

**INFLUENCE OF REMARRIAGE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF
PARENTALLY BEREAVED ADOLESCENTS IN KIAMBU COUNTY**

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OCTOBER, 2022

DECLARATION

I Margaret Muriko Muchiri declare that this research is my original work and has not been presented in any other university.

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Date28/10/2022

DECLARATION BY SUPERVISORS

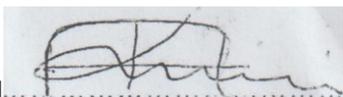
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DEDICATION

With indisputable gratitude and warm regard, I wish to dedicate this work to my father, all counseling psychologists, and clergies. I get inspired by your compassion and dedication to supporting bereaved people as they grieve and make meaning in life after losing a loved one to death.

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ABSTRACT

An adolescent faces a myriad of adjustment challenges characteristic of their developmental stage. In addition, a parentally bereaved adolescent faces other challenges unique to blended families when their surviving parent remarries. The current study examined the influence of remarriage on the psychological well-being of parentally bereaved adolescents in Kiambu County. The study objectives were: To examine how loyalty binds, parenting tasks, and family culture influence parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological well-being. Based on attachment and family system theories, the study adopted a descriptive design using quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The sample comprised of 132 parentally bereaved adolescents from reconstituted families, and 10 key informants who were social workers, clergies, and individuals fostering parentally bereaved adolescents. Quantitative data were collected using self-administered questionnaires among adolescents, and qualitative data were obtained from the key informants through focus group discussions (FGDs). To ensure the reliability of the research instrument, a pilot study was done before conducting the actual study. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics namely, percentage, frequency, mean, and standard deviation, as well as inferential statistics which were ANOVA, and multivariate and the findings were presented by use of tables. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically using a latent approach and the findings were presented in verbatim. The findings showed that the adolescents exhibited low levels of psychological well-being. The findings on autonomy and acceptance revealed a mean of 2.47 with a standard deviation of 0.926, and a mean of 2.40 with a standard deviation of 1.048, respectively. The findings revealed that loyalty binds influenced psychological well-being of adolescents as indicated by a mean of 2.22 and a standard deviation of 0.930. In addition, parenting task was reported to affect the adolescents psychological well-being as indicated by a mean of 2.64 and a standard deviation of 0.934. Further, it was established that family culture influenced adolescents psychological well-being as indicated by a mean of 2.29 and a standard deviation of 0.912. The regression model was statistically significant in predicting that loyalty binds, parenting tasks, and family culture influenced parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological wellbeing (Sig. value = 0.000). The regression analysis showed a strong and significant association between loyalty binds and psychological well-being (coefficient value of 0.293, p-value of .028); family culture and psychological well-being (coefficient value of .342, p-value of .010); and parenting task and psychological well-being (coefficient value of .264, p-value of .013). The findings implied that loyalty binds, parenting tasks, and family culture strongly and positively influenced the adolescent's psychological well-being. The study recommends specific counseling interventions to assist parentally bereaved adolescents to adjust psychologically and thereby fit in reconstituted families.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The current study was designed to examine the influence of remarriage on psychological well-being among parentally bereaved adolescents. Human beings change drastically over their lives and varied factors influence their cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and physical development. Depending on how one views challenges posed by life, one is likely to find satisfaction or dissatisfaction in life (Muqodas et al., 2019). Life satisfaction which indicates psychological well-being encompasses the intra-individual and inter-individual levels of positive functioning. Inter-individual levels of positive functioning refer to positive functioning indicated by how one relates with significant others in the course of life. On the other hand, the intra-individual level of positive functioning refers to one's sense of mastery and personal growth and determines one's judgments of life satisfaction (Burns et al., 2011).

Life-span developmental perspectives emphasize various challenges one encounters at various phases of the life cycle. Theorists advancing developmental perspectives include Erickson, Buhler, and Neugarten. These theorists define psychological well-being to not only encompass the absence of illness but also to include features of positive psychological functioning such as having purpose in life, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, autonomy, and realizing personal growth (Muqodas et al., 2019). Positive psychology focuses on psychological and emotional health indicated by having good feelings and reaching one's full potential (Iqbal & Nishat, 2017). Subjective well-being is how a person thinks and feels about his or her own life (Brouzos et al., 2016). All the same, well-being includes being independent, being in control of your environment, having good

relationships, growing as a person, accepting yourself, and having a purpose in life (Gao & McLellan, 2016).

When an adolescent loses a parent to death, his/her life changes considerably. In his thesis, George Engel said, "The loss of a loved one is psychologically traumatic in the same way that being severely hurt or burned is physiologically traumatic" (Worden, 2009). Besides having to deal with parental loss, parentally bereaved adolescents have to deal with issues posed by single parenting or in the reconstituted family. This is because widowhood comes with its problems and tasks that a widow or widower must do well to live a fulfilling life. There are financial, social, and psychological problems that come with being a widow, especially in the first years. Common problems include being alone to take care of the house and children, taking on new responsibilities for self-care, and expressing feelings (Miruka et al. 2015). Some widows and widowers are strong and can deal with these issues on their own, but others need help (Riina & McHale, 2014). In some cases, widows are left at the mercy of unscrupulous family members who would rather take advantage of the dead person's property than help the grieving person. Contrary to African customs, some widowers must take care of themselves and their children. These tendencies can be traced back to the shift from collectivism to individualism as modern Africans adopt Western ways of life, which makes it harder for families to stick together (Kiiru, 2014).

The study by Miruka et al, (2015), and Owiti (2017), conducted in the Western Kenya region indicated that one thing that happens when a spouse dies, is that the person can remarry and form a blended family. Most African men only stay single for a short time because it is common for them to get married again soon after their first wife dies (Miruka et al., 2015). In these kinds of marriages, the new partner may have children with their previous partners and may have more children within the new union. In most cases, a widower or widow remarries

a single person who has never been married before, a person who is separated or divorced, or a person whose spouse died (Furrow & Palmer, 2007). As such, most blended or reconstituted families are made up of "broken pieces" of relationships from the past. So, this type of family faces unique problems that don't usually come up in nuclear families (Riches & Dawson, 2010).

The study conducted in Abha (Saudi Arabia) and Aligarh (India) by Iqbal and Nishat, (2017), indicated that people are thought to have better psychological health if they show more positive emotions and fewer negative ones after going through hard times. Also, a positive outlook, good relationships with other people, self-acceptance, self-worth, autonomy, and a general attitude toward life are all signs of psychological well-being (Iqbal & Nishat, 2017). It may not be easy for an adolescent who has lost a parent to death and the remaining parent has remarried to exhibit psychological well-being. In examining how remarriage influences psychological wellness among parentally bereaved adolescents, the study sought to establish the level of autonomy and self-acceptance in determining the presence or absence of psychological wellness.

Self-acceptance is a central feature of psychological well-being and characteristic of optimal functioning, self-actualization, and maturity. Life span theorist emphasizes one's acceptance of self as well as one's past, and present life. Therefore, holding a positive attitude toward self is a significant characteristic of positive psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2015). The death of a parent subverts the development of a child in many ways. To some adolescents, the death of a parent may mean grief, an increased probability of inadequate child care, worsened family economic status, isolation from friends and some family members, change of residential area, and changes in family structure (Riina & McHale, 2014). Such changes have negative implications on life and affect how adolescents judge

their satisfaction with changed life in the absence of one parent and inclusion of a replacement; step-parent and possibly step-siblings and half-siblings. Adolescents who have lost a parent face many problems. Teenagers' feelings are often characterized by sadness that comes and goes and their grief is more fluid and emotional than that of adults (Cohen & Mannarino, 2010). According to Webb, (2010), parents and others may think that adolescents or young children aren't affected by the death of a close person, so they don't connect their bad behavior or emotional pain to the loss. Still, these adolescents rarely get the help they might need to heal emotionally because their caretakers are also going through a hard time (Seifter et al., 2014). An adolescent going through challenges may not be in a position to fully accept themselves.

Autonomy refers to a psychological demand that supports adaptive psychosocial functions. An autonomous person has qualities such as independence, and self-determination, and regulates behavior from within. Being autonomous helps a person to function fully because one has an internal locus of evaluation; one does not depend on others for approval or is easily swayed by external factors/life experiences but rather evaluates self by personal standards (Ryff & Singer, 2015). As adolescents transition from childhood to maturity, their need for autonomy grows. They are, however, dependent on parents for the provision of all their needs including support to develop autonomy in making significant decisions in life. Parent-child relationship plays a significant role in that it provides support for autonomy development. Parents provide autonomy support through the use of behaviors that encourage their children's age-appropriate independence in problem-solving, making choices, and basing actions and decisions on their interests (Cheung et al., 2016).

The death of a parent disrupts the bond between a parent and child (Linkiewich et al., 2021; Lubenko & Sebre, 2010). When an adolescent loses a parent, the absence of one parent hurts

them more because as one transit from childhood to adulthood, people go through a lot of changes which can make them feel both lost and excited about new things. Adolescents have to make hard decisions about their sexuality, friends, alcohol and drug use, romantic interests, schoolwork, and how they look (Draper & Hancock, 2011) and need close guidance from their parents. When the remaining parent remarries, parental tasks are prone to change as well as a family culture which plays a role in determining a child's loyalty to the parent.

Several researchers have shown a link between delinquency in adolescents and traumatic events like parental death and family reorganization (Cohen & Mannarino, 2004; Draper & Hancock, 2011). Brown in his study, however, indicated that depression is not caused by the loss itself, but by factors related to the loss, such as the presence of other negative economic and social effects after loss, as well as the quality of parental care available after the death of a parent (Pravitha & Sembian, 2011). The current study, therefore, focused on examining how loyalty binds, parental tasks, and family culture in a reconstituted family after the remaining biological parent remarry influence the psychological wellness among bereaved adolescents.

Many cultures and religions want widows and widowers to get married again. Like many other cultures, Agikuyu often chose a match for a widow, who was usually a member of the family of the person who died. A widower, on the other hand, could choose a new partner from within the family or from other clans (Edward & Whiting, 2004). A study involving Caucasian, African-American, Asian, and Latino/Latina indicated that in modern American communities, a widow or widower's decision to remarry is heavily influenced by their economic and biological situation as well as their mental health as indicated in the study by Perry-Fraser and Fraser, (2017). The study also indicated that it is usually up to the widow or widower to decide if they want to get married again. In other words, widows and widowers

who are young, emotionally stable, and poor are more likely to remarry than those who are older, emotionally unstable, and wealthy (Perry-Fraser & Fraser, 2017).

Reconstituting a family changes the structure of the family as well as its members. Most of the time, bereaved adolescents don't get to choose their step-parents when their surviving parent decides to remarry and in the end, they become part of a blended family (Riches & Dawson, 2010). Adolescents who have lost a parent must compete with step-siblings for the attention of their surviving biological parents as well as their step-parents. Also, they compare the step-parent to the deceased parent and the current family to the family that used to be there (Behere et al., 2017). In the book by Bernardi et al, (2018), the authors focused on European lone families and the studies indicated that bereaved children who live in mixed households will have mental, social, and physical problems as adults. In blended families, parents have trouble getting along, which affects the children and especially those in their teenage (Biank & Werner-Lin, 2011). Adolescents who don't get along with their step-parents have neurotic depression, severe anxiety, and long-lasting depression as indicated in Illinois' study conducted at Lincoln Prairie Behavioral Health Center (LPBHC) by Behere et al, (2017). However, the bereaved adolescents may be affected in both good and bad ways by the surviving parent's remarriage. Most of the time, a new spouse is chosen to keep the family structure the same. But this doesn't always happen because not every couple is a perfect fit. Studies on bereaved children such as the study conducted in Allegheny County (metropolitan Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania by Brent et al. (2012), have shown that the effects of a parent's death on development are linked to how well the child and parent are doing and how well the family stays together (Brent et al. 2012). In a controlled study of women who lost their mothers before age 11, only those with bad relationships with their stepmothers went on to have psychological problems. In addition, the women who were bereaved at a later age had

more severe and long-lasting anxiety than women who had lost a parent as a child and had good relationships with their stepmothers (Biank & Werner-Lin, 2011). The study found that remarrying the other parent to replace a parent who has died could help or hurt bereaved teens, depending on how well the family works.

