' identity style based on the step parent showed there were no differences of the mean value between adolescents living with a step mother and

adolescents' living with a step father on informational orientation, normative orientation and commitment. However, there was small difference on mean value of diffuse orientation; step father ( $M=24.1$ ,  $SD=5.2$ ) and step mother ( $M=22.7$ ,  $SD=5.3$ ). Table 21 shows the mean value, the standard deviation value of identity style of step parent.

Table 21.

*Mean of Identity Style and Step Parent*

	step mother or step father	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Informational Orientation	Step Father	120	34.6175	4.48891	.40978
	Step Mother	88	34.8937	5.60301	.59728
Normative Orientation	Step Father	120	25.8763	3.80429	.34728
	Step Mother	88	25.2249	4.29324	.45766
Diffuse Orientation	Step Father	120	24.1193	5.22221	.47672
	Step Mother	88	22.6864	5.27621	.56245
Commitment	Step Father	120	28.0174	4.07213	.37173
	Step Mother	88	28.6447	4.70360	.50141

Further, a T-test result showed the mean difference of the identity style between adolescents living with a step mother compared to adolescents living with a step father was only statistically significant at diffuse orientation; step father ( $M=24.1$ ,  $SD=5.2$ ) and step mother ( $M=22.7$ ,  $SD=5.3$ )  $t(206)= 1.43$ ,  $p<0.05$ . This shows the only identity style with significance difference on mean value based on step parent was diffuse orientation. Table 22, shows these results.

Table 22.

*T-Test for Identity Style and Step Parents*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Informational Orientation	Equal variances assumed	0.28	0.60	-0.39	206.00	0.69	-0.28	0.70	-1.66	1.10
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.38	161.95	0.70	-0.28	0.72	-1.71	1.15
Normative Orientation	Equal variances assumed	1.24	0.27	1.16	206.00	0.25	0.65	0.56	-0.46	1.76
	Equal variances not assumed			1.13	173.89	0.26	0.65	0.57	-0.48	1.79
Diffuse Orientation	Equal variances assumed	0.36	0.55	1.95	206.00	0.05	1.43	0.74	-0.02	2.88
	Equal variances not assumed			1.94	186.52	0.05	1.43	0.74	-0.02	2.89
Commitment	Equal variances assumed	1.45	0.23	-1.03	206.00	0.31	-0.63	0.61	-1.83	0.58
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.01	171.13	0.32	-0.63	0.62	-1.86	0.60

To answer the research question on ‘the influence of attachment style on identity of adolescents’, MANCOVA test as a multivariate analysis was conducted. The key variables for the multivariate was; the identity style as the dependent variable, the attachment style as independent variable and step parents as fixed factors. Table 23 shows the Multivariate test output result of one-way MANCOVA. The point of intercept between the attachment style and the identity based on the Wilk’s Lambda result shows it was statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, identity style based on attachment style was statistically difference  $F(4, 202) = 1.242$ ,



$p < .05$ ; Wilk's  $\Lambda = 0.976$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .024$ . This means attachment style influenced identity style. Further, the dependence on attachment style based on adolescents' step parent was not significant.

Table 23.

*Multivariate Test on Influence of Attachment Style on Identity Style*

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.971	1663.743 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.000	.971
	Wilks' Lambda	.029	1663.743 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.000	.971
	Hotelling's Trace	32.945	1663.743 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.000	.971
	Roy's Largest Root	32.945	1663.743 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.000	.971
attachment	Pillai's Trace	.084	4.650 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.001	.084
	Wilks' Lambda	.916	4.650 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.001	.084
	Hotelling's Trace	.092	4.650 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.001	.084
	Roy's Largest Root	.092	4.650 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.001	.084
Step mother\step father	Pillai's Trace	.024	1.242 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.295	.024
	Wilks' Lambda	.976	1.242 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.295	.024
	Hotelling's Trace	.025	1.242 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.295	.024
	Roy's Largest Root	.025	1.242 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.295	.024
a. Design: Intercept + attachment_ + stepmother or father							
b. Exact statistic							

Further analysis on the test between subject effects shows that attachment style has a statistically significant effect on three of the identity style components. In chronological order based on the influence, Commitment ( $F(1, 205) = 13.960$ ;  $p < .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .064$ ), Diffuse orientation ( $F(1, 205) = 6.994$ ;  $p < .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .033$ ), and Informational orientation ( $F(1, 205) = 6.226$ ;  $p < .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .029$ ). There was no influence on Normative orientation ( $F(1, 205) = 2.479$ ;  $p > .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .012$ ). This shows attachment style affects the commitment, diffuse orientation and informational orientation as identity style of adolescents as indicated on Table 24.

Table 24.

*Test between Subjects Effect of Attachment Style on Identity Style*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	Informational Orientation	155.063 <sup>a</sup>	2	77.531	3.193	.043	.030
	Normative Orientation	61.278 <sup>b</sup>	2	30.639	1.911	.151	.018
	Diffuse Orientation	291.220 <sup>c</sup>	2	145.610	5.447	.005	.050
	Commitment	268.505 <sup>d</sup>	2	134.253	7.541	.001	.069
Intercept	Informational Orientation	55854.141	1	55854.141	2300.164	.000	.918
	Normative Orientation	31015.679	1	31015.679	1934.892	.000	.904
	Diffuse Orientation	31743.096	1	31743.096	1187.413	.000	.853
	Commitment	35220.674	1	35220.674	1978.402	.000	.906
attachment	Informational Orientation	151.192	1	151.192	6.226	.013	.029
	Normative Orientation	39.737	1	39.737	2.479	.117	.012
	Diffuse Orientation	186.980	1	186.980	6.994	.009	.033
	Commitment	248.529	1	248.529	13.960	.000	.064
Step mother or step father	Informational Orientation	.002	1	.002	.000	.993	.000
	Normative Orientation	30.923	1	30.923	1.929	.166	.009
	Diffuse Orientation	63.530	1	63.530	2.376	.125	.011
	Commitment	3.904	1	3.904	.219	.640	.001
Error	Informational Orientation	4977.948	205	24.283			
	Normative Orientation	3286.083	205	16.030			
	Diffuse Orientation	5480.264	205	26.733			
	Commitment	3649.530	205	17.803			
Total	Informational Orientation	256080.025	208				
	Normative Orientation	139669.484	208				
	Diffuse Orientation	120766.996	208				
	Commitment	170300.806	208				
Corrected Total	Informational Orientation	5133.011	207				
	Normative Orientation	3347.360	207				
	Diffuse Orientation	5771.484	207				
	Commitment	3918.035	207				
a. R Squared = .030 (Adjusted R Squared = .021)							
b. R Squared = .018 (Adjusted R Squared = .009)							
c. R Squared = .050 (Adjusted R Squared = .041)							
d. R Squared = .069 (Adjusted R Squared = .059)							

Table 25.

*Themes and sub themes of Identity*

Themes	Sub themes
Attachment styles (communication, trust, alienation)	Identity styles goals, values, beliefs, decision making, conflict

The theme that emerged from the focus group respondents and counselors was ‘attachment styles’ and sub themes were; ‘identity styles’-goals, values, beliefs and decision making. As shown in Table 25.

The study results found out that step parents that adopt secure attachment styles enhance adolescents’ information identity style as depicted by the following respondents when they were asked whether they stand by what they believe in when step parents or other people challenge their personal decisions.

(Respondent FGD 5)

*‘I stand by what I believe in and do not allow my step parents especially my step father to influence my personal decisions. We have a good relationship with him but sometimes he wants to impose some ideas into my head. I remember during subject choice selection in Form 2 he persuaded me not to drop physics because he wants me to pursue a career in civil engineering but I stood my ground and gave my reasons why I wanted to take Biology instead. I am currently in Form 3 and glad that I took Biology. He no longer pushes me because I do not want him to control my life. This shows that the respondent has a cordial relationship with the step father where there is communication and that may be the reason why he is able to stand his ground.*

(Respondent FGD 17)

*'When I make personal decisions I do not turn back especially in my academics. I made a decision to put effort in my school work and not to score a grade less than a B+ in my exams and I have maintained grade A or A- My step mother is very supportive and she assists me where need be. I am committed to continue doing well in school. This shows how committed the respondent is in achieving his goals and the support he gets from his step mother has enhanced his information and commitment style development.*

(Respondent FGD 6)

*I have a close relationship with my step father and since he came into my life he has been encouraging me to work extra hard in school. My goal is to pursue medicine at Nairobi University. I am determined to forge ahead and achieve my goal. This illustration this girl has support from the step father and this close relationship has enhanced her information and commitment identity styles development.*

(Respondent FGD 1) reponse to the question on how he deals with conflict when it arises.