The 2015 Kenya National Adolescents and Youth Survey showed that some of the health problems young people in Kiambu County face are mental health issues, drug, and substance abuse, and sexually transmitted diseases. Peer pressure, family problems, and cooperation between drug dealers and police are thought to have caused these problems (National Council for Population and Development [NCPD], 2017). Some of these problems may have resulted as a result of the absence or diminished parental care associated with parental death. The actual number of annual deaths and nature of deaths that takes place in Kiambu County and that could result in child neglect are not readily available. However, in Kiambu County, there are many deaths of young adults with young families. The major causes of such deaths include road accidents, lifestyle diseases, alcoholism, suicide, and murder (Manyara, 2013; Matheka et al. 2015; Mukinda, 2017; Republic of Kenya: Ministry of Health [RKMH], 2015). Another cause of death in Kiambu County is maternal death. In 2011/2012, the ratio of maternal deaths in Kiambu County was 111 deaths in 100,000. The causes of maternal deaths were hemorrhage and health conditions exacerbated by pregnancy (Muchemi et al., 2012). These data indicate that children in Kiambu County are getting parentally bereaved leading to a possibility of remarriage after spousal death.

Blended families, which can happen when a spouse dies and one decides to remarry, could be a source of family conflict for the adolescents in Kiambu County. Since several studies have focused on the effects of parental death on teenagers and the effects of remarriage on

children, a knowledge gap exists in understanding how widow/widower remarriage influences the psychological well-being of parentally bereaved adolescents.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Psychological well-being is a core determinant of mental health. It refers to inter- and intra-individual levels of positive functioning that can include one's relatedness with others and self-referent attitudes that include one's sense of mastery and personal growth. Changes in life resulting from parental death have significant implication on the surviving spouse and the bereaved children. When a widower/widow decides to remarry, the dynamics of a nuclear family change. The remaining spouse and the children have to deal with grief and adjustment in the reconstituted family. A parentally bereaved adolescent face more challenges in that they depend on a parent who is also dealing with spousal loss and figuring out who they are in the new relationship. In addition, when a widow or widower decides to remarry, the children of the late spouse are often brought along as a "package" (Gunga, 2009; Philip et al. 2015). Also, they might have an opinion about who should replace a parent who has died, or they might not want a replacement at all. Since they don't have a say in whether or not they should have a step-parent or when, and they don't have much of a say in who that step-parent should be, such adolescents are likely to go through a lot of psychological distress which lowers their psychological well-being (Gunga, 2009). Reconstituting a nuclear family structure through remarriage after a person has lost a spouse often leads to ambiguity in parenting tasks (Bretn et al., 2012; Canary & Canary, 2013), family culture (Bergman & Hanson, 2017; Schlomer et al., 2011), and may lead to loyalty binds (Furrow & Palmer, 2007). Family reconstitution resulting from the death of one parent and inclusion of step-parent may have implication on autonomy development and self-acceptance among bereaved adolescents. Little has been done to find out how remarriage affects bereaved adolescents'

psychological well-being. The current study, therefore, focused on examining how remarriage influences the psychological well-being of parentally bereaved adolescents.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study purposed to examine the influence of remarriage on psychological well-being among bereaved adolescents living in blended family. The study assessed bereaved adolescents' levels of autonomy and self-acceptance, and how loyalty binds, family culture, and parenting tasks related with their psychological well-being.

1.4 Study Objectives

To define the focus of the study, the researcher focused on three specific objectives as indicated;

1. To examine how loyalty binds influence parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological well-being in Kiambu County.
2. To explore how parenting tasks influence parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological well-being in Kiambu County
3. To determine the influence of family culture on the parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological wellbeing in Kiambu County.

1.5 Study Null Hypotheses

The researcher formulated null hypothesis stating that there was no relationship between Psychological well-being and the individual independent variables (Loyalty binds, family culture and parenting tasks). The researcher hypothesized that the observable differences were just a chance of occurrence. A p-value less than 0.05 (typically ≤ 0.05) is statistically significant to reject the null hypotheses.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between loyalty binds and psychological well-being of parentally bereaved adolescents in Kiambu County.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between parenting tasks and psychological well-being of parentally bereaved adolescents in Kiambu County.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between family culture and psychological well-being of parentally bereaved adolescents in Kiambu County.

1.6 Justification of the Study

Past studies have primarily focused on elucidating the implications of parental deaths on adolescents while others have focused on the implication of family reconstitution on adolescents. More research is required whereby the association between widow/widower remarriage and parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological well-being is examined together. The findings of this study contribute to filling this gap in the literature. The study findings indicate the status of psychological well-being among parentally bereaved adolescents and the nature of family culture, loyalty binds, and parenting tasks within reconstituted families. Also, the study findings indicate the importance of psychological support for members of a blended family to address issues precipitated by spousal/parental loss to death. Lastly, the study findings have yielded information essential in guiding counseling approaches for enhancing parenting tasks, and family culture, and reducing loyalty binds in reconstituted families.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study focused on examining how remarriage influences psychological well-being among parentally bereaved adolescents. The study focused on two indicators of psychological well-being; autonomy and self-acceptance and three independent variables; loyalty binds, family

culture, and parenting tasks. A total of 142 participants comprising of 132 bereaved adolescents (aged between 10-19 years) and ten key informants including, two clergies, three social workers, and five foster parents caring for parentally bereaved adolescents, participated in the study. All participants were recruited from Kiambu County in Kenya.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

Researchers in the past have demonstrated that different factors contribute to adolescents' psychological well-being. For the sake of study feasibility the researcher only focused on a few factors including the relationship between parenting tasks, family culture, and loyalty binds in reconstituted family and the parentally bereaved adolescent's psychological well-being indicated by levels of autonomy and self-acceptance. Other factors such as communication, parental monitoring, boundary management, conflict, and similar variables that have been shown to affect adolescents' psychological well-being were not put into consideration. Although the study had initially intended to conduct interviews and three focus group discussions, challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic hindered the plan and only one virtual FGD was conducted. The study was limited to recruiting participants only from Kiambu County due to time and financial constraints.

1.9 Delimitation of the Study

The study aimed to examine the influence of widow/widower's remarriage on the parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological-wellbeing. Nevertheless, the researcher was not limited to enrolling only parentally bereaved adolescents. Other study informants were adults including clergies, social workers working in orphanages, and custodians of parentally bereaved adolescents. The study was also not limited to enrolling participants from a small village or an orphanage but covered the entire county of Kiambu to allow diversity among

participants. Lastly, the study was not limited to collecting one type of data because it adopted a mixed method of data collection obtaining both qualitative and quantitative data.

1.10 The significance of the study

The current study is of enormous significance in that it contributed to the area of study involving the psychological well-being of parentally bereaved adolescents in reconstituted families. The study findings inform counseling psychologists on issues that are unique to parentally bereaved adolescents and that impact their psychological wellness. The study informed on how levels of autonomy and self-acceptance among bereaved adolescents relate to parenting tasks, loyalty binds, and family culture. The findings also highlighted the significance of conducting more studies focusing on related factors in the area of study involving parentally bereaved adolescents.

1.11 Assumptions of the Study

The study relied on subjective information collected through self-report questionnaires and focus group discussions. The researcher, therefore, made assumptions that the participants' responses were accurate and sincere. The researcher also assumed that despite the sensitivity of the information the study focused on collecting, the study participants would be willing to respond to the study questions. Lastly, the researcher had assumed that the guardians would be willing to consent on behalf of the underage participants (10-17 years old) who were ineligible to consent.

1.12 Operational Definition of Key Terms and Study Variables

Adolescents	:	A child in the age bracket of between 10 and 19 years.
Bereavement	:	The loss resulting from the death of a parent or spouse.
Grief	:	The experience an adolescent or parent goes through after losing a parent or a spouse respectively to death.
Autonomy	:	The state of an adolescent being self-governing or having the ability to make decisions independently of external control from peers and being overly controlled by parents and other authorities.
Self-Acceptance	:	An adolescent's ability to accept all of his/her attributes and life situations; positive or negative.
Family Culture	:	An aggregate of attitudes, ideas, ideals, and environment, unique to a blended family.
Loyalty Binds	:	A perceived tension of an adolescent child's loyalty between deceased parent and step-parent. When an adolescent feels compelled to show affection to one deserving relationship (stepmother/father) at the cost of "real" or "imagined" betrayal, or being disloyal to the deserving deceased father/mother relationship.
Parenting Task	:	The act of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional,

social, financial, and intellectual development of an adolescent within a blended family

Remarriage : The union of a widower/widow with another partner who is single, separated, divorced, or widowed.

Blended/reconstituted family: A family formed when a widow or widower remarries, and there is the presence of step-parents, step-children, step-siblings, or half-siblings.

Psychological well-being/wellness: A state in which an adolescent in a blended family experiences cognitive, emotional, and spiritual ease combined with positive social relationships.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews earlier studies on how remarriage affects the psychological well-being of parentally bereaved adolescents living in mixed families. Attachment theory and family system theory were explored to give light on factors affecting reconstituted family members. Additionally, a conceptual framework was included to indicate how the independent variable (loyalty binds, parenting tasks, and family culture) influences the dependent variable (Psychological well-being of a parentally bereaved adolescent living in a blended family) as indicated by levels of autonomy and self-acceptance.

Empirical Studies Review

Much on bereavement, widow/widower remarriage, and adolescents' psychological well-being have been unfolded through research. Several researchers have worked on different areas of grief such as; children bereavement (Baloyi, 2014; Coyne & Beckman, 2012; Mannarino & Cohen, 2010), adolescent loss (Brent et al. 2012; Robin & Omar, 2014), and adult bereavement (Kiiru, 2014). Research findings have indicated that bereaved individuals grieve differently because of their developmental level (Coyne & Beckman, 2012), personality, and cultural practices, as well as the nature of death (Nader, 1997). Brent et al. (2012) in their study based in Allegheny County (metropolitan Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania U. S found that bereaved youth exhibited weaker peer attachment, more job problems, less well-developed career plans, and lower educational aspirations. The study also reported that even after correcting for pre-death factors, bereavement affected family climate, offspring tendency, and caregiver functioning and found no correlation between causes of death,

parent's gender, or child's age at parental death (Brent et al., 2012). Coyne and Beckman (2012) in their study based in America found that a child's developmental stage affects their response to parental death. Much has also been done concerning widow/widower remarriage and even the experience of adolescents in blended families (Brent et al. 2012; King et al. 2015; Perry-Fraser & Fraser, 2017). The study by Hollingshaus and Smith, (2015) focusing on adults who got bereaved at an early age in Utah State in the U.S. indicated that early remarriage of widowed parents attenuated the suicide relationship before age 50 among females and significantly exacerbated suicide after age 50 (Hollingshaus & Smith, 2015).

2.2: Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being does not only refer to the absence of physical illness but also includes features of positive psychological functioning such as self-acceptance, autonomy, positive relations with others, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and personal growth (Muqodas et al., 2019). The study focused on two indicators of psychological well-being: autonomy and self-acceptance.

2.2.1: Autonomy and Psychological well-being

Autonomy is a psychological demand that supports adaptive psychosocial functions because it frees one from overly external control or influence (Iqbal & Nishat, 2017; Muqodas et al., 2019). Adolescence age is characterized by a desire to abandon childhood behavior while facing worrisome consequences of adult behaviors (Palmer et al., 2016). Also, adolescents go through biological changes characterized by hormonal and physical changes (Pravitha & Sembiyan, 2014). In other words, teenage involves sorting out a tangle of emotional, moral, physical, and social changes which leads to independence in decision-making and individuation, aspects of autonomy (Riina & McHale, 2014). These changes make adolescents prone to peer pressure as they navigate their lives amidst all the confusion

characteristic of this age. As such, the attribute of autonomy is critical at this age as a prerequisite for appropriate behavior and decision-making among adolescents.

As children transit from childhood to adulthood, they desire to achieve autonomy, specifically gaining independence in decision-making. Naturally, parents tend to overprotect their adolescent children in an attempt to protect them from making harmful decisions and engaging in harmful behaviors (Palmer et al., 2016). However, overprotection hinders adolescents from making discoveries and stunts their confidence making them timid and fearful children (Rathi & Rastogi, 2007). On the other hand, the absence of parental guidance at this critical age makes youths stray and mess up with their future lives (Riches & Dawson, 2010). Autonomy eases an adolescent into braving through and overcoming life challenges by learning how to cope with problems posed by life. Autonomous teenagers have developed confidence, and high self-esteem, and are more capable of making healthy choices. In addition, they pick up family values, social norms, and indispensable life skills that help them thrive in adulthood (Fousiani et al., 2014).

The study by Cheung et al. (2016) involving American and Chinese children and their mothers indicated that parents need to practice autonomy-supportive parenting by creating an autonomy-supportive environment. Essentially, parental practices that encourage autonomy development include getting involved in a child's life but encouraging age-appropriate independence and problem-solving skills, as indicated by Green, (2017) in his book "*Raising human beings: creating a collaborative partnership with your child.*" Parents also need to provide a rational explanation for behavioral expectations and family rules (Cheung et al., 2016). It is also important for parents to label and validate an adolescent's feelings and perspectives, minimize judgment and control, encourage decision-making, and allow teenagers to solve problems with minimal support (Cheung et al., 2016; Green, 2017).

Individual autonomy ranges from very autonomous to one controlled by external circumstances (Brent et al. 2012). An autonomous person is self-congruent and has integrated behavior (Ryan & Huta 2009). According to research based on self-determination theory, low autonomy is defined by a widespread awareness that an individual's behavior is influenced by other factors, especially societal constraints. Also, autonomous conduct predicts beneficial behaviors and events, including creative and satisfying involvement, better vitality and energy, lower stress, and higher general well-being (Weinstein & Ryan, 2011).

The death of a parent disrupts the parent-child bond, which is a considerable risk factor in adolescents' development. This bond remains significant in adolescence because children at this age are still dependent on their parents (Robin & Omar, 2014). Bereaved adolescents whose surviving parent has remarried are more likely to grow up in a family characterized by different parenting styles, strained child-parent relationships, and increased and ambiguous parental roles (Schrodt & Shimkowski, 2013). As such, parentally bereaved adolescents in blended families are likely to react in an inconsiderate way towards role models in their lives and parents may not be fully present in their lives. The study by Robin and Omar, (2014) based in America indicated that bereaved adolescents exhibit psychological defense mechanisms such as denial, regression, self-limiting exposure, and overwhelming emotions (Robin & Omar, 2014). Similarly, the study by Weinstein and Ryan, (2011) based in the United Kingdom indicated that adolescents are likely to be problematic while relating to significant others, especially in a reconstituted family setup (Weinstein & Ryan, 2011). Therefore, parental support of autonomy development among parentally bereaved adolescents can be a bigger task compared to when teenagers are living with both of their biological parents.

A study involving young Spaniards indicated that psychological well-being was associated with self-competence and meaning of life, attributes that indicate autonomy (Garcia et al., 2019). A similar study in the United Kingdom by Inguglia et al. (2015) indicated that autonomy is an essential dimension in shaping the psychological well-being among adolescents and is negatively correlated with self-perceived isolation and loneliness during the adolescent stage (Inguglia et al., 2015). In addition, the study by Schofield et al. (2017) based in the United Kingdom showed that positive social agents and environmental conditions encourage self-determination among adolescents which is a prerequisite to achieving autonomy. In an adverse context, where adolescents experience inequalities or deficiencies concerning significant others, they express an inability to act autonomously which translates to an absence of psychological well-being (Schofield et al. 2017). The study by Guay et al. (2013) used a person-centered approach to analyze teenage autonomy characteristics. The study recruited students from different schools in East Canada and used three autonomy-supporting sources (mothers, fathers, & teachers). The study found low levels of autonomy support from all sources, low levels from fathers, and moderate levels from mothers and teachers. Feng and Lan (2020) found comparable results with 763 family-bereaved 13- to 18-year-old Chinese children. The study found three autonomy support profiles: high parental autonomy support, low teacher autonomy support (n = 34), and high parental autonomy support, high instructor autonomy support (n = 598). Teens lacked behavior and emotional self-regulation, causing psychological suffering. The study by Marbell and Grolnick (2012) involving Ghanaian children indicated that autonomy support was positively related to autonomous forms of motivation, engagement in school, and children's endorsement of collectivist cultural values. The study also indicated that autonomy support was negatively related to depression (Marbell & Grolnick, 2012). A similar study by Wairimu et al. (2016) involving high school students in Kieni West District in Nyeri

indicated that parental support for autonomy development positively correlated with self-esteem among adolescents in high school.

2.2.2: Level of Self Acceptance and Psychological Wellbeing

Self-acceptance refers to an individual's acceptance of all of his/her attributes; positive or negative (Sagone & Caroli, 2014). Self-acceptance is critical to mental health because failure to accept self unconditionally can lead to various emotional difficulties such as uncontrolled anger and depression (Rosenbaum, 2019). Many are the time when people self-evaluate rather than accept themselves unreservedly. Self-evaluating people are very needy and are likely to devote considerable personal resources and attention to self-aggrandizement to compensate for perceived personal deficits (Rosenbaum, 2019). Self-acceptance is important in that it enables one to be willing to let others see one's true self. As such, a self-accepting person lives in the moment and never minds how he/she comes across to others. High scorer of self-acceptance which translates to the presence of psychological well-being possess a positive attitude toward self, feel positive about their past and present life, and accepts multiple aspects of self, including both popular and objectionable qualities. In contrast, the low scorer of self-acceptance feels dissatisfied with self, is disappointed with the past life, wishes to be different, and is dissatisfied with certain personal qualities (Sagone & Caroli, 2014).

Parental death is one of childhood's most devastating events. Loss can impair a bereaved child's basic needs and life course. Parental death threatens self-worth, economic, and social relatedness, and control. As such, bereaved adolescents often struggle with self-acceptance (Palmer et al., 2016; Wolchick et al., 2008). Parental mortality can lead to lower economic resources, less contact with acquaintances and neighbors, more obligations, and less quality time with the remaining parent. This is because the remaining parent has to deal with grief

resulting from spousal loss, financial challenges, new relationships, and additional domestic and occupational duties (Owaa et al., 2015). Such difficulties can damage a parent's ability to financially, socially, psychologically, and spiritually nurture their child (Wolchick et al., 2008). Some research, including Amato and Anthony (2014), link parental death to lower academic attainment and teen school failure (Amato & Anthony, 2014). Parental remarriage may alleviate the financial impact of parental loss by boosting family income (Rosenbaum, 2019). Stepparents without enough money may affect the family's finances (Wolchick et al., 2008).

Bereaved adolescents view themselves based on how their social setting meets their basic needs. Self-system belief systems reflect basic needs satisfaction (Cascio et al., 2016). While people perceive their experiences and memories uniquely, one may make the mistake of assuming that others' evaluations of his/her experiences are objective. As a result, one may mindlessly incorporate others' evaluations of him as truth and this is very common among adolescents. The inability to accept self wholly makes one mindless and behaves the way others think they ought to behave (Modecki et al., 2017). Bereaved adolescents must self-evaluate themselves appropriately irrespective of their changed social context as an important aspect of self-acceptance and improved psychological well-being.

The study by Sagone and Caroli, (2014) involving children in Italy indicated that as compared to girls, boys were more likely to express acceptance of multiple aspects of themselves, including good and bad qualities, and had higher levels of psychological wellness. A similar study by Rimiru and Maroko, (2020) based in Gatanga Murang'a Kenya sought to examine the impact of acceptance of loss on psychological well-being among parentally bereaved adolescents. The findings were that acceptance of parental loss reflected in bereaved adolescents' ability to accept self and enhanced psychological well-being.

2.3 Loyalty Binds and Parentally Bereaved Adolescents' Psychological Well-being

In a stepfamily, the deeply rooted lines of connection lie between children and their parents and not in the step-couple or the stepparent-stepchild. This is because one parent outside the household, alive or dead, remains part of the family. Consequently, step-families can have loyalty issues (Papernow, 2017). Group members may be loyal out of interest in membership, sentiments of commitment, external compulsion, and unconsciously bound obligation to belong. Biological and hereditary kinship determine family loyalty (Furrow & Palmer, 2007).

Reconstituted families aren't alone in facing loyalty issues. Family system theory says they originate from repeated family modifications throughout marriage transition, system rearrangement, and step-family growth. Reconstituted families face four challenges. First, a step-family usually combines two existing families. Past experiences often interfere with a family's new relational obligations. Children feel pushed to "pick sides" as the remarried couple tries to establish a new family identity (Furrow & Palmer, 2007).

Step families must also define family boundaries. Tension builds when remarried couples handle the co-parenting needs of previous spouses and when biological children believe their parent's attention is being directed elsewhere. Therefore, spouses may be stuck between new and old familial ties. Such factors might cause allegiance disputes between parents, step-parents, and their offspring (Furrow & Palmer, 2007).

In addition, blended families inherit a heritage of loss, and the impulse to quickly move on may inhibit past difficulties' resolution. New partners may complement the former spouse's position, but they may also deepen a child's grief over the death and remarriage of a parent. Blended families may have trouble balancing their developmental demands. Adolescent extrusion and parenting disparities are developmental variances. Women bond with

stepchildren more easily than males, according to studies. Mothers are more tender and warm with their children than fathers (Hagan et al., 2012). Blended family members must learn to manage developmental needs that may impair healthy relationships (Furrow & Palmer, 2007).

Some studies such as that by Behere et al., (2017) in Illinois' study conducted at Lincoln Prairie Behavioral Health Center (LPBHC), indicated that adolescents who don't get along with their step-parents have neurotic depression, severe anxiety, and long-lasting depression which translates to the absence of psychological wellbeing. A similar study conducted by Iafrate and Giuliani (2012) examined loyalty conflict, feelings of unfairness, and young adults' individuation difficulties among adolescents in separated and non-separated families in Italy. The study findings indicated that children in blended families perceived loyalty conflict presenting as experiencing parental pressure to side and feeling caught between parents (Iafrate & Giuliani, 2012). Similar findings were reported in the study conducted in the United States by Biank and Werner-Lin, (2011) which indicated that a blended family's parents have trouble getting along, with both step and biological children which diminishes the psychological well-being of such children and especially them in the teenage (Biank & Werner-Lin, 2011).

All in all, studies have indicated that bereaved adolescents may be affected in both good and bad ways by the surviving parent's remarriage. Most of the time, a new spouse is chosen to keep the family structure the same. But this doesn't always happen because not every couple is a perfect fit. Studies on bereaved children have shown that the effects of a parent's death on development are linked to how well the child and parent are doing and how well the family stays together (Brent et al. 2012). In a controlled study of women who lost their mothers before age 11, only those with bad relationships with their stepmothers went on to have

mental health problems. The distress was characterized by depression and more severe and long-lasting anxiety than in women who had lost a parent as a child and had good relationships with their stepmothers (Biank & Werner-Lin, 2011). The study found that remarrying to replace a deceased parent could help or hurt bereaved adolescents depending on how well the family works.