*'I have no issue in dealing with conflict. I avoid responding when I am angry, I wait until I have calmed down then I approach the person that has offebded me and we resolve conflict amicably. My step mother taught me right from young age how to deal with conflict.'* The respondent had a close relationship with the step mother since childhood and this may have enhanced and strengthened his conflict resolution skills hence solidifying his identity style development.

(Counselor 1)

*'I have dealt with adolescents from blended families who have real challenges in making personal decisions. Some get assistance through counseling though its usually a bit of a challenge especially if the adolescent comes from a step family where relationships are toxic.'* I

*wish these step parents would better their relationships with adolescents step children so that they can lessen the problems they go through*'. This shows how counselors struggle in dealing with adolescents' challenges in therapy because of the toxic relationships in blended families.

The above results underscore the importance of step parents adopting secure attachment styles when relating with adolescents in blended family households to promote adolescents identity styles development.

The study results found out that insecure attachment styles adopted by step adolescents are detrimental to adolescent identity style development as shown in the respondents responses.

(Respondent FGD 12 ) reponse when she was asked how she deals with conflict.

*'I do not deal with conflict when it happens, I get so angry decide not to speak to the person that has offended me and this silence can go on for a long time. In the long run I fail to make up with the offender and funny enough I am okay with it, after all conflict at home with especially my step father and step children is the order of the day.'* This depicts how insecure step parent – adolescent relationship promote diffuse avoidant identity style which is detrimental to their well being.

(Respondent FGD 9) response when asked if she stands by what she believes in when her step parents or other people challenge her personal decisions.

*. I take a lot of time in making personal decisions. No wonder my step father says he knows what decisions are good for me and is aware of how adolescent go astray. Little does he know that taking alcohol is a decision I made*". This adolescent falls back to drinking when he cannot make personal decisions and does not embrace his step father's decision either. Such a behavior promotes avoidant identity style development. Study findings also revealed that dysfunctional step family attachment styles are a recipe to adolescent identity problem. This

happens when parents especially step fathers are alienated from their girls which leads to the daughters loneliness which makes them yield to negative peer pressure as they seek solace from friends who in turn mislead them because they are unable to make personal decisions. This observation was made by one of the counselors who reported that two of the girls from her school had been sent away because of lesbianism.

(Counselor 2) response

*“When these girls were referred to me for counseling I discovered they came from step families that were very dysfunctional, one of the girls step father subjects her biological mother to domestic violence while the other girl lives a solitary life because she has no close relationship with her step father”.*

The counselor deduced that these girls had identity problems. All 4(100%) counselors concurred and also emphasized that homosexuality was common in schools and was a reflection of dysfunctional families. This explains the importance of parents creating a close relationship with adolescents to strengthen information and commitment identity styles so that they cease being swayed away by other peers.

The above quantitative and qualitative results concur that step parents that adopt secure attachment styles with adolescents from blended families enhance adolescents' identity style formation unlike those step parents who adopt insecure attachment styles. This is line with earlier empirical research studies that indicated enough evidence that relationship between parents and adolescents greatly enhance exploration and formation of identity during adolescent years (Kiralp, 2017). Also studies by Mikulincer and Shaver (2018) indicated that a secure

parent adolescent attachment encourages feelings and beliefs that contribute to life meaning and a stable coherent identity while insecure parent adolescent relationship is detrimental to the formation of a stable adolescent self-identity.

Likewise, an earlier study done on perceived parenting patterns and identity styles among 674 Dutch adolescents Soenens and Luyckx (2008) indicated there was a significant relationship between parental attachment and adolescent identity styles development. Further, Ghorbani (2015) found out that family relationships had an impact on adolescent's identity style development in a study done among Iran adolescents. This shows the importance of parental attachment in enhancing adolescents' identity style formation.

Further the study findings indicated that attachment styles only affect the informational, diffuse avoidant and commitment identity styles but does not affect normative orientation. This was contrary to Imtiaz & Naqui (2012) study on parental attachment and identity styles among adolescents in Pakistan that indicated that parental attachment was positively associated with adolescents' informational, normative identity styles and commitment. On the other hand, parental attachment was negatively correlated with adolescent diffuse avoidant identity style. This may mean that adolescents in Pakistan adopt normative identity styles indicating they adopt ideas of significant others than the Kenyan adolescents. This could be attributed to the almost homogenous culture and religious affiliation in Pakistan as opposed to the diverse multicultural and religious scenario prevailing in Kenya.

The study also found out that adolescents living with step mothers had significantly higher parental trust and parental communication and this has led to adolescents having a secure attachment with the step mothers. This has resulted to enhanced informational and commitment

identity styles development of adolescents as compared to adolescents living with step fathers. Similarly studies have shown that mothers enhance adolescent informational identity by encouraging broad exploration by their maturing adolescents, while fathers discourage the adolescents from commitment and make definite personal choices (Sesito & Sica, 2014). Moreover, Heerden (2018) concurs with this findings that maternal modelling and instruction is a positive predictor of informational identity style development in adolescents. On the contrary, Ratner (2014) revealed that maternal attachment predicts the normative identity styles in adolescents but the findings of the current study refuted this assertion by indicating that attachment styles do not influence the establishment of adolescent normative identity style regardless of whether an adolescent lives with a step mother or a step father.

Study findings also revealed that dysfunctional step family attachment styles are a recipe to adolescent identity problem. This happens when parents especially step fathers are alienated from their girls which leads to the daughters loneliness which makes them yield to negative peer pressure as they seek solace from friends who in turn mislead them because they are unable to make personal decisions. This observation was made by one of the counselors about two of the girls from her school who had been sent away because of lesbianism. Dumas, Ellis and Wolfe (2012) concur with this premise that the advantage of identity development process is that it enables teenagers avoid getting carried away by friends in making wrong choices because they have developed appropriate identity.

In addition this study findings depicted that informational and commitment orientation of adolescents living with their step fathers had no significant relationship with parental trust and parental communication. Further, the findings noted that adolescents living with step fathers had



only significant relation on diffuse orientation and parental alienation. This implied that step fathers adopt categories of insecure attachment in relating with adolescents and this has resulted to distant relationships. This premise is in line with Heerden (2018) assertion that a lot of studies should be conducted on father involvement and adolescent identity style development. Similarly, Ratner (2014) study recommended further research to investigate the variables that keep fathers from embracing a significant relationship with adolescents which in turn affects their identity styles. This gap was partially filled in the current study because it explored separately how mother and father attachment styles influenced adolescent identity style development though from a blended family perspective.

#### Influence of Attachment Styles on Establishment of Autonomy among Adolescents from Blended Families.

The last objective of the study sought to assess the influence of attachment styles on establishment of adolescent emotional autonomy among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County. The research question for this objective required the respondents to discuss how their relationship with step parents influence their emotional autonomy. Quantitative and qualitative results were discussed.

#### **Descriptive Statistics on Autonomy.**

The fourth objective was to examine the influence of attachment styles on establishment of autonomy among adolescents from blended families. The autonomy was measured by the use of Silverberg & Steinberg (1986) Emotional Autonomy Scale (EAS) with 20 questions. The parameters were measured by use of four Likert scale 1 strongly disagreed and 4 strongly agreed.

To answer this question, the statistical analysis conducted were descriptive statistics, statistical assumption tests, correlation tests, T-test and MANCOVA.

The descriptive statistical tests conducted were Mean (M) and Standard deviation (SD). The mean value result for each question was categorized as follows:  $M < 1.5$  as Not at all like me,  $M \Rightarrow 1.5, < 2.5$  as Not like me,  $M \Rightarrow 2.5, < 3.5$  as somewhat like me and lastly  $M \Rightarrow 3.5$  as Very much like me. The results were divided into three clusters of parents; the step father, the stepmother and the combined (all parents) for each of the four components presenting autonomy of the adolescents. As indicated on Table 26, there was similarity at which the four component presenting autonomy were ranked by adolescents living with a step father, mother and the combination of the two. The rate of each of the component was obtained by summation of the response.

Table 26.

*Mean of Autonomy Style for all parents*

	Step Father		Step Mother		All Parents	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Deidealization	13.3933	3.32161	13.6479	2.94450	13.5010	3.16268
Non dependency	11.2663	2.80253	11.2155	2.76557	11.2448	2.78036
Parent as people	14.3650	3.13724	14.1823	2.86048	14.2877	3.01749
Individuation	9.6871	3.06213	9.7077	3.13082	9.6959	3.08387

Correlation Test for Autonomy and Attachment Style

Correlation test was conducted to test for significant relationship between the autonomy as dependent variable and attachment style as the independent variable of study. Table 27, shows

the correlation between attachment style components and adolescents autonomy based on the step parents of adolescents. All the components of emotional autonomy; deidealization, non-dependency, parent as people and individuation had significant relationship with attachment styles ( $p < .05$ ).