The study in the United States by Schrodts (2006) indicated that some children and teens trust step-parents. The findings pointed out that 522 young adult step-children who had close relationships with their step-fathers and were sure of their concern for them, gave them authority over their lives. Alike findings were reported in the study by Kinniburgh-White et al. (2011) in New Zealand. The results were that step-parents who built positive interactions with their step-children were likely to have a close bond. A similar study by Njoroge, (2017), sought to examine the effect of blended family dynamics on the well-being of children in Kenya. The study findings were that 66.7% of the children living with their stepmothers related closely while 33.3% had a significantly strained relationship with their stepmothers. Another finding was that 64% of the children living with step-fathers related closely while 36% had a strained relationship with their step-fathers.

2.4: Parental Task and Parentally Bereaved Adolescents' Psychological Well-being

As compared to nuclear and single-parent families, the composition of the step-family is, of course, more complicated. The formation of a reconstituted family involves two parties who were in previous marriages or one party was in a previous marriage union and is more likely to change in composition, as compared to other forms of families. For example, a child or children not initially living with their parents may decide at some point to come and live in the step-family; a child already living in the step-family may leave to live with their other

parent or members of the extended family, or grow up and leave home. Half brothers or sisters may be born (Canary & Canary, 2013).

For instance, step-parents must deal with the new position and the alliances with step-children that the spouse and his/her children had before the marriage. Additionally, step-parents often have responsibilities to children of their own. These responsibilities are financial and legal as well as psychological and may limit the step-parents' ability to support their new family in the way they would like. According to a study on blended families, money management is more separate than in nuclear households. In mixed families, spouses prefer separate bank accounts and demonstrate diverse patterns in paying common bills, while in nuclear families, couples generally operate joint accounts and jointly fund expenses (Raijas, 2011).

In some situations, deceased parents leave behind properties presumably to be inherited by their children. At times, a step-parent may feel excluded or unsure about his/her position or what to provide or not provide as a parent to a step-child (Canary & Canary, 2013). Balancing what to offer to every child in a reconstituted family may pose a big challenge. A step-parent in such a setting has relational problems owing to ineffective parenting. When roles in a blended family are unclear, step-parents take a less active role or overcompensate by befriending their stepchildren.

For example, the extended members of a family; grandparents, aunts, or uncles may disapprove or decline to accept the partner with whom a family member is joining to form a blended family (Anyebe et al., 2017).). Such an attitude can add to the strain at a time when the step-family is vulnerable. In some situations, the bereaved spouse only reconsiders remarriage as a result of financial and parenting challenges, as well as to avoid the stigma associated with single parenting (Anyebe et al., 2017). Such intents hinder the smooth

adjustment process of step-parenting. In some cases, children, particularly the eldest and only children, may have had an essential position in their former family and closer than usual relationships with their parents. The introduction of a new adult into the family can alter this relationship as the parent usually turns instead to the new partner for companionship, help, and advice. Consequently, children can react in a variety of ways to such change (Canary & Canary, 2013).

Some of the common examples of folk tales include the Snow-White, Cinderella, and Red Riding Hood (Canary & Canary, 2013). Sigmund Freud and other psychologists hold that such myths are rationalized versions of universally held, but deeply unconscious fantasies (Corey, 2009). Strained relationships occur when a step-child idealizes the step-parent as cruel or when the parent idealizes the child/children as rebellious. In contrast, when a child idealizes the biological parent as the wicked and perceives the step-parent as the savior, and he/she acts so, then the step-relation is likely to be good (Canary & Canary, 2013).

Couples who marry with children from past relationships face greater demands, which can lead to tension and conflict (Furrow & Palmer, 2007). Such pressure is greater when one or both parties have suffered a loss, indicating that the termination of their first relationship wasn't their choice. A widower or widow who remarries may face increased negativity, conflict, and fewer cohesive family relationships (Bretn et al. 2012). Step-parents' parenting roles to step-children are most affected by these negative impacts (Hope & Hodge, 2006).

The study by De-Juanas et al. (2020) involved 216 high school parentally bereaved students in the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades of a high school in Turkey. The study findings indicated that social support in bereaved adolescents was a complete mediating task in the relationship between grief and psychological well-being. The finding showed that a high level of parental support in the loss and mourning process of adolescents and the provision of the essentials of

life assists in coping with grief and positively impacts their psychological well-being (De-Juanas et al., 2020). A similar study by Yu et al., (2022) engaged students from two middle schools based in Fujian province in China. The study sought to examine the role of social support and family functioning during adolescence. The findings were that constant family support predicted high psychological well-being among adolescents even after they had experienced traumatic events such as parental deaths. The study also showed that adolescents experience more psychological well-being in a supportive family setup (Yu et al., 2022). Another study by Sironga (2018) sought to determine the impact of the parent-adolescent relationship on psychological well-being among adolescents living in Dagoretti South in Nairobi. The study findings indicated that there was a positive relationship between parent-adolescent relationships and adolescents' psychological well-being and that the correlation was stronger for the parent-girls relationship as compared to boys (Sironga, 2018).

2.5: Family Culture and Parentally Bereaved Adolescents' Psychological Well-being

A family is a culture-bound phenomenon (Bales & Parsons, 2014) that gives people from birth to maturity membership, belonging, nurture, socialization, economic support, and education (Bales & Parsons, 2014; Canary & Canary, 2013). Every family has a shared concept of who to relate to, how to connect, the significance of clutter, loudness, and expectations within and outside the family. Each family is a distinct microcosm and product of a broad cultural background (Johnson et al., 2013). These specified components of behavior establish parent-child traditions. The significance of relationships changes after a parent's death. The death of one parent forces some children to live with the other parent or with a grandparent, aunt, uncle, sibling, stepmother, stepfather, foster parent, or adoptive parent. Changes in family structure and relationships pose challenges to children of all ages. While children need support for their survival and mental health, the contrary can happen

after death due to changes in family circumstances and culture. For adolescents, this can mean less intimacy with caregivers and new family. Such a reconstitution might lead to uncertainty when a youngster learns new meanings of right ties and family expectations. These experiences can make teenagers have trouble accepting a parent's loss and welcoming new family members causing psychological and emotional distress and an absence of psychological well-being (Bergman & Hanson, 2017).

When a blended family is formed, the participants bring their different cultures that are uncommon among step-relationships. Everyday life is full of big and tiny contrasts. Thus, stepparents and stepchildren must construct new norms, and because of their subordinate nature in the relationship, children are required to compromise more (Schlomer et al., 2011) leading to distress. The loss of a spouse or parent is another problem in blended families. Although new relatives may fill the void, children in blended families may miss their departed parent and previous extended family and their remaining parent also has to deal with the loss of the spouse (Canary & Canary, 2013).

Parental cultural values help comprehend family functioning in terms of parental decision-making, conflict, and a blended family; diverse parenting styles affect stepparent/stepchild relationships (Schwartz et al., 2013). Several aspects dictate whether a reconstituted family successfully blends multiple family cultures. Struggling stepfamilies debate about right and wrong, diminishing mental health (Kinniburgh-White et al., 2011; Schrodt & Shimkowski, 2013). Successful stepfamilies construct a new family culture while honoring stepfamily traditions, habits, and values (Canary & Canary, 2013; Schrodt & Shimkowski, 2013).

The study by Umana-Taylor (2011), sought to examine if familism (collective culture) attenuates psychological distress and involvement in risky behaviors among Mexican adolescents mothers. The study findings were that familism served as a moderator between

risky behaviors and discrimination. Adolescents who reported low levels of discrimination and high levels of familism were engaged in fewer risky behaviors. A similar study by King et al. (2015), sought to examine adolescents' perceptions of family belonging in stepfamilies. The findings pointed out that several factors contributed to adolescents' feeling of belonging and their psychological wellness. Quality of parent-child relationship, holding family events, and communication about every family member's affairs significantly correlated with family belonging and psychological wellness among family members in a reconstituted setup (King et al., 2015).

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Bereavement and blended family research have several theoretical approaches. Attachment theory brings some insights into how family members form attachments, how different attachment types determine how members relate with each other in the family setup, and how they are likely to relate with non-members when the need arises. Family system theory goes ahead to explain how anxiety in families comes about and how to address such anxieties. These two theories were adopted in the study to contribute to the understanding of how psychological wellness can be destabilized or achieved in individuals within reconstituted families involving parentally bereaved adolescents.

2.6.1 Attachment Theory

Psychoanalyst John Bowlby advanced the attachment theory in 1958. According to attachment theorists, the absence of an attachment figure stimulates an intrinsic motivational system that motivates a person to search for the missing person. When the quest is futile, the bereaved person feels sadness and despair (Field & Sundin, 2001). This notion helps explain grief and emotional and behavioral reactions after an attachment figure's death (spouse or parent).

Attachment theory says humans have an inbuilt psychobiological system. The Attachment Behavioral System motivates people to seek out important others/attachment figures when in need (Forslund, 2021; Rholes, & Simpson, 2004). An individual's attachment behavioral system seeks objective and subjective support or protection. From this perspective, a widower/widow or parentally bereaved adolescent attempts to find an attachment figure after the loss. Such an attachment figure replaces the deceased's role in the provision of their different objective and subjective supportive needs. Nevertheless, the psychobiological needs motivating a widower/widow to seek an attachment figure differs from those of adolescents. For instance, a widower/widow finds an intimate attachment figure to satisfy their biological (sexual), financial, emotional, and social needs. On the other hand, a parentally bereaved child or adolescent would only be interested in an attachment figure that will supposedly provide emotional, physical, financial, and social support. Conflict may, therefore, arise if an attachment figure replacement is perceived as inadequate or a threat to the very needs being sought to be met. Such challenges must, thus, be addressed for the family members to maintain psychological equilibrium.

The other perspective held by Attachment theorists is that bereaved individuals respond to a loss depending on the attachment style that has developed in the course of their life. For instance, individuals with a secure attachment style are comfortable with themselves, their limitations, and those of others and can express a wide range of feelings (Obegi & Berant, 2009). Such people are also adaptable, can be dependent on others, and are confident in their capacity to function within close relationships and during separations. Additionally, people with a secure attachment style are comfortable talking about life experiences and can narrate their experiences coherently and appropriately (Field & Sundin, 2001; Forslund, 2021). People with a secure attachment style are, therefore, likely to adjust adequately even in

adverse situations. As such, parentally bereaved adolescents in reconstituted families are likely to experience psychological wellness if they exhibit a secure attachment style.

In contrast, people with insecure attachment styles are generally prone to psychological distress. Particularly, the ambivalent attachment style, which, according to attachment theory, is associated with experiences such as the general sense of insecurity, fear, and abandonment, has been linked to psychological distress (Forslund, 2021; Rholes, & Simpson, 2004). Bereaved adolescents with such an attachment style would, therefore, have an issue with a symbolic attachment figure. Also, they are more likely to be intoxicated by outside forces or internal emotional pressures on how they perceive and relate to symbolic attachment figures. Also, attachment theorist argues that people with ambivalent attachment style have an under-regulated effect and are hyper-vigilant to signs of rejection (Rholes, & Simpson, 2004).

Similarly, such people tend to present frequent and unclear calls of distress to the provider; hence, the provider may harbor feelings of resentment and be overwhelmed (Field & Sundin, 2001). A blended family where some family members have an ambivalent attachment style is likely to end up in a strained relationship (Forslund, 2021; Rholes, & Simpson, 2004). Such strained bonds lead to disequilibrium in psychological well-being among members.

According to attachment theory, psychological distress among parentally bereaved adolescents in reconstituted families can be explained by the concept of disorganized attachment style, which is also a form of insecure attachment style. Adolescents who exhibit such attachment styles have had harmful, hurtful, or terrorizing interactions with their primary caregiver (Field & Sundin, 2001). In this case, the primary caregiver could be the surviving or the deceased parent. Individuals with disorganized attachment are perceived as lacking the ability to regulate their emotions when stressed and tend to express the need for ultimate control when feeling threatened. They also represent great difficulty in making sense

of emotions and understandably communicating them. Moreover, such people learn no reliable strategies for coping or problem-solving, and they cope by keeping emotional reactions to past traumas (Field & Sundin, 2001). Consequently, adolescents who have had such experiences are more likely to have conflicts with the members of the reconstituted family.

Therefore, adolescent/parent attachment remains significant, although attachments to peers tend to emerge and become very important at this stage of development (King et al. 2015; Perry-Fraser & Fraser, 2017). The nature of attachment in a blended family based on parenting tasks, loyalty binds and family culture may impact an adolescent's psychological well-being either positively or negatively.

Bowlby's attachment theory states that how people react to the loss of a loved one depends on how their attachment system was developed. Other attachment theorists claim that early childhood attachment experiences are important for social-personality development but can be changed by later events (Obegi & Berant, 2009). Attachment theory offers a unique approach to securing emotional attachment between bereaved adolescents and their surviving and step-parents. Attachment theory uses an attachment lens essential in conceptualizing family presenting conflict in blended families as they deal with the loss of an attachment figure and develop new attachments. The theory, however, fails to illuminate how conflict can be explained even when attachment figures are present. As a result, the study also adopted the Family system theory to shed more light on sources of family distress.

2.6.2 Family System Theory

Murray Bowen, a psychiatrist founded the Family System Theory in the late 1960s. The model says eight concepts cause family dysfunctionality. They include emotional fusion and self-difference triangles, nuclear family emotional system, marital conflict, family projection process, emotional cut-off, multi-generational transmission, sibling position, and social Regression (Miller et al. 2004; Steijn & Barton, 2020).

Some family members exhibit emotional fusion characterized by enmeshment, where personal boundaries are permeable and unclear. People who have not been individuated have difficulties connecting emotionally even with significant others. The anxiety may be even higher, especially when teenagers are expected to closely relate with a step-parent whom they may not have contributed to their identification. Bowen holds that self-differentiated persons relate well with other family members. This is because a differentiated self can stand as an individual while maintaining emotional engagement with the group (You, 2021). An individuated individual may think about a problem without being drawn to act in a specific manner by others (Miller et al. 2004). This form of attachment is crucial for a blended family's psychological well-being.

Bowen also argues that an emotional system that characterizes all families is a network of interlocking triangles. He, however, holds that very few people in a dyadic relationship have attained a level of differentiation to the extent that they don't require triangulation (Miller et al. 2004; Steijn & Barton, 2020). As such, family members participate in triangles when anxiety buildup up between parties as a means of resolving the conflict. Blended families may experience more anxiety, trying to establish ideal triangulations (Miller et al. 2004). Parentally bereaved adolescents in blended families are, therefore, more likely to express

significant symptoms primarily because of different family traditions and ideals of their former family unit and those of their new family unit.

According to Bowen, conflicts emanate from the system as a whole and not from an individual. He argues that an individual's distress within a family may be caused by Marriage conflict and child dysfunction (Faber, 2004; Miller et al. 2004). As such, the extent of psychological well-being among parentally bereaved adolescents is proportional to the level of tranquility experienced by every member of the family.

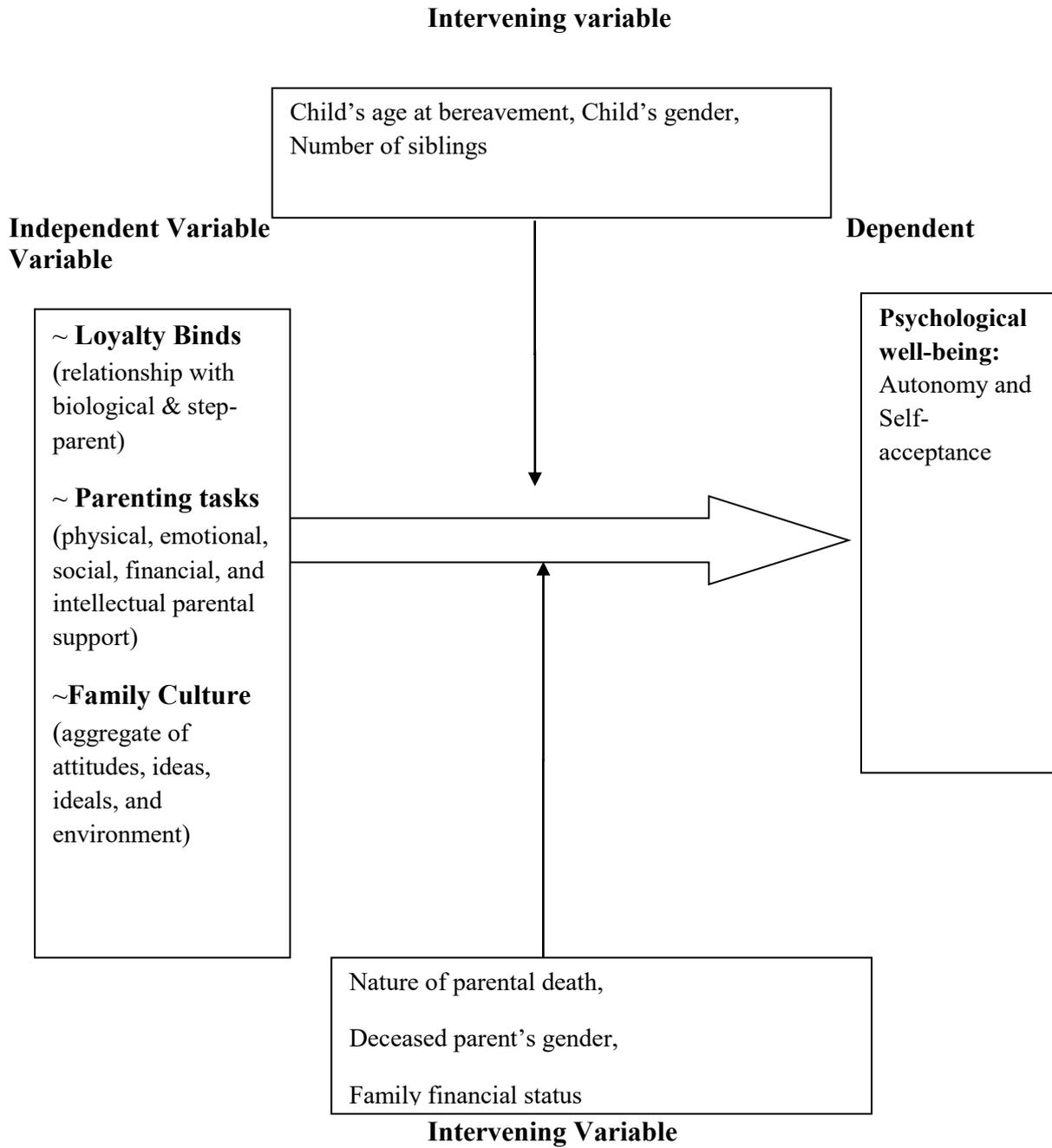
Bowen says sibling position affects personality. Birth order determines how a person relates to parents and siblings (Faber, 2004). Since the triangle is the primary family unit, birth order determines which triangle one grows up in (Faber, 2004; Miller et al. 2004). This may not be the case in a blended or step-family because it's common to find a spouse replacement who is younger than the step-children, especially when a widower remarries a young woman to replace his deceased wife. Also, a widow may end up marrying a person who is very senior or junior in age. In such families, members are more likely to struggle with anxiety when sibling position becomes hard to locate (Faber, 2004). Also, where a couple unites and carries their children into the new union, determining birth order and the position of triangles may create more anxiety. To avoid family regression, real issues within a family system should be addressed adequately (Faber, 2004). Age, gender, authority, power, and privilege can cause conflict in blended families. Gains for one family member might be losses for another, causing competitiveness that can lead to confrontational behavior, threats, promises, or appeasement. Equilibrium requires identifying and resolving such challenges.

From the family system theory, a reconstituted family struggles with complex anxiety, which is a natural product of life. As they struggle with identity formation and family separation, adolescents aspire to be less cohesive and more distinct from the family. The adolescent's

developmental needs conflict with the new step families' need for intimacy and connection. This explains why stepfamilies with teens are less cohesive than first-marriage nuclear families. However, if obstacles inhibiting fusion are overcome in a blended family, members' optimal cohesion level is equivalent to nuclear families (Faber, 2004).

Figure 1.1:

Conceptual Framework



Relationship between variables

Parenting task plays a significant role promoting a child's physical, emotional, social, economic, and intellectual growth from birth to adulthood. As a result parenting tasks improves the psychological well-being of their teen children. Children always experience strained relationship or loyalty binds to their parents when they had a good relationship with the deceased. When an adolescent is required to shift affection to one deserving relationship; step-mother/father at the cost of "real" or "imagined" betrayal or being disloyal to another deserving relationship; deceased father/mother), he/she is more likely to experience low levels of psychological well-being. A family with a well-established aggregate of attitudes, ideas, ideals, and environment, unique to a family are more likely to experience heightened levels of psychological well-being. However, when a nuclear family get reconstituted to accommodate step-parents and siblings, family culture is likely to become ambiguous. As a result adolescents receiving parenting from step-parents are likely to develop psychological distress resulting to low levels of psychological well-being.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the study's design, the population that was used in the study, the sampling method used to recruit the study population, data gathering methods, study instruments, and data processing procedures.

3.2 Research Design

The study utilized descriptive design embracing quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Descriptive research was considered more appropriate because it involves describing, explaining, and interpreting the conditions of the present. The design examines a phenomenon occurring in a specific place and time. Also, it concerns itself with existing practices, relationships, conditions, structures, differences, and held opinions as well as ongoing processes and evident trends. This design was considered appropriate for this research because of its objectivity and neutrality (Picardi & Masick, 2013). As such, the design yielded data that indicated the reality of the situation in question: the influence of remarriage on parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological well-being.

3.3 Study Site

All the study participants were recruited from Kiambu County, which is one of the 47 counties in Kenya. The county is highly populated as indicated by the 2009 Kenya Population and housing projection which was at 2,032,464 people by the end of the year 2017. The projection also indicated that the ratio of males to women was 1:1.02. The urban population in Kiambu County is high and multi-ethnic because of the county's proximity to the capital City (Gicaci, 2015). The county reports many deaths of children bearing age mostly caused

by road accidents, lifestyle diseases, alcoholism, suicide, and murder (Manyara, 2013; Matheka et al. 2015; Mukinda, 2017; RKMH, 2015). Another cause of death in the county is maternal death. In 2011/2012, the ratio of maternal deaths in Kiambu County was 111 deaths in 100,000 (Muchemi et al., 2012).

3.4 Target Population

The study population consisted of 142 participants consisting of 132 bereaved adolescents (aged 10 years to 19 years) and 10 key informants (comprising of 2 clergies, 3 social workers, and 5 guardians of parentally bereaved adolescents). All the study participants were recruited from different sub-counties of Kiambu County (Kabete, Limuru, Kikuyu, Kiambu, Kiambaa, and Ruiru).

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

In Kiambu County, the entire population of bereaved adolescents living in a blended family after the remaining parent has remarried is unknown. To determine the study population, the researcher adopted Andrew Fisher's formula which is recommended for calculating sample size where the actual number of the entire population is missing (Kibucha, 2021). The researcher utilized 80% confidence, 0.5 standard deviations, 5% confidence interval, and 1.28 Z-Score, formulary components that have successfully been used in other similar studies.

$$\text{Sample Size} = \frac{(Z\text{-score})^2 \times \text{StdDev} \times 1\text{-StdDev}}{(\text{Confidence interval})^2}$$

$$\text{Sample Size} = \frac{(1.28)^2 \times 0.5 \times (1 - 0.5)}{(0.05)^2} = \frac{1.6384 \times 0.25}{0.0025}$$

Sample Size = 163.84 approximated at 165 for ease in calculation.