Table 27.

*Correlation Test for Emotional autonomy and Attachment Style*

		Deidealization		Non dependency		Parent as people		Individuation	
		Step father	step mother	Step father	step mother	Step father	step mother	Step father	step mother
Parental trust	Pearson Correlation	-.314**	-.303**	-.252**	-.282**	.232*	.442**	.236**	.338**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.004	.005	.008	.011	.000	.009	.001
	N	120	88	120	88	120	88	120	88
Parental communication	Pearson Correlation	-.402**	-.428**	-.336**	-.486**	.317**	.355**	.352**	.443**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001	.000	.000
	N	120	88	120	88	120	88	120	88
Parental alienation	Pearson Correlation	.419**	.456**	.412**	.442**	-.371**	-.462**	-.492**	-.489**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	120	88	120	88	120	88	120	88
Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).									
Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).									

T-test and MANCOVA on Influence of Attachment Style on Autonomy

The mean comparison of the adolescents' autonomy style based on the step parent showed there were no differences of the mean value between adolescents living with a step mother and

adolescents' living with a step father on deidealization, non-dependency, parent as people and individuation. Table 28, shows the mean value, the standard deviation value of autonomy of step parent

Table 28.

Mean of Autonomy and Step Parent

	step mother and father	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Deidealization	Step Father	120	13.3933	3.32161	.30322
	Step Mother	88	13.6479	2.94450	.31388
Non dependency	Step Father	120	11.2663	2.80253	.25584
	Step Mother	88	11.2155	2.76557	.29481
Parent as people	Step Father	120	14.3650	3.13724	.28639
	Step Mother	88	14.1823	2.86048	.30493
Individuation	Step Father	120	9.6871	3.06213	.27953
	Step Mother	88	9.7077	3.13082	.33375

Further, a T-test result showed the mean difference of the autonomy style between adolescents living with a step mother compared to adolescents living with a step father was not statistically significant ( $p>0.05$ ). This shows that there was no statistical difference on the mean value of autonomy based on step parent. Table 29, shows these results.

Table 29.

*T-Test for Autonomy and Step Parents*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Deidealization	Equal variances assumed	1.975	.161	-.573	206	.567	-.25462	.44459	1.13115	.62191
	Equal variances not assumed			-.583	198.659	.560	-.25462	.43642	1.11524	.60600
Non dependency	Equal variances assumed	1.536	.217	.130	206	.897	.05081	.39114	-.72034	.82197
	Equal variances not assumed			.130	189.008	.897	.05081	.39034	-.71917	.82080
Parent as people	Equal variances assumed	1.577	.211	.431	206	.667	.18272	.42433	-.65386	1.01930
	Equal variances not assumed			.437	196.436	.663	.18272	.41833	-.64227	1.00772
Individuation	Equal variances assumed	.012	.913	-.047	206	.962	-.02058	.43386	-.87595	.83479
	Equal variances not assumed			-.047	185.233	.962	-.02058	.43535	-.87945	.83829

To answer the research question on 'the influence of attachment style on autonomy of adolescents', MANCOVA test as a multivariate analysis was conducted. The key variables for the multivariate were; the autonomy as the dependent variable, the attachment style as independent variable and step parents as fixed factors. Table 30 shows the Multivariate test output result of one-way MANCOVA. The point of intercept between the attachment style and the autonomy based on the Wilk's Lambda result shows it was statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, autonomy based on attachment style was statistically different  $F(4, 202) = .934, p <$

.05; Wilk's  $\Lambda = 0.982$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .018$ . This means attachment style significance influence on autonomy of adolescents.

Table 30.

*Multivariate Test on Influence of Attachment Style on Autonomy*

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.963	1297.277 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.000	.963
	Wilks' Lambda	.037	1297.277 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.000	.963
	Hotelling's Trace	25.689	1297.277 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.000	.963
	Roy's Largest Root	25.689	1297.277 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.000	.963
attachment_	Pillai's Trace	.299	21.504 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.000	.299
	Wilks' Lambda	.701	21.504 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.000	.299
	Hotelling's Trace	.426	21.504 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.000	.299
	Roy's Largest Root	.426	21.504 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.000	.299
Step mother or step father	Pillai's Trace	.018	.934 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.445	.018
	Wilks' Lambda	.982	.934 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.445	.018
	Hotelling's Trace	.018	.934 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.445	.018
	Roy's Largest Root	.018	.934 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	202.000	.445	.018
a. Design: Intercept + attachment_ + stepmothers or step fathers							
b. Exact statistic							

Further analysis on the test between subject effects shows that attachment style has a statistically significant effect on all types of autonomy components; in chronological order based on the influence, deidealization ( $F(1, 205) = 46.7$ ;  $p < .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .186$ ), Non dependency ( $F(1, 205) = 40.1$ ,  $p < .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .164$ ), parent as people ( $F(1, 205) = 36.1$ ;  $p < .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .150$ ), and lastly, Individuation ( $F(1, 205) = 45.0$ ;  $p < .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .180$ ). This shows attachment style affects the autonomy of adolescents. However, the inclusion of type of step parent was not significant ;hence, does not affect the relation between autonomy and attachment style as indicated on Table 31

Table 31.

*Test between Subjects Effect of Attachment Style on Autonomy*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	Deidealization	386.938 <sup>a</sup>	2	193.469	23.558	.000	.187
	Non dependency	261.763 <sup>b</sup>	2	130.882	20.046	.000	.164
	Parent as people	283.288 <sup>c</sup>	2	141.644	18.131	.000	.150
	Individuation	354.472 <sup>d</sup>	2	177.236	22.509	.000	.180
Intercept	Deidealization	12783.068	1	12783.068	1556.516	.000	.884
	Non dependency	8817.986	1	8817.986	1350.605	.000	.868
	Parent as people	7550.070	1	7550.070	966.446	.000	.825
	Individuation	2766.406	1	2766.406	351.338	.000	.632
attachment_	Deidealization	383.646	1	383.646	46.714	.000	.186
	Non dependency	261.632	1	261.632	40.073	.000	.164
	Parent as people	281.593	1	281.593	36.045	.000	.150
	Individuation	354.450	1	354.450	45.016	.000	.180
Step mother or step father	Deidealization	23.268	1	23.268	2.833	.094	.014
	Non dependency	4.604	1	4.604	.705	.402	.003
	Parent as people	15.080	1	15.080	1.930	.166	.009
	Individuation	7.666	1	7.666	.974	.325	.005
Error	Deidealization	1683.586	205	8.213			
	Non dependency	1338.427	205	6.529			
	Parent as people	1601.501	205	7.812			
	Individuation	1614.151	205	7.874			
Total	Deidealization	39984.009	208				
	Non dependency	27900.754	208				
	Parent as people	44345.455	208				
	Individuation	21522.608	208				
Corrected Total	Deidealization	2070.523	207				
	Non dependency	1600.191	207				
	Parent as people	1884.789	207				
	Individuation	1968.622	207				
a. R Squared = .187 (Adjusted R Squared = .179)							
b. R Squared = .164 (Adjusted R Squared = .155)							
c. R Squared = .150 (Adjusted R Squared = .142)							
d. R Squared = .180 (Adjusted R Squared = .172)							

Table32:

*Themes and sub themes of Autonomy*

Theme	Sub theme
Attachment - communication, trust, alienation	Emotional autonomy Freedom to make decisions Freedom to question Challenges to freedom

The theme that was 'attachment' and the sub themes were freedom to make decisions, question and challenges encountered by adolescents as they strive for freedom.

Results from the findings indicated that step parents that adopt secure attachment styles enhance adolescents emotional autonomy as depicted from the respond responses below. (Respondent FGD 8).

*'My step father encourages me to work hard and achieve my academic goals, he appreciates me when I excel in school and when I have not done so well he takes time to find out whether I have a problem and gives me a choice if I would prefer him to pay a teacher to tuition me in my weak areas'* The step father gives space for dialogue and affirms the daughter even when she does not do so well academically. This enhances not only their relationship bond but also the adolescent's emotional autonomy.

*(Respondent FGD 16)*

*'I have a close relationship with my step mother. She allows me to make personal decisions on what we should cook for the family and she does not impose her ideas on me but encourages*



*dialogue when need be.* The step mother has a close relationship with the step daughter and this enhances individuation.

*(Respondent FGD19)*

*My step father allows me to spend time with my school mates but cautions me on the need to be responsible. I always come back home at the agreed time and in case I get late I call him and explain what the problem is. He trusts me because I keep my promise. A secure relationship is bulid on trust and communication which in turn promotes adolescents emotional development*

*(Respondent FGD 20)*

*My step mother joined our family when I was in form one. At first I had a negative attitude towards her because I felt she took up my late mothers space. But gradually I realized she was very accommodating and implored me to ask her any questions. The fact that she does not curtail my freedom of expression has made our relationship stronger. This is a relationship where communication is permitted and this has enhanced the stepparent- adolescent relationship resulting to a stronger bond and enhanced emotional outonomy.*

Results from the study found out that step parents that adopt insecure attachment styles hinder adolescents from developing approproate emotional autonomy as depicted by the respondents below;

*(Respondent FGD 3).*

*“I wonder why my step father controls my life he does not allow me to visit even my classmates or members of our youth group(Respondent FGD 10)*

*“There was a time when my step father threatened to throw my mother and me out of his house because I asked him why he wanted to hit my mother”.*

*(Respondent FGD14).*

*“My step mother does not reprimand her daughter when she commits an offense. When I ask her why she treats me unfairly she scolds me and states I have no manners”*

*(Respondent FGD 21).*

*“When I wanted clarification as to why my step sibling is given all the attention and I am ignored, my mother was rude and my step father asked me sarcastically to grow up”*

*(Counselor 1).*

*A boy told me that since the mother married the step father rules of the house changed. I used to visit friends and come home latest 7pm but since then I was prohibited from visiting my friends by my stepfather”.*

*(Counselor 3).*

*“A 16 year old girl once told me that she no longer has the freedom of expression like she used to before her biological father remarried. The step mother took over the house hold. What annoys her is the fact that her biological father no longer fights for her”.*

*(Respondent FGD 14).*

*'My step mother is a wicked woman, imagine the other day she lied to my father that I had insulted her and he gave me a piece of his mind. She is a witch and I wonder why she hates me so much. I hate her too''*

The quantitative and qualitative results concurred that attachment styles had statistically significant effect on all components of emotional autonomy; deidealization, non-dependency, parents as people and individuation. Similarly, parents play a major role in assisting adolescents in developing autonomy by ensuring they provide a secure base, offer guidance and trust them to make independent decisions where necessary (Rote & Smetana, 2014). Depending on the attachment styles that step parents adopt, adolescents can either develop the four components of emotional autonomy indicated above or fail to develop the same. Aveh and Jalatat (2015) supported this assertion that one of the main milestones of adolescent growth is to form an emotional autonomy that is acquired from caregivers. Further findings stipulated that step parents that embrace secure attachment enhance appropriate emotional autonomy. Similarly, Kocayoruk et al. (2014) indicate that a close parent adolescent connection has all characteristics of a secure attachment which include: warmth, effective communication, development of emotional autonomy and low conflict levels.

These findings were also confirmed by Yung (2013) who states that supportive parents take the initiative to encourage adolescents to focus on their goals and resolve problems on their own, thereby enhancing their emotional autonomy. Such step parents adopt secure attachment style, they enhance communication and in turn the adolescents' trust them unlike step parents who adopt insecure attachment styles.

Further, the study findings depicted that step parents who adopt insecure attachment that is controlling hinder adolescents' emotional autonomy development. This is in line with earlier studies which suggested that patterns of heightened parental warmth and involvement, combined with less levels of control create a conducive environment for adolescents' psychosocial growth (Dishion, 2015). Likewise Cheung et al. (2016) study concurs that parenting that is critical or controlling and coercive obstructs adolescents' autonomy development.

It is paramount for parents to loosen the rigid house rules as children grow from one stage of development to the other and offer guidance where need be. This assertion was in line with Beijersber et al., (2012) who stipulated that as children get to adolescence, parents should learn to adjust the tough rigid rules and permit the adolescents to have some degree of freedom in making choices in a variety of situations.

This research findings show that insecure attachment styles are detrimental to adolescents' emotional autonomy development. It was discovered that step parents become agitated when adolescents question some of their beliefs and practices. They curtail adolescents' freedom of expression and this affects the four components of emotional autonomy. Similarly, previous studies support this aspect of questioning because it makes adolescents begin the process of deidealizing of their parents where they realize that the parents are not all knowing. They also question past parental value systems that they had internalized (Anderson, 2000).

The study deduced that such step parents curtail adolescents' freedom to ask questions (deidealization), fail to become independent (non-dependency) which slow the process of individuation development. No wonder at this age (13-19 years) adolescents are unable to view their step parents as people. This was in line with previous research which indicated that children

lack capability of viewing their care givers as people when they are between 10 -16 years (Silverberg & Steinberg, 1986).

A research study by Anderson (2000) stipulated that 21-24 years is the age when children look at parents differently. A study needs to be done to refute or confirm this assertion. Step parents should strive to develop a close relationship with their step children especially adolescents and respond to their questions. Lack of appropriate response alienates and distance them from the adolescents.

The study findings further noted that lack of freedom of expression has led to adolescents suffocating with their personal problems. Brown et al.(2015) concurs that individuals who fail to individuate accordingly are prone to having challenges and are unable to connect with other people. It is crucial that the step parents should allow the adolescents to express themselves as this may enhance their individuation process. Kins et al.(2015) asserts that individuation is possible in families that provide a secure base for adolescents to express their views and are not psychologically controlled to embrace all the norms and rules of the family without questioning.

Findings of this study indicated that step mothers curtail their step daughters' freedom to access their biological fathers and this makes parenting the adolescents very difficult. It was noted that the step mothers lie to their spouses so they turn against their own daughters. This indicates that the step mothers and step daughters compete for attention from spouse /father respectively and this widens the gap between step mothers and step daughters. Therefore the step mothers face a challenge of parenting the step children. This premise has been supported by Forbes et al. (2015) that stepmothers get more stressed parenting step children. It is important

that step mothers give their step daughters freedom to access their fathers because it has a bearing on their psychosocial development.

This study finding further found no gender difference in emotional autonomy development; this assertion was supported by Parra and Queija (2015). The findings contrasted Sandhu and Kaur (2017) findings that on total emotional autonomy, female score higher than males and also Hoang (2015) whose study indicated that adolescent boys' emotional autonomy develops more rapidly than that of girls. The study deduced that secure attachment styles adopted by step parents enhance adolescents emotional autonomy. Similarly Njoroge and Kirori (2018) asserted that step parents that create room for autonomy accompanied by guidance bring up adolescents who are healthy, more satisfied with life and have holistic growth. Step parents should therefore adopt secure attachment styles rather than insecure attachment styles.

### Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented detailed findings, data analysis, interpretation, presentation and discussion on the influence of attachment styles on adolescent psychosocial development among secondary school students from blended families in Kiambu County, Kenya. The presentation was divided into three sections; the first section presents the response rate and general information of the respondents. The second section presents data analysis which was done in accordance with the stated objectives namely to; examine the attachment styles adopted by parents of adolescents among blended families in Kiambu County, evaluate the influence of attachment styles on establishment of self-esteem among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County, evaluate the influence of attachment styles on establishment of identity among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County and assess the influence of attachment

styles on establishment of autonomy among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County. To answer the research questions, statistical assumptions tests, T- test, ANOVA and MANCOVA tests were conducted.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

#### Introduction

This chapter covers a summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations and areas of further research. The information in this chapter is based on the findings in chapter 4. The purpose of the study was to establish the influence of attachment styles on adolescents psychosocial development among selected secondary school students from blended families in Kiambu, County, Kenya. The summary of the findings are organized based on the objectives of the study namely; examine the attachment styles adopted by parents of adolescents among blended families in Kiambu County, evaluate the influence of attachment styles on establishment of self-esteem among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County, evaluate the influence of attachment styles on establishment of identity among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County and assess the influence of attachment styles on establishment of autonomy among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County.

#### Summary of the Findings

##### Attachment styles adopted by step parents

The first objective sought to find out which attachment styles are used by parents of adolescents from blended families from Kiambu County. The study deduced the attachment styles adopted by step parents are secure and insecure in nature. Further, Correlation Test for attachment style indicated that parental trust had positive and significant relationship with



parental communication; step father  $r = .799, p < .05$  and step mother  $r = .787, p < .05$ . ,but negative relation with parental alienation; step father  $r = -.452, p < .05$  and step mother  $r = -.594, p < .05$ . Lastly, parental communication had negative and significant relationship with parental alienation; step father  $r = -.628, p < .05$  and step mother  $r = -.715, p < .05$ . This shows parent trust and parent communication have positive and significant relationship, while parent alienation have negative and significant relationship with parental trust and parent communication.