However, the study ended up working with a study population of 142 (132 bereaved adolescents and 10 key informants). Snow-balling sampling technique was used to identify the study population. The researcher approached clergies who gave contacts of parents/guardians of bereaved adolescents in their congregation. The approached clergy also introduced the researcher to other clergies who also assisted in identifying bereaved adolescents in Kiambu County. The researcher considered clergies as more appropriate because they have a close relationship with their congregation and understand family structure among the faithful. The study participants were selected using Snowball sampling. The study adopted snowball sampling because the target demographic is challenging to identify. The researcher approached clergies requesting assistance in identifying reconstituted families with bereaved adolescents in different churches. This initial sample of participants formed the snowball's first wave. The researcher continued to seek referrals for a similar population (adolescents aged 10-19) from the first wave. Some of the referrals were siblings of the first-wave population and schoolmates. The researcher proceeded to request referrals until the study population was obtained. The researcher also requested the guardians and the clergies, and the social workers identified in the process of sampling to participate in the FGD. A total of 2 clergies, 3 social workers, and 5 foster parents agreed to a virtual FGD. One focus group discussion comprising the 10 key informants was successfully conducted.

3.6 Instrumentation

The questionnaires were used by the researcher to gather information. There were four parts to the questionnaire that were meant to measure demographics, independent variables, and dependent variables. Part A sought to find out the participants' background information. Part B collected information on the dependent variable (autonomy and self-acceptance). A modified Ryff psychological well-being scale was used to measure the level of autonomy and

self-acceptance. Part C looked at the effects of loyalty binds using the Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) scale, as well as parenting tasks and family culture using tools that were made just for this purpose. Part D was a guided FGD with clergy, social workers, and foster parents of teens who had lost one of their parents to death, and the remaining parent had remarried.

All the tools apart from the FGD guide were on a Likert scale, and users could choose from a) a) It's usually not true; b) it's sometimes true; c) it's usually true; d) it's almost always or always true. The Likert scale simply measures feelings and thoughts. The 14-item modified Ryff 20-item Psychological Wellbeing Scale and the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) scale by Armsden and Greenberg were both used in the study's questionnaire.

Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being look at six aspects of mental health. They include autonomy, which means being independent and making your own decisions, environmental mastery, which means being able to control your own life, personal growth, which means being open to new experiences, positive relationships with others, which means having good, satisfying relationships, a sense of purpose in life, and self-acceptance, which means having a positive view of yourself and your past lives (Kafka & Kozma, 2002). In this study, the 14-item subscale was revised to 10 items for each construct. The 14-item subscale for autonomy has an alpha of .83 and a correlation with the 20-item parent scale of .97 (Kafka & Kozma, 2002; Neuman, 2007). The 14-item subscale for self-acceptance has an alpha of .91 and a correlation of .99 (Kafka & Kozma, 2002).

The researcher modified the IPPA tool from the initial 75 items by Armsden and Greenberg. It tool has three subscales, each with 25 items, and is used to measure how close teenagers are to their parents and their peers. The Likert scale items in the three composites are all the

same and range from 1 (never true) to 5 (always true). In this study, the researcher compressed the tool into 10 items on each subscale by omitting items that measured closely related facets. These sources say that interpersonal acceptance is made up of several interconnected parts, such as unconditional positive regard, warmth, support, positive evaluations, approval, not being alienated, and behaviors that give people freedom or don't control them Gullone & Robinson, 2005). The study adopted the items testing child/mother and child/father relationship.

The FGD was led by self-structured and open-ended questions that were made to find out how different people felt about how a widower/widow's remarriage affected the psychological wellness of the bereaved adolescents in such reconstituted families. The tool asked people about their concerns about parentally bereaved adolescents and the bereaved spouse, the choice of remarriage after spousal bereavement and where the couple had children, the nature of the parental role in a blended family, the behavior of parentally bereaved teens, the effect of the primary family's culture or way of life on the unity of a blended family, the problems widows and widowers face when they join a blended family, and how parentally be

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Before starting data collecting, the researcher sought ethical approval from Kenya Methodist University research approving body (Kenya Methodist University Scientific Ethics and Review Committee) and from NACOSTI (National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation). Before participating, the adult interviewees were requested to fill out a consent form and for the underage participants (10-17 years old participants), their guardian/parent or institution directors were asked to fill an assent/parental consent form and others consented orally through a phone call. 132 questionnaires were dully filled and returned. Some of the

questionnaires were administered physically and others were sent through email. Ten adults comprising 2 clergies, 3 social workers, and 5 guardians participated in an FGD via zoom meeting.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

According to Kafka & Kozma (2002), data dependability and validity are key. If a measure isn't trustworthy, it can't be valid.

3.8.1 Reliability

To ensure reliability in the study, the researcher administered the same type of questionnaire to all the subjects. A pilot survey was done focusing on five parentally bereaved adolescents. The survey consisted of 54 items and the value for Cronbach's alpha for the survey was α 0.82. The tool was, therefore, considered reliable for the study.

3.8.2 Validity

An instrument is valid if it measures what it was meant to measure and addresses all research topics in content and detail. The researcher ensured that the instruments used in the study were valid and reliable. The study used Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scales. The 14-item subscale for autonomy has internal consistency (alpha) =.83 and correlation with the 20-item parent scale =.97, whereas the 14-item subscale for self-acceptance has alpha =.91 and correlation =.99. (Kafka & Kozma, 2002). Combining surveys with existing data on the influence of grief and parental remarriage on teenagers' psychological wellness increased confidence in the findings. Pre-testing ensured that the research instruments covered the research topics in terms of substance and details. The questionnaire was concise to increase the response rate and reduce ambiguity and time waste. No personal data was collected, which fostered free expression and accurate information sharing.

3.9 The Pilot Phase

Piloting in research involves the administration of the proposed study instrument to a few study participants to identify flaws. Piloting helps in determining if the questions comprising the study tool are clear and whether the participants fully understand the instructions and the questionnaire content. The researcher administered five questionnaires to five study participants and analyzed the responses to find out if their responses indicated conceptualization of the questions. The response turned out to be okay and the researcher administered the remaining questionnaires to other participants. The pilot phase of the study was conducted in Kabete District in Kiambu County. Participants in the district were targeted because of the ease of access by the researcher in terms of transport and communication. Also, the demographic characteristic of the residents was similar to other areas in the county. The researcher ensured that the participants in the pilot study were in the age bracket of 10-19 years. Two males and three females: in high school and college were enrolled in the pilot study. The objective of performing the pilot study was to assess the feasibility of the main study process including determining recruitment rates and retention rates, estimating the resources that would be needed for the main study through assessing challenges related to time and budget, and pilot testing the different data collection instruments.

3.10 Data Analysis and Presentation

The researcher analyzed quantitative data with SPSS 25 and qualitative data thematically using the latent approach. SPSS was used for the following statistical procedures in this study. First, descriptive statistics, including frequencies, cross-tabulation, and descriptive ratio statistics (Mean, Standard deviation, and mode) were done. Secondly, Bivariate statistics comprising the ANOVA, model summary, and regression coefficients were also performed. Tables were used to present findings. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically

using a latent approach. First, the researchers identified common themes from the responses and afterward inferred the underlying meaning of every theme that was identified.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

The activities of the research were guided by various ethical guidelines. First, the researcher sought authorization from Kenya Methodist University (KEMU) SERC and NACOSTI (National Commission for Science. Secondly, the researcher sought participants' consent by explaining to all study participants and their parents/guardians what the research entailed and what participation required. In addition, the participants were informed that anonymity of their identity would be ensured by withholding their names, contacts, or any information that would have revealed their identity.

Participants were also assured of confidentiality in that the information they gave was held with utmost confidentiality as is the requirement in data collection. The participants were also assured of non-maleficence in that the researcher ensured that the study procedures did not cause any damage to the participants' psychological, emotional, spiritual, or physical well-being. Nevertheless, since the proposed study involved obtaining delicate details about the participants' lives, the researcher debriefed a few participants who presented with emotional turmoil after participating in the study.

The researcher also adhered to the principle of beneficence by formulating the study topic in such a way it targeted to close a gap in the area of study. Additionally, the researcher collected data using tools that were valid and reliable to ensure that the obtained data lead to findings that added value to the research field. The participants were informed that the study's benefit was likely to accrue for years in the future and not necessarily immediately. That way, the researcher remained truthful to the participants who wished to benefit directly from the study findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The chapter presents study findings on the influence of remarriage on parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological well-being in Kiambu County, Kenya.

The Study Objectives were:

1. To examine how loyalty binds influence parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological well-being in Kiambu County.
2. To explore how parenting task influence parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological well-being in Kiambu County.
3. To determine the influence of family culture on the parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological well-being in Kiambu County.

4.2 Response Rate

The targeted study sample was 165 and only 142 responded to the prompts and participated in the study successfully. The 142 participants comprised of 132 parentally bereaved adolescents in blended families and 10 key informants (clergies, social workers, and guardians of parentally bereaved adolescents), participated in the study. This was a response rate of 86% and was considered sufficient for data analysis. The response rate was as depicted in table 4.1.

Table 4.1:
Response Rate

Response Rate	Frequency	Percentage
Reponses Receive	142	86%
Non-responses	23	14%
Total	165	100%

Out of the 165 respondents who were issued with a questionnaire and engaged in FGD, only 142 managed to adequately respond to the prompts. The study response rate was therefore, 86% and was considered sufficient for analysis because according to O’Sullivan and Rassel (2016) a response rate of 50% is adequate for data analysis.

4.3: Demographic Findings

The study sought to ascertain the demographic outline of the bereaved adolescents who participated in the study. The demographic characteristics that were assessed included: gender, age of bereavement, period before remarriage, and gender of deceased parent. The findings were as indicated in tables 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5:

4.3.1 Gender of Respondents (Adolescents)

The study participants were asked to indicate their gender and the findings were as presented in table 4.2:

Table 4.2
Distribution by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Females (Adolescents)	78	54.9%
Males (Adolescents)	54	38.1%
Males (Clergy)	2	1.4%
Females (Social Workers)	2	1.4%
Males (Social Workers)	1	0.7%
Female (Guardians)	4	2.8%
Male (Guardians)	1	0.7%
Total	142	100%

The findings indicate that 54.9% of the participants who successfully responded to questionnaires were female parentally bereaved adolescents, 38.1% were male parentally bereaved adolescents, 1.4% were male clergies, 1.4% were female social workers, 0.7% were male social workers, 2.8% were female guardians, and 0.7% were male guardians.

4.3.2: Age of Bereavement

The respondents were asked to indicate the age at which they were bereaved and the findings were as indicated in table 4.3:

Table 4.3
Age of Bereavement

Age of bereavement	Frequency	Percentage
0-5 years	63	48%
6-10 years	41	31%
11-15 years	27	20%
Above 16 years	1	1%
Total	132	100%

Table 4.3 indicates that the majority 63 (48%) of the adolescents participating in the study were bereaved at the age of 0-5 years, 41(31%) were bereaved at the age bracket of 6-10 years, 27 (20%), were bereaved while in the age bracket of 11-15 years, and one participant (1%) lost one parent to death when he had attained the age of 16 years. The study findings implied that more parentally bereaved adolescents had lost a parent to death at an early age as compared to those who had lost a parent at a later age. The study also implied that irrespective of the number of years the adolescents were in bereavement, they were still not well adjusted and reported low levels of psychological wellness as indicated by scores on autonomy and self-acceptance. The study findings were similar to the research findings by Draper and Hancock (2011) which indicated that the loss of a parent at an early age is detrimental because children are solely dependent on their parent (especially a mother) for their survival (Draper & Hancock, 2011). Similar findings from the study by Brent et al. (2012) indicated that bereaved adolescents evidenced lower competence in peer relations, education aspiration, career planning, and work, outcomes that were unrelated to age at the time of parental death, cause of death or gender of the deceased parent (Brent et al., 2012).

4.3.3: Period before Parental Remarriage

The adolescents participating in the study were asked to indicate the period between which their remaining parent took before remarrying. The findings were as indicated in table 4.4.

Table 4.4*Period before remarriage*

Period before Re-marriage	Frequency	Percentage
0-3 years	92	70%
4- 6years	26	20%
7-9 years	9	7%
10-12 years	4	3%
13-15 years	1	1%
Total	132	100%

Table 4.4 indicates that the majority 92 (70%) of the bereaved adolescents' surviving parents remarried within a period of 3 years of their bereavement, 26 (20%) remarried within a period of 4-6 years of their widowhood, 9 (7%) of the respondents' parents remarried within 7-9 years of their bereavement, 4 (3%) and 1(1%) of the adolescent's parents remarried with a period of 10-12 and 13-15 years of their bereavement respectively. On average, most widows/widowers (70%) remarry within three years and a very small percentage (1%) of widows/widowers remarry after a decade of their widowhood. The study findings suggest that widow/widower remarriage shortly after spousal death had a relationship with levels of psychological well-being among bereaved adolescents in reconstituted families. The findings correspond to the study findings by Riches and Dawson, (2010). The study indicated that early remarriage after spousal death may intensify loss when children feel as if they have also lost the remaining parent to the step-parent and that the feelings complicate children's grief process (Riches & Dawson, 2010). A similar study indicated that early remarriage of widowed parents attenuated the suicide relationship before age 50 among female adults bereaved at an early age and significantly exacerbated suicide after age 50 (Seifter et al., 2014).

4.3.4 Gender of Deceased Parent

The adolescents participating in the study were asked to indicate the gender of their deceased parent. The findings were as indicated in table 4.5:

Table 4.5
Distribution by Gender of Deceased Parent

Period before Re-marriage	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Mother	92	69.7%
Father	40	30.3%
Total	132	100%

Table 4.5 shows that most of the bereaved adolescents recruited in study 92 (69.7%) had lost their biological mother to death and that the remaining 40 (30.3%) had lost a father to death. The findings imply that there could be a higher mortality rate for women as compared to males in Kiambu County. The findings could be supported by statistics that indicated high mortality rates in Kiambu County during child birth as indicated by a ratio of 111 deaths in 100,000 (Muchemi et al., 2012). The findings could also imply that more widowers consider remarriage as compared to widows. This finding is supported by the study findings which indicated that widowers remarry mostly within the first two years of losing a spouse and that the major reason for remarriage is to seek a partner who would help in child rearing (Seifter et al., 2014).

4.4 Adolescent Psychological Functioning

The study measured two indicators of the participants' psychological wellness; autonomy and self-acceptance. Means and standard deviations for the measures of autonomy and self-acceptance were presented in tables 4.6 (autonomy) and 4.7 (self-acceptance) respectively:

4.4.1 Levels of Autonomy.

The study used a modified Ryff psychological wellbeing measure to assess teenagers' autonomy, a psychological wellbeing construct. The tool measured teens' agreement with autonomy-related statements. The tool was a Likert-scale where participants choose on a scale of 1-6 options from strongly disagree (1.49 and below), Moderately disagree (1.5-2.49), Slightly disagree (2.5-3.49), Slightly agree (3.5-4.49), Moderately agree (4.5-5.49), and Strongly agreed (5.5 and above). Before analyzing data, negative worded items (denoted by R) were reverse scored. On a scale of 1 to 6, (1.49 and below) indicated minimal autonomy and (5.5 and above) indicated high autonomy. Table 4.6 shows the results

Table 4.6
Level of Autonomy

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev	Mode
Sometimes, I change the way I act or think to be more like those around me.	2.13	0.984	2
I am not afraid to voice my opinions (share my thoughts), even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most	2.77	1.132	2
I tend to worry about what other people think of me (R)	2.59	0.753	3
Being happy with myself is more important to me than having others approve of me.	2.64	0.974	3
My parents rarely talk me into doing things I don't want to do	2.72	0.952	2
It is more important to me to "fit in" with others than to stand alone on my principles. (R)	2.54	0.911	2
I have confidence in my opinions (beliefs), even if they are contrary (opposing) to the general consensus (agreement).	1.94	0.906	2
It's difficult for me to voice my opinions on controversial matters (likely to cause disagreement). (R)	2.49	0.961	2
I am concerned about how other people evaluate the choices I have made in my life (R)	2.52	0.927	2
I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important.	2.35	0.762	2
<u>Average Score</u>	<u>2.47</u>		<u>2</u>

The findings presented in table 4.6 indicate that the adolescents scored low on levels of autonomy with the highest score of 2.77 (slightly disagree) with a standard deviation of 1.132 and the lowest score of 1.94 (moderately disagree) with a standard deviation of 0.906. The average all items' score was 2.47 (moderately disagree), average all items' standard deviation of 0.926, and all items' average mode of 2. The findings as indicated by the mode, mean, and standard deviation implied that bereaved adolescents in blended families present with low

levels of autonomy and this translates to low levels of psychological well-being. The observation on low autonomy support system among the parentally bereaved adolescents was espoused in the verbatim from the FGD participants.

`A good number of bereaved adolescents join friends with unacceptable characters such as alcoholism.

Participant PP01: Compared with my children, it is hard to identify the emotions expressed by my two nephews.

Participant PP04: When widowers/widows remarry, they shift their attention from the children they had with their deceased wives/husband.

Participant PP06: Couples in reconstituted families should exercise caution while relating with their stepchildren because they will never replace the deceased.

Participant PP02: I don't allow my grandchildren to relate with their stepmother and father; they decided to live their lives.

The verbatim indicated strained or absence of parent/child relationships leading to inability to offer support for autonomy development among the parentally bereaved adolescents.

The findings implied that bereaved adolescents in blended families expressed low levels of autonomy. The study findings were similar to the findings of the research by Marbell and Grolnick (2012) which indicated that autonomy support was negatively related to depression and positively related to autonomous forms of motivation, engagement in school, and children's endorsement of collectivist cultural values. It is obvious from the FGD that participants' advocated aloofness among members of a blended family denying parents a chance to instill a culture of autonomy in their children. A similar study by Wairimu et al. (2016) involving high school students in Kieni West District in Nyeri indicated that parental support for autonomy development positively correlated with self-esteem among adolescents in high school. In line with the results of Guay et al. (2013), the study demonstrated three

unique patterns of autonomy support in adolescents: low levels of autonomy support from fathers, moderate levels of autonomy support from mothers and teachers, and low levels of autonomy support on all sources. Comparable results were found in research including 763 family-bereaved teenagers between the ages of 13 and 18 conducted by Feng and Lan, (2020). The findings showed that there were three distinct patterns of parental and educator support for student autonomy. These patterns were high parental autonomy support and low educator support (n = 34), low parental autonomy support and high educator support (n = 131), and high parental autonomy support and high educator support (n = 598).

4.4.2 Level of Self-Acceptance

The study adopted a modified Ryff psychological wellbeing tool to measure the level of self-acceptance among the bereaved adolescents. The responses to the statements indicated the social, physical, conduct, and achievement aspects of self-worth among the adolescents. The statements were rated in form of a Likert-scale where the participants chose one category ranging from strongly disagree (1.49 and below), Moderately disagree (1.5-2.49), Slightly disagree (2.5-3.49), Slightly agree (3.5-4.49), Moderately agree (4.5-5.49), and Strongly agreed (5.5 and above). Before analyzing data, negative worded items (denoted by R) were reverse scored. The study findings were as indicated in table 4.7.

Table 4.7
Level of Self-Acceptance

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev	Mode
When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out	2.36	1.078	2
I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have. (R)	2.13	1.149	1
Given the opportunity, there are many things about myself that I would change (R)	2.51	1.037	2
I like most aspects of my personality (how I behave	2.50	1.102	2
I made some mistakes in the past, but I feel that all in all everything has worked out for the best	2.43	1.086	2
In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life (R)	2.42	1.049	2
For the most part, I am proud of whom I am and the life I lead	2.45	0.999	2
Many days I wake up feeling discouraged about how I have lived my life (R)	2.41	0.908	2
The past had its ups and downs, but in general, I wouldn't want to change it.	2.36	0.990	2
When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am	2.42	1.085	2
<u>Average score</u>	<u>2.40</u>		<u>2</u>

The study findings as indicated in table 4.7 showed that the adolescents scored low on all indicators of self-acceptance and that the highest scored indicator of self acceptance had a mean score of 2.51 (slightly disagree) with a standard deviation of 1.037 and the lowest scored indicator of self-acceptance had a mean score of 2.13 (moderately disagree) with a standard deviation of 1.149. The mode score in all indicators was 2. The average mean score in all items was 2.40 (moderately disagree) with a standard deviation of 1.048. The findings

imply that the bereaved adolescents in blended families exhibited low sense of self-worth which translates to diminished psychological wellbeing. The findings on low levels of self-worth among the parentally bereaved adolescents in restructured families were further expressed in the verbatim from the FGDs.

Participant PP10: Some parents genuinely offer their best to support their step children, but they end up getting frustrated because these children express animosity.

Participant PP09/PP07: It is sad that the church has tried to offer financial and social support to some bereaved teens but majority end up abusing drugs.

Participant PP06: I feel distressed when I see most bereaved adolescents have to be forced to focus on their studies and end up missing an opportunity to improve their future lives.

Participant PP09: I earnestly pray to God to help bereaved children who become alcoholic and promiscuous at very early age when their age mates pursue their academic path.

Participant PP01/PP09/PP06: `Its common to find bereaved adolescents complain about their status even when they seem to be doing better than other children whose parents hardly provide for their needs.

The verbatim from the participants indicated that adolescents don't consider themselves worthy recipient of support from different sources, an indication of a form of withdrawal and an inability to accept self and anything else. The findings imply that adolescents in blended family express low self-worth which contributes to lessened levels of psychological wellbeing. The results corroborate those of a study by Bretn et al. (2012) that found that bereaved young people experienced greater employment challenges, peer attachment issues, and educational desire reductions. After controlling for the influence of pre-death variables,

the study found that the consequences of grief were most typically arbitrated through their effects on parental and caregiver functioning and family atmosphere.

4.5: Loyalty Binds and Parentally Bereaved Adolescents' Psychological Wellbeing

One of the study's objectives was to assess how loyalty binds between the parentally bereaved adolescents and their parents in a blended family affected the psychological wellness of the adolescents. The study adopted a modified Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) tool to test how adolescents related with the parents. The statements indicating loyalty binds asked how the adolescents felt about their biological mother or Step-mother/ biological father or step-father in the blended family setup. The tool was in form of a Likert-scale of 5 where the participants chose one category ranging from a) Almost never true or never true (1.49 and below); b) not very often true (1.5-2.49); c) sometimes true (2.5-3.49); d) often true (3.5-4.49); e) almost always or always true (4.5 and above). Responses to negatively worded items (denoted by R) were reverse-scored before data was analyzed. The findings were as indicated in table 4.8:

Table 4.8
Loyalty Binds and Adolescents' Psychological wellbeing

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev	Mode
My mother respects my feelings and accepts me as I am	2.23	0.729	2
I wish I had a different mother (R)	2.23	0.972	2
I like to get my mother's point of view on things I'm concerned about	2.30	1.026	2
Talking over my problem with my mother makes me feel ashamed (R)	2.28	0.935	2
My mother expects too much from me	2.25	0.944	2
When we discuss things, my mother cares about my point of view	2.18	0.915	2
My mother has her own problem so I don't bother her with mine	2.19	0.942	2
My mother helps me to understand myself better	2.14	0.914	2
I can count on my mother when I need to get something off my chest	2.15	0.961	2
If my mother knows something is bothering me, she asks me about it	2.30	0.996	2
My father respects my feelings and accepts me as I am	2.56	0.758	2
I wish I had a different father. (R)	2.14	1.012	2
I like to get my father's point of view on things I'm concerned about.	2.35	0.899	2
Talking over my problems with my father makes me feel ashamed (R)	2.27	0.974	2
My father expects too much from me. (R)	2.21	0.955	2
When we discuss things, my father cares about my point of view.	2.16	0.907	2
My father has his own problem so I don't bother him with mine	2.11	0.913	2
My father helps me to understand myself better	2.17	0.969	2
I can count on my father when I need to get something off my chest	2.10	0.898	2
If my father knows something is bothering me, he asks me about it	2.08	0.989	2

The observation on low loyalty binds between adolescents and parents in a blended family was backed in the verbatim from FGD.