The T-test result showed adolescents living with step mothers had statistically significant higher parental trust ( $M=3.24, SD=.83$ ) compared to adolescents living with step fathers ( $M=2.97, SD=.93$ ),  $t(206) = -2.17, p=0.03$ . Similarly, the adolescents living with step mothers had statistically significant higher parental communication ( $M=3.15, SD=1.17$ ) compared to adolescents living with step fathers ( $M=2.68, SD=1.20$ ),  $t(206) = -2.80, p=0.01$ . However, there was no statistical significant difference on parental alienation between adolescents living with step mother ( $M=3.15, SD=1.17$ ) compared to adolescents living with step father ( $M=2.68, SD=1.20$ ),  $t(206)=0.57, p=0.57$ . This shows parental trust and parental communication attachment styles were significantly higher for adolescents living with their step mothers than step fathers but there was no difference on the parental alienation.

#### Influence of attachment styles on adolescent self esteem.

The second research objective sought to evaluate the influence of attachment styles on establishment of self-esteem among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County. The ANOVA was conducted to determine the statistical significance difference between the self-esteem and the attachment style (self-esteem \* attachment style). There was a statistically significant difference between attachment style components and self-esteem as indicated on one-

way ANOVA; parental trust ( $F(2,205) = 3.659, p <.05$ ), parental communication ( $F(2,205) = 9.721, p <.05$ ) and parental alienation ( $F(2,205) = 8.549, p <.05$ ).

A Tukey post hoc test revealed that parental trust significantly influence an adolescent with high self-esteem ( $M=33.2, p <.05$ ) and low self-esteem ( $M=26.8, p <.05$ ) but not an adolescent with normal self-esteem ( $p >.05$ ). This shows parental trust as an attachment style has higher significant influence on adolescents' high self-esteem ( $33.2 \pm 7.9$ ) and adolescents' low self-esteem ( $26.8 \pm 11.3$ ) but not normal self-esteem.

The second attachment style was parent communication which statistically influenced adolescents level of self-esteem on all levels; high self-esteem ( $M=32.5, p <.05$ ), normal self-esteem ( $M=26.1, p <.05$ ) and low self-esteem ( $M=19.3, p <.05$ ). This shows parental communication as an attachment style has higher significant influence on adolescents' high self-esteem ( $32.5 \pm 10.6$ ), followed by normal self-esteem ( $26.1 \pm 10.6$ ) and the least influence was the low self-esteem ( $19.3 \pm 9.5$ ).

Lastly, the parental alienation as an attachment style was significant to adolescents at low self-esteem ( $M=20.9, p <.05$ ), normal self-esteem ( $M=15.9, p <.05$ ) and high self-esteem ( $M=14.4, p <.05$ ). However, there was no statistically significant difference on the level of influence between the normal self-esteem and high self-esteem ( $p >.05$ ). This shows parental alienation as parental attachment style has a higher significant influence on adolescents' self-esteem chronologically from adolescent low self-esteem ( $20.9 \pm 7.0$ ), normal self-esteem ( $16.0 \pm 6.3$ ) and high self-esteem ( $14.0 \pm 6.9$ ). There was no statistically significant ( $p >.05$ ) difference on the way parental alienation influences normal self-esteem and high self-esteem. In addition,

narrative analysis depicted the following themes; attachment styles, adolescents high and low self esteem.

#### Influence of attachment styles on adolescents identity.

The third objective was to evaluate the influence of attachment styles on establishment of identity among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County. The correlation test for identity style and attachment style was conducted to test for significant relationship between the identity as dependent variable and attachment style as the independent variable of study. Findings indicated that information orientation of adolescents living with their step mothers had significant relationship with all the attachment styles; positive relation with parental trust ( $r = .288, p < .05$ ) and parental communication ( $r = .266, p < .05$ ) but negative relation with parental alienation ( $r = -.212, p < .05$ ). However, the information orientation of adolescents living with their step father had no significant relationship ( $p > .05$ ) with all the attachment styles. Similarly, commitment of adolescents living with their step mothers had significant relationship with all the attachment styles; positive relation with parental trust ( $r = .278, p < .05$ ) and parental communication ( $r = .348, p < .05$ ) but negative relation with parental alienation ( $r = -.399, p < .05$ ). However, the commitment of adolescents living with their step fathers had no significant relationship ( $p > .05$ ) with all the attachment styles.

Adolescents living with step fathers had only significant relation on diffuse orientation and parent alienation ( $r = .191, p < .05$ ) but not significant with parent communication and trust. Normative orientation of both adolescents living with step mothers and those living with step fathers had no significant relationship ( $p > .05$ ) with all the attachment styles.

To answer the research question; the influence of attachment style on identity style of adolescents, MANCOVA test as a multivariate analysis was conducted. The key variables for the multivariate was; the identity style as the dependent variable, the attachment style as independent variable and step parents as fixed factors. The point of intercept between the attachment style and the identity based on the Wilk's Lambda result shows it was statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, identity style based on attachment style was statistically difference  $F(4, 202) = 1.242$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Wilk's  $\Lambda = 0.976$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .024$ . This means attachment style influenced identity style. Further, the dependence on attachment style based on adolescents' step parent was not significant.

Further analysis on the test between subject effects shows that attachment style has a statistically significant effect on three of the identity style components. In chronological order based on the influence, Commitment ( $F(1, 205) = 13.960$ ;  $p < .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .064$ ), Diffuse orientation ( $F(1, 205) = 6.994$ ;  $p < .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .033$ ), and Information orientation ( $F(1, 205) = 6.226$ ;  $p < .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .029$ ). There was no influence on Normative orientation ( $F(1, 205) = 2.479$ ;  $p > .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .012$ ). This shows attachment style affects the commitment, diffuse orientation and information orientation as identity style of adolescents. Themes delived from qualitative findings were; goals, values, belefs, decision making and conflict.

#### Influence of attachment styles on adolescent autonomy.

The last research objective was to assess the influence of attachment styles on establishment of autonomy among adolescents from blended families in Kiambu County. Correlation test was conducted to test for significant relationship between the autonomy as dependent variable and attachment style as the independent variable of study. All the

components of autonomy; deidealization, non-dependency, parent as people and individuation had significant relationship with attachment styles ( $p < .05$ ).

T-test and MANCOVA on influence of attachment style on autonomy was also done. Findings indicated that the mean comparison of the adolescents' autonomy style based on the step parent showed there was no difference of the mean value between adolescents living with step mothers and adolescents' living with step fathers on deidealization, non-dependency, parent as people and individuation. Further, a T-test result showed the mean difference of the autonomy style between adolescents living with step mothers compared to adolescents living with step fathers was not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). This shows there was no statistical difference on the mean value of autonomy based on step parent. To answer the research question; the influence of attachment style on autonomy style of adolescents, MANCOVA test as a multivariate analysis was conducted. Analysis on the test between subject effects shows that attachment style has a statistically significant effect on all types of autonomy style; in chronological order based on the influence, deidealization ( $F(1, 205) = 46.7; p < .05; \text{partial } \eta^2 = .186$ ), Non dependency ( $F(1, 205) = 40.1, p < .05; \text{partial } \eta^2 = .164$ ), parent as people ( $F(1, 205) = 36.1; p < .05; \text{partial } \eta^2 = .150$ ), and lastly, Individuation ( $F(1, 205) = 45.0; p < .05; \text{partial } \eta^2 = .180$ ). This shows attachment style affects the autonomy style of adolescents. However, the inclusion of type of step parent was not significant; hence, did not affect the relation between autonomy and attachment styles. Qualitative data themes were deduced through narrative data analysis and these were; freedom to make decisions, to ask questions and challenges to freedom.

## Conclusion

The conclusion will be guided by the study research questions . based on the findings

On the attachment styles adopted by step parents from blended families the study concludes; there are two attachment styles namely secure and insecure which are based on characteristics of parental trust, parental commitment and parental alienation. A secure step parent adolescent bond can develop whether the step parent joined the blended family when the adolescent was young or during adolescent stage so long as the step parents adopt secure attachment styles. Insecure attachment styles are detrimental to step parent adolescent relationship and that step parent families relationships are complex and challenging. Step mothers have high levels of parental trust and parental communication while step fathers have higher levels of parental alienation. The study concluded that the type of attachment style that step parents adopt dictates whether the step adolescent relationship will be close or distant.

The study concludes that adolescents that have a close relationship with step parents where there is trust and appropriate communication, such adolescents develop a high self - esteem. On the contrary those step parents who adopt insecure attachment styles have a distance relationship with adolescent and this enhances development of low self- esteem. Step fathers that adopt a secure attachment with step daughters and are present in their lives enhance their high self- esteem as compared to those step fathers that distant themselves from their step daughters. Step fathers were noted to have insecure relationships with step sons and this contribute to such adolescents developing a low self-esteem. Early step mother child attachment enhances adolescents' self -esteem during adolescent stage. The study therefore concludes that step parents' attachment styles influence adolescent self- esteem

The study further concludes that step mothers influence the development of adolescents' information and commitment identity styles unlike the step fathers who influence adolescents diffuse avoidant identity style. Adolescents living with step mothers had higher levels of parental trust and parental communication as compared to step fathers whose parental alienation levels were high. Step parents' attachment styles influence adolescents' information, commitment and diffuse avoidant identity styles but not normative identity style. Step parents should adopt secure attachment styles other than insecure attachment to enhance appropriate development of adolescent identity styles and that step fathers should go an extra mile in building positive relationships with adolescents

The study concludes that step parents should ensure they provide a secure base in order to enhance adolescents emotional autonomy. Step parents who adopt insecure attachment styles that are controlling hinder adolescent development of autonomy. Lack of freedom of questioning and expression has led adolescents to internalize their personal problems and this is unhealthy for their autonomy development. The study therefore concludes that attachment styles influence the establishment of adolescents emotional autonomy development components; deidealization, individuation, viewing parents as people and individuation regardless of whether the adolescent lives with the step father or step mother. In addition, the study concludes that secure attachment that has high parental trust, high parental communication and low parental alienation is the most appropriate attachment style unlike the insecure attachment which has high parental alienation, low parental communication and low parental trust component.

## Recommendations

These recommendations are made to benefit government agencies, Ministry of Education, counselors, parents, families and society at large.

### Government Agencies

The government agencies for instance children welfare institutions should have policies that are geared towards early and appropriate integration of blended families. For instance the adoption policy should be streamlined to facilitate an easier adoption process that takes cognizant of the vulnerability of the parties involved.

### Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education should have mechanisms in place that cater for unique needs of adolescents. The ministry should deliberately institute a counseling division within its structures with representations at all levels from the headquarters all the way to the individual schools. These counseling divisions should be empowered through appropriate and adequate human and material resources to carry out its functions. As a bare minimum, the ministry should deploy trained counselors who are able to counsel adolescents from blended families.

### Counselors

School counselors should be appropriately trained and sensitized on the need to look out for issues pertaining to adolescents from blended families as opposed to the general school fraternity. This is because from the research findings adolescents from blended families



encounter many challenges that affect their psychosocial development compared to adolescents living with both biological parents.

#### Parents, families and society

Should embrace the aspect of blended families in order to build healthy families and society at large. Step parents should embrace step children as early as possible after joining the blended families so as to enhance their establishment of self-esteem identity styles and emotional autonomy development. In addition, they should be psycho educated on the unique aspects of blended families. Parents should look into adolescence sense of safety and their freedom which can contribute to behavior problems.

#### Recommendation for further Research

Research is very crucial for scholarly progress to discover new ideas. This study recommends the following;

- i. Further research can be conducted on the plight of mutual children in blended families because they tend to be over protected over the other step children
- ii. Studies should be conducted on father involvement and establishment of adolescent identity style development and investigate the variables that keep fathers from embracing a significant relationship with adolescents. This is because the study depicted that step fathers were alienated from their step children and therefore have distant relationship.
- iii. Research should be conducted on the role of counselling in mitigating the challenges experienced by adolescents from blended family households.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Researcher's Introduction Letter

Questionnaire that will be used to identify students from blended families that live with either step mother/ step father.

Dear Students,

My name is Lucy Gachenia a student at Pan Africa Christian University. I am pursuing a PhD research entitled '*The Influence of attachment styles on adolescent psychosocial development among secondary school students from blended families in Kiambu County Kenya.*' To enable me complete my studies the university requires me to conduct a research on the study that I have just mentioned. I am not able to identify students who reside with their step parents from your class and this is the reason why I will issue you with a questionnaire so that you can kindly indicate in the correct box who lives with step parents. Kindly indicate your name to enable me through your school counselor retrieve these students from the classes so that they can assist me in my study. Kindly note that your names will be for identification purposes only and will not be used in any other way. Any personal information will be treated with absolute confidentiality and the findings of this study will not be used against you in any way. Please be very honest as you respond.

Thank you

Lucy Gachenia

## Appendix 2: Demographic questionnaire for students

A: Kindly fill in the blank spaces below

Name..... Age..... Gender.....

B: Tick in the correct box

I live with

Both biological parents	
A step father and a biological mother	
A step mother and biological father	
None of the above	

Appendix 3: Standardized Tool Questionnaire for Adolescents (before they fill in the individual questionnaires based on standardized tools)

It will be orally done by the researcher.

Dear Students,

My name is Lucy Gachenia a student at Pan Africa Christian University. I am pursuing a PhD on Influence of attachment styles on adolescent psychosocial development among secondary school students from blended families in Kiambu County, Kenya. I will issue you with a questionnaire and guide you on how to respond to the questions.

Your responses will be used to write my end examination paper. Any personal information will be highly confidential and the findings of this study will not be used against you in any way.

Please be very honest as you write your responses. Do not indicate your name anywhere in this paper.

Thank you

Lucy Gachenia



#### Appendix 4: Revised Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Maternal)

##### Armsden and Greenberg (1987) Revised Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment

This questionnaire is a measure of mother adolescent relationship. Kindly tick (√) in the box that shows how much you believe a statement is true about your mother using the scale given.

		Never True	Rarely True	Sometimes True	Often True	Always True
1.	I get less attention at home					
2.	My feelings are respected by my mother					
3.	My mother takes me as I am					
4.	I feel it is of no value in letting my feelings show					
5.	I get troubled easily at home					
6.	If my mother realizes that something is troubling me she enquires about it					
7.	I am not sure who I can rely on these days					
8.	I do not bother my mother with my issues because she has her own problems					
9.	I feel ashamed or foolish when I share my challenges with my mother.					
10.	I would desire to have a different person as my mother					
11.	When we talk about issues with my mother she regards my opinion					
12.	I share with my mother my problems and concerns					
13.	I have faith in my mother					
14.	I can depend on my					

	mother when I need to disclose something that is troubling me					
15.	My mother trusts my opinion					
16.	My mother does not acknowledge what I am going through these days					
17.	My mother motivates me to talk about my problems					
18.	My mother can feel when I am disturbed by something					
19.	I get distressed many times but my mother does not know about it					
20.	My mother aids me in appreciating myself better					
21.	When I am troubled about something, my mother tries to be understanding					
22.	I feel annoyed with my mother					
23.	My mother understands me					
24.	I like to get my mother's view on things that have to do with me					
25.	My mother expects a lot from me					

## Appendix 5: Revised Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Paternal)

### Armsden and Greenberg (1987) Revised Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment

This questionnaire is a measure of father adolescent relationship. Kindly tick (√) in the box that shows how much you believe a statement is true about your father using the scale given.

		Never True	Rarely True	Sometimes True	Often True	Always True
1.	I get less attention at home					
2.	My feelings are respected by my father					
3.	My father takes me as I am					
4.	I feel it is of no value letting my feelings show					
5.	I get troubled easily at home					
6.	If my father realizes that something is disturbing me, he enquires about it					
7.	I am not sure who I can rely on these days					
8.	I do not bother my father with my issues because he has his own problems					
9.	I feel ashamed or foolish sharing my problems with my father					

10.	I would desire to have a different person as my father					
11.	When we talk about issues with my father he regards my opinion.					
12.	I share with my father my problems and concerns					
13.	I have faith in my father					
14.	I can depend on my father when I need to disclose something that is troubling me					
15.	My father trusts my opinion					
16.	My father does not acknowledge what I am going through these days					
17.	My father motivates me to talk about my difficulties					
18.	My father can feel when I am disturbed by something					
19.	I get distressed many times but my father does not know about it					
20.	My father aids me in appreciating myself better					
21.	When I am troubled by something, my father tries to be understanding					

22.	I feel annoyed with my father					
23.	My father understands me					
24.	I like to get my father's view on things that have to do with me					
25.	My father expects a lot from me					

### Appendix 6: Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale

Below is a list of statements dealing with general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. Kindly tick (√) where applicable

		Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree
1.	I am mostly satisfied with myself				
2.	Sometimes I feel I am not good enough				
3.	I feel I have a few good qualities				
4.	I am able to do things that other people can do				
5.	I feel I have little to be proud off				
6.	I surely feel useless at times				
7.	As a person I feel I am worthy and at par with others				
8.	I hope I could have more respect for myself				
9.	All things considered I am likely to feel I am a failure				
10.	I take a hopeful attitude towards myself				

### Appendix 7: Berzonsky (2011) Identity Style Inventory.

Below are a number of statements about beliefs, attitudes, and/ or ways of dealing with issues. Please read each keenly and use it to describe yourself. Kindly tick (√) in the box with the scale that shows the extent to which the statement describes you.

		Not at all like me	Not like me	Somewhat like me	Very much like me
1.	I am not certain of my future, I hope things will sort themselves out				
2.	I try to reach the goals that my family and friends expect of me				
3.	I am not very much concerned about my future presently it is still a too early				
4.	If I have to come up with a decision, I try to delay as much as possible in order to find out what will happen				
5.	When making important life decision, I consider various perspectives before making a choice				
6.	I am unsure of the values I hold				
7.	I feel it is wrong to question advice of established experts e.g., clergy, doctors, lawyers when making individual decisions				
8.	I believe it is better to retain fixed values rather than adopting different value system				
9.	I tackle problems in life by carefully reflecting on them				
10.	I try not to handle personal issues that require much thinking from me				
11.	I am no longer certain what I want out of life				
12.	When other people state something that conflicts with my values or beliefs, I try to accommodate their opinion				
13.	My life goals tend to change any time I speak to different people				
14.	Whenever I make a decision concerning my future, I habitually follow my relatives or close friends expectations				
15.	I occasionally spend much time reasoning about main life				

	decisions, the choice I make is quite fast and obvious to me.				
16.	It is crucial for me to obtain and evaluate information from different sources before I make significant life decisions				
17.	I am unsure of what I believe				
18.	I primarily know what I believe and do not believe				
19.	I am aware of what to do with my future				
20.	When faced with a life decision I attempt to analyze the situation in a bid to understand it				
21.	I take more time reading or conversing with others as I try to develop a set of values that sound sensible to me				
22.	I have never had doubts about my beliefs because I obviously know what I believe and what I don't believe				
23.	I have straight forward life goals				
24.	When making significant decisions I love to spend time thinking of my opinions				
25.	I am intimately involved and committed to particular values and ideals				
26.	I am governed by my emotions and feelings when facing life choices				
27.	Being uncertain about my values or life goals would mean that I require to actively seek out and assess relevant details				
28.	Sometimes I fail to believe a problem will occur, and somehow things manage to work out on their own				
29.	When others say something that challenges my individual values or beliefs, I automatically ignore what they have to say				
30.	When personal difficulties come up, I delay dealing with them as long as possible				
31.	Who I am changes depending on situations				
32.	I purposely think what I want to do with my life				
33.	Communicating with other people enables me explore my personal beliefs				
34.	I never ask what I want to do with my life because I tend to agree with what important people expect me to do				



35.	Often I do not concern myself with my own problems, they work themselves out				
36.	I have a clear set of values that I use in making personal decisions				
37.	The best thing I can do is not to take life so seriously but sit back and enjoy it				
38.	I would rather deal with situations in which I can rely on social norms and standards				
39.	I regularly think and examine the logical consistency between my values and life goals				
40.	In serious decision making I like to have as many details as possible				
41.	When faced with personal difficulties , I definitely know what to do				
42.	I habitually adopt and follow the values I was raised with				
43.	I think it is better to acquire a firm set of beliefs than to be broad-minded				
44.	It is not necessary to worry about values ahead of time I reach a conclusion as things happen				
45.	I avoid thinking about or deal with hard times as long as I can				
46.	I am unsure of what I want to do in the near future				
47.	I have realized that personal problems often turn out to be fascinating challenges				
48.	Inability of being uncertain of my values or life goals make me fearful and anxious				

### Appendix 8: Silverberg & Steinberg (1986) Emotional Autonomy Scale (EAS)

This questionnaire is an assessment of parent –adolescent relationships. Please indicate your answer by putting a tick (✓) in the most appropriate box.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	My parents act almost in the same way whether they are at home or at work				
2.	When I become a parent there are things I will not do like my parents used to do				
3.	My parents and I concur in everything				
4.	I rely on my parents to work out things for me when I have done something wrong.				
5.	My parents would be amazed to realize what I am like when I am not with them				
6.	My parents behave almost in a similar in the presence of their friends just like they do when they are with me at home				
7.	My parents rarely make mistakes				
8.	I am surprised to find out how my parents behave at a party				
9.	When I am not around I wonder how my parents behave				
10.	It is better for children to approach their peers for advice on some issues other than their parents				
11.	When I am not around my parents perhaps converse about different things than when I am present.				
12.	When parents are with their own parents they tend to behave differently from how they act at home				
13.	I wish my parents would appreciate who I really am				
14.	When I will have children of my own I will treat them in exactly the same way as my parents used to treat me.				
15.	There are a number of things that my parents do not know about me				
16.	Before handling a problem on my own I go to my parents for assistance.				
17.	If I was in conflict with any of my friends, I would consult my mother and father before deciding what to do about the problem				
18.	When there is a disagreement between my parents and I my parents are always right				
19.	My parents are aware of everything there is to know about me				
20.	I try as much as possible to have the same believe as that of my parents				

## Appendix 9: Researcher's Introduction Letter for Focus Group Interview

Questionnaire for in-depth interview schedule for focus group participants (done orally)

Dear group members,

My name is Lucy Gachenia a student at Pan Africa Christian University. I am pursuing a PhD on Influence of attachment styles on adolescent psychosocial development among secondary school students from blended families in Kiambu County, Kenya. Accompanying me is my research assistance..... . I have put you in a group because I want us to discuss some questions based on my study. Your names will not be indicated anywhere in this conversation. With your consent I will record our discussion (verbatim) to enable me recall some of the themes of the discussion that may escape my mind later after discussion. My research assistance will also note down some points as we discuss. None of these information will be used against you. I would also encourage all of you to take part in the discussion and kindly note that everything we discuss should be confidential and should not be disclosed to anyone else outside this group. Feel free to make your contributions, ask questions and clarifications if need be. Please be very honest as you take part in this conversation. Do not indicate your name anywhere in this paper.

Thank you

Lucy Gachenia

#### Appendix 10: Focus Group Interview Schedule

1. At what age did you join a blended family and how was that like for you?
2. Would you say your relationship with your step mother/ step father is close or distance?  
Kindly explain
3. Do you share your personal problems with your step father/stepmother? Kindly explain.
4. In which ways does your step father/step mother meet your needs?
5. How is your relationship with your step siblings?
6. What challenges do you experience in your relationship with your step father/step mother that affect your self esteem?
7. How does your relationship with your step father/step mother affect your self-esteem?
8. Who do you turn to when you encounter challenges? Kindly explain.
9. What are your personal goals beliefs and values on life?
10. Do you stand by what you believe in when your step father/step mother or other people challenge your personal decision?
11. When you are in conflict with other people how you do deal with such conflict?
12. How free are you in making personal decision at home? Kindly explain
13. How free are you to ask questions or seek clarification on a variety of issues from your step father/ step mother?

14. What other areas do you feel your step father/step mother curtail your freedom?

Appendix 11: Researcher's Introduction Letter for School Counselors (done orally)

Dear Counselor,

My name is Lucy Gachenia a student at Pan Africa Christian University. I am pursuing a PhD on Influence of attachment styles on adolescent psychosocial development among secondary school students from blended families in Kiambu County Kenya. I have chosen you to take part in my study and I hope you will kindly assist me in responding to questions based on my study. Your responses will be used to write my end examination paper. In addition the findings will be used in assisting counselors in schools deal with adolescents who come from blended families. With your consent I will record our conversation to enable me identify the themes discussed and avoid omitting important details of our conversation. Your name will not be indicated anywhere in this paper or in recording. Any personal information will be highly confidential and the findings of this study will not be used against you in any way. Please be very honest as you give your responses.

Thank you

Lucy Gachenia

## Appendix 12: Counselors Interview Schedule

1. In your counseling practice have you encountered students from blended families?
2. For those cases that you deal with in a sample of roughly 10 cases how many come from blended families?
3. What are the issues that emanate from adolescents who live with either their step fathers/step mothers?
4. In which ways do you think these challenges affect adolescent's self-esteem, identity and autonomy?
5. What challenges do you encounter when counselling adolescents who live with step fathers/step mothers?
6. What recommendations can give in mitigating issues of students who live with step fathers/step mothers?

## Appendix 13: Institution Data Collection Request Letter

Appendix 13.

**Institution Data Collection Request Letter**

The Principal/Deputy principal

*Loreto High School, Limuru*

Dear Sir/Madam

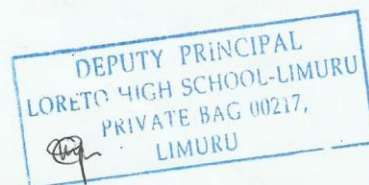
Re: Request for permission to collect data in your school

My name is Lucy Gachenia a student at Pan Africa University in Kenya. I am pursuing a PhD and conducting a study on influence of attachment styles on adolescent psychosocial development among secondary school students from blended families in Kiambu County Kenya. I believe that this study is important in assisting students, counselors, administrators, board of management, teachers, parents, policy makers in education sector and academicians understand how attachment styles affect adolescents who come from blended families specifically those students that live with either stepmothers or step fathers. The findings of the study will not be used to victimize or tarnish the name of your school whatsoever. Confidentiality will be maintained, and I promise to share the study findings with you. If you are okay with permitting students from your school take part in the study, kindly read and sign the consent form attached to this letter. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Thank you

Signed...*Lucy*.....

Lucy Gachenia.





#### Appendix 14: Informed consent document for principals of sampled secondary schools

Study Title: Influence of attachment styles on adolescent psychosocial development among secondary school students from blended families in Kiambu County Kenya.

Study Location: Kiambu County, Kenya

Purpose of the study: The purpose of the current study is to assist the researcher in finding how attachment styles adopted by either step father or step mother affect adolescent psychosocial development which include; self-esteem, identity and autonomy as well as establishing attachment strategies these parents use in relating with adolescents.

#### Description of the research study

The researcher will first sample 6 classes where all the students will be issued with a questionnaire to enable the researcher identify students that live with either step fathers or step mothers. They will be required to write their names for identification purposes the rest of the questionnaires will not require the students to indicate their names. Through the assistance of the school counselor, the researcher will have the appropriate group for the study. On the actual day of data collection, the researcher will guide the students on how to fill in the questionnaires based on the study. The questionnaires will be given to individual students. There will also be focus group where some students will be asked to take part in discussion of questions based on the study. This will depend on whether your school has been sampled for focus group.

In addition, the school counselor of sampled schools will have time with the researcher to respond to some questions. For group discussion the researcher will record the conversation in order to capture all the required themes. The form used to gather information will not bear the

names of students so they cannot be traced back to the person that responded. Students' participation will remain anonymous. The data collected will be stored in computer systems that are protected with passwords. Participation in this study is voluntary and the students are free to terminate their responses to questionnaires or focus group discussions anytime.

#### Risks/ Benefits

There is no risk of participation in this study, students sampled from blended families will not be expected to give their names during the actual data collection duration. The benefits are that the study will benefit students, parents, teachers, and administrators, policy makers in education, academicians and counselors and will equip them with information on how attachment styles affect adolescents' self-esteem, identity formation and autonomy from a blended family perspective. Students will benefit from intervention programs that support harmonious and tolerant relationships.

#### Contact Information

If you have any questions now or in future regarding this study kindly contact Lucy Gachenia PhD student Pan Africa Christian University mobile number 0720403973.

#### Declaration of consent.


I have read and understood the content of this consent form; the details of the study and the basis of the students participation. I also understand that the students have the liberty to participate in the study and can withdraw their participation at will. I have therefore agreed that the students from my school participate in the study without any coercion whatsoever.

Signature (School Principal) *P.K.* Date.....


Name of person obtaining consent *P. Kiyonji* Date *10/2/2021*

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL  
LUKETO HIGH SCHOOL-LIMURU  
PRIVATE BAG 00217,  
LIMURU

Appendix 15: Research Licence



**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**




**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR  
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION**

Ref No: **350909**

Date of Issue: **04/February/2021**

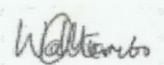
**RESEARCH LICENSE**



**This is to Certify that Ms.. Lucy Wamathi Gachenia of Pan Africa Christian University, has been licensed to conduct research in Kiambu on the topic: INFLUENCE OF ATTACHMENT STYLES ON ADOLESCENTS' PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM BLENDED FAMILIES IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA. for the period ending : 04/February/2022.**

License No: **NACOSTI/P/21/8748**


**350909**



**Director General  
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR  
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY &  
INNOVATION**

**Applicant Identification Number**

**Verification QR Code**



**NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.**

## Appendix 16: Ethical Review Authorisation

**VERDICT: APPROVAL WITH COMMENTS**  
Daystar University Ethics Review Board



Our Ref: DU-ERB/15/12/2020/000480

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020

To: Lucy Wamathi Gachenia

Dear Lucy,

**RE: ATTACHMENT STYLES AND ADOLESCENTS' PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM BLENDED FAMILIES IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA**

Reference is made to your ERB application reference no. 261120-01 dated 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020 in which you requested for ethical approval of your proposal by Daystar University Ethics Review Board.

We are pleased to inform you that ethical review has been done and the verdict is to revise to the satisfaction of your Supervisors and Head of Department before proceeding to the next stage. As guidance, ensure that the attached comments are addressed. Please be advised that it is an offence to proceed to collect data without addressing the concerns of Ethics Review board. Your application approval number is **DU-ERB-000480**. The approval period for the research is between **15<sup>th</sup> December 2020 to 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021** after which the ethical approval lapses. Should you wish to continue with the research after the lapse you will be required to apply for an extension from DU-ERB at half the review charges.

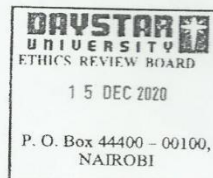
This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements:

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used.
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by Daystar University Ethics Review Board.
- iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to Daystar University Ethics Review Board within 72 hours of notification.
- iv. Any changes anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to Daystar University Ethics Review Board within 72 hours.
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of a signed one-page executive summary report and a closure report within 90 days upon completion of the study to Daystar University Ethics Review Board via email [duerb@daystar.ac.ke].

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://oris.nacosti.go.ke> and other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Susan Muriungi  
**Vice Chair, Daystar University Ethics Review Board**



Encl. Review Report

P. O. Box 44400 - 00100,  
NAIROBI

## Appendix 17: County Commissioner's Research Authorisation



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
 MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND CO-ORDINATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT  
 COUNTY COMMISSIONER, KIAMBU

Telephone: 066-2022709

Fax: 066-2022644

E-mail: [countycommkiambu@yahoo.com](mailto:countycommkiambu@yahoo.com)

When replying please quote

County Commissioner  
 Kiambu County  
 P.O. Box 32-00900  
**KIAMBU**

Ref.No: ED.12/1(A)/VOL.IV/113

5<sup>th</sup> February, 2021

Ms. Lucy Wamathi Gachenia,  
 Pan Africa Christian University,  
 P.O. Box 984-00219  
**KARURI - KENYA**

**RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION**

Reference is made to National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation Letter Ref No. NACOSTI/P/21/8748 dated 4<sup>TH</sup> February, 2021.

You have been authorized to conduct research on "*INFLUENCE OF ATTACHMENT STYLES ON ADOLESCENTS' PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM BLENDED FAMILIES IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA.*" The data collection will be carried out in *Kiambu County* for a period ending 4<sup>TH</sup> February, 2022.

You are requested to share your findings with the County Education Office, Kiambu, upon completion of your research.

Festus Kimeu  
 FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER  
**KIAMBU COUNTY**

Cc National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation  
 P.O. Box 30623-00100  
**NAIROBI**

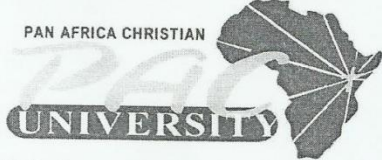
County Director of Education  
**KIAMBU COUNTY**

All Deputy County Commissioners (*For information and record purposes*)  
**KIAMBU COUNTY**

---

*"Our Youth our Future. Join us for a Drug and Substance free County".*

## Appendix 18: PAC University Research Authorisation



22<sup>ND</sup> JANUARY, 2021

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Dear Sir/Madam,

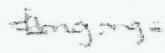
**RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION & ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER FOR LUCY GACHENIA REG. NO: PMFT/6458/16**

Greetings! This is an introduction letter for the above named person a final year student at Pan Africa Christian University (PAC University), pursuing the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Marriage and Family Therapy.

She is at the final stage of the programme and is preparing to collect data to enable her finalise on her Dissertation. The dissertation title is *“Influence of attachment styles on adolescents’ psychosocial development among secondary school students from blended families in Kiambu County, Kenya”*.

We kindly request that you allow her obtain a research permit so as to proceed and conduct research at selected secondary school students from blended families in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Warm Regards,



PAN AFRICA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY  
**REGISTRAR**  
 P.O. Box 56875 - 00200  
 TEL: 0721 932050 0734 400694  
 NAIROBI, KENYA

Dr. Lilian Vikiru  
 Registrar Academic Affairs  
 Pan Africa Christian University  
 Lumumba Drive, Roysambu, off Kamiti Rd, off Thika Rd  
 P.O Box 56875-00200, Nairobi, Kenya  
 Tel: +254 721-932050/726-595863/734-400694  
 Email: [registrar@pacuniversity.ac.ke](mailto:registrar@pacuniversity.ac.ke)  
 Web: [www.pacuniversity.ac.ke](http://www.pacuniversity.ac.ke)

Appendix 19: Map of Kiambu County