Participant PP01/PP03/PP06: A widower should surrender the custody of their children to the deceased wife's extended family members.

Participant PP05: A man should not support his step-children at the expense of his biological children.

Participant PP04: A widower should not remarry because the step mother will only come to distance him from his children and take their inheritance.

Participant PP03/PP8: When a widower remarries, his focus will get split between his children and the family of his wife.

Participant PP01/PP03/PP07: Widows should not remarry because the children will suffer under the care of their step fathers and children will lose their fathers' inheritance, voiced by many of the participants.

The verbatim indicated a rejection of step-parents and any new member in a reconstituted family, an attitude that contributed to strained relationships between parentally bereaved adolescents and their parents in a blended family.

The study findings as indicated in table 4.8 that the adolescents in the study scored low in all indicators of loyalty binds between them and their parents. The lowest-scored indicator of loyalty binds had a mean score of 2.08 (not very often true) with a standard deviation of 0.989 while the highest-scored item had a mean score of 2.56 (sometimes true) with a

standard deviation of 0.758. The average mean score for all indicators of loyalty binds was 2.22 (not very often true) with a standard deviation of 0.934 and a mode of 2.

The findings imply that the relationship between bereaved step-children and remaining parents or their step-parents is strained. The findings are similar to the past survey findings which indicated reluctance of the bereaved children in accepting discipline or punishment from their step-parent and teens unfavorably comparing their step-parents with the deceased parents (Draper & Hancock, 2011). Another study indicated that tension builds up when the biological children feel like the privilege of attention by their biological parent is being focused elsewhere (Furrow & Palmer, 2007).

Other studies have indicated opposing findings. The study by Kinniburgh-White et al. (2011) showed that step-parents who created relationships that their step-children saw as characterized by positive regard, were likely to develop a close step-parent/step-child relationship. Such findings support the supposition that the replacement of a deceased parent through remarriage of the remaining parent can be productive or counter-reproductive to the bereaved adolescents depending on the family functionality. The quality of the relationship with family members, particularly with parents, is a significant determinant of psychological well-being in adolescents (Rathi & Rastogi, 2007).

4.5: Parenting Task and Parentally Bereaved Adolescents' Psychological Well-being

The study examined how parental task influences psychological wellness. The study adopted a tailor made tool to capture indications of execution of parental roles to their children. The statements indicating parenting task asked how the parents were involved in the adolescents' lives. The tool was in form of a Likert-scale where the participants chose one category ranging from (1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree. The findings were as presented in table 4.9:

Table 4.9
Parenting Task and Adolescents' Psychological Well-being

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev	Mode
I live happily with my parents under the same roof	2.64	1.225	3
My parents ensure that they treat all my siblings without favoritism	2.27	0.883	2
My parents provide for my needs (clothing and food) to their level best	2.46	0.894	2
Most of my interactions with my parent are conflicting and associated with a state of anxiety.	2.86	0.966	3
My parents encourage me to study hard	2.80	0.886	3
My parents check my school work often	2.96	0.894	3
My parents make me feel guilty when I perform poorly in school	2.44	0.927	2
I discuss with my parents about my feelings	2.63	0.886	3
My parents talk sternly (firmly) when I do something they disapprove	2.73	0.987	3
We often celebrate birthdays and have fun together as a family	2.93	0.793	3
<u>Average Score</u>	<u>2.67</u>		<u>3</u>

Uncertainty in executing parental role to parentally bereaved adolescents in a blended family is backed in the verbatim from the FGD participants.

Participant PP07/PP09: Majority of parentally bereaved adolescents in blended families are deprived of parental love and have lost meaning in life. As a result, majority of them exhibit deviant behaviors such as, alcoholism, stealing, prostitution, others get withdrawn, some show desperation and a few achieve in life.

Participant PP01: In-laws fight for the custody of the bereaved children because it is obvious that the step-parents never have good intention of taking care of them, verbalized a foster parent and social worker.

Participant PP04: God forbid but if I lost my wife to death, I cannot remarry because step-mothers will never take care of another woman's child.

The table indicates that the highest mean score was 2.96 (sometimes true) with a standard deviation of 0.894 and the lowest mean score of 2.27 (not often very true) and a standard deviation of 0.883. The means score for all items was low at 2.67 (sometimes true) and a mode of 3. The findings indicate that participants felt that their parents were not fully involved in parenting. The findings imply that parents in reconstituted families score low in executing their parental role in such setups. The study findings are similar to results from the study by Anyebe et al. (2017) which indicated that extended family members play a part in hindering successful adjustment process of the step-family when they disapprove or decline to accept the partner with whom a family member is joining to form a blended family (Anyebe et al., 2017). Also studies have indicated that inability to execute parental role in blended families uniting as a result of bereavement is partly connected to stigmatization resulting from myths and folk tales that depict such unions as cruel and unhappy (Canary & Canary, 2013). Myths surrounding step-parenting hinder cohesion among members of a blended family and have adverse effects is most apparent for step-parents' parental roles to their step-children (Hope & Hodge, 2016).

4.5 Family culture and Parentally Bereaved Adolescents' Psychological Wellbeing

Another objective in the study was to determine the influence of family culture on parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological wellbeing. The study adopted a tailor made tool to capture elements indicating structured family culture. The statements indicating structured

family culture asked how the adolescents related with parents and siblings in the family. The tool was in form of a Likert-scale of 5 where the participants chose one category ranging from strongly disagree (1.49 and below) (2) disagree (1.5-2.49) (3) not sure (2.5-3.49) (4) agree (3.5-4.49) (5) strongly agree (4.5 and above). The findings were as depicted in table 4.10:

Table 4.10
Family Culture and Psychological wellbeing

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev	Mode
My parent's value my ideas but they always question them.	2.58	0.900	2
In my family we are allowed to interact with non-members freely.	2.89	1.134	3
I often spend time with both of my parents and enjoy their company.	2.38	1.088	2
In our family we often talk about topics like politics and religion where some persons disagree with others.	2.21	0.791	2
Every member of our family has some say in family decisions.	2.20	0.769	2
My parents allow me to challenge their ideas and beliefs	2.31	0.802	3
Getting my ideas across is important, even if others don't like them	2.62	0.852	3
Every person in our family mind about each others' affairs	2.80	0.789	3
The best way to stay out of trouble with my parents is to keep away from them.	2.95	0.999	2
We often celebrate birthdays and have fun together as a family	2.29	1.000	<u>2</u>
<u>Average Score</u>	<u>2.29</u>		

Table 4.10 indicates that the highest scored indicator of family culture had a mean score of 2.95 (not sure) with a standard deviation of 0.999, and the lowest scored item indicating family culture had a mean score of 2.20 (disagree) with a standard deviation of 0.769. The

average mean score of all items was low at 2.29 (disagree) with a standard deviation of 0.912 and the average mode for all items was 2. The study findings indicate that participants scored low on family culture dynamics that govern a family's life and healthy routine, an indication of low levels of psychological wellness. The findings from the FGD verbatim created a similar impression:

Participant PP05: Widowers who remarry pretend to love their bereaved children but in reality they don't, men favor children of the woman they live with.

Participant PP01/PP07: Step-mothers give plastic acceptance to the bereaved adolescents and are likely to hurt them in the end.

Participant PP10: It is difficult reconciling members of a blended family especially where bereaved children are present.

The verbatim indicated disharmony among family members and a perceived disunity in a reconstituted family. The findings imply that blended families comprising of bereaved members have less defined dynamics which bind a family in tackling daily activities, solve common problems, achieve common goals, and relate with each other. These findings are similar to the findings that indicated that family obligation values as important elements in development of positive emotional well-being and motivation in high school learners (Chung et al., 2007). Similarly, the study by Kinniburgh-White et al. (2011) and that by Schrodts and Shimkowski, (2013) indicated that struggling stepfamilies often argue over what is right and wrong, and overly diminishes the psychological wellness among its members (Kinniburgh-White et al., 2011; Schrodts & Shimkowski, 2013).

4.6: Inferential Analysis

The research conducted inferential analysis to draw conclusions, make generalizations, predictions, and estimations based on data from samples. The study conducted inferential statistics such as Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), multivariate regression equation, and model summary.

4.6.1: ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

The analysis of Variance (ANOVA) involved computing data to yield information about levels of variability within regression model. The information formed a basis of significance of the overall regression model. The findings were as indicated in table 4.12:

Table 4.12
ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1					
Regression	22.889	4	5.722	12.34	.000 ^b
Residual	.000	127	.000		
Total	22.889	131			

a. Dependent Variable: PSYW

b. Predictors: (Constant) LYF, LYM, PT, FC.

The F column provides a statistic for ascertaining the hypothesis that all $\beta \neq 0$ against the null hypothesis that $\beta = 0$. Table 4.12 indicates that the significant value in the sig. column is an infinite number approximated at .0000 which is less than the sig. value of .05. The findings imply that the regression model was statistically significant in predicting how loyalty bind, family culture, and parenting task in a blended family influenced the parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological wellness.

4.6.2: Multivariate Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was performed to give an estimate of the relationship between independent variables (parental loyalty binds, parenting task, and family culture) and the dependent variable (parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological wellbeing). The findings were indicated in table 4.13:

Table 4.13
Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig./P
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	5.504	.897		7.032	0.000
LYM	.481	.276	.426	4524140.046	.025
LYF	.104	.105	.454	4795278.855	.031
FC	.342	.206	.340	3204857.056	.010
PT	.264	.136	.481	4547359.152	.013

The beta coefficient value of.481 and the p-value of.025<.05 in Table 4.13 demonstrate a strong positive and significant correlation between the psychological wellness and loyalty binds to mother figure in the blended family among teenagers who have lost a parent. Similarly, the beta coefficient value of.104 and the p-value of.031<.05 suggest a strong positive and significant link between the psychological well-being of parentally bereaved teenagers and loyalty binds to the father figure in the blended family. The table also shows that there is a correlation between the beta coefficient value of.342 and the p-value of.010<.05, indicating a positive association between family culture and the psychological wellness of parentally bereaved adolescents. The beta coefficient value of.264 and the p-

value of $0.013 < 0.05$ show a positive relationship between parenting tasks after parental loss and the teenagers' psychological well-being.

Table 4.14
Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Method and Criteria	Remark
H₁ : There is no significant relationship between loyalty binds and psychological well-being of parentally bereaved adolescents in Kiambu County	Multivariate regression analysis ($P=0.025 < 0.05$ & $0.031 < 0.05$)	Reject Null Hypothesis
H₂ : There is no significant relationship between parenting task and psychological well-being of parentally bereaved adolescents in Kiambu County.	Multivariate regression analysis ($P=0.010 < 0.05$)	Reject Null Hypothesis
H₃ : There is no significant relationship between family culture and psychological well-being of parentally bereaved adolescents in Kiambu County.	Multivariate regression analysis ($P=0.013 < 0.05$)	Reject Null Hypothesis

The results indicate that all three alternative hypotheses are correct, while the three null hypotheses are rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between Loyalty binds, Family culture, and Parenting task and psychological wellbeing of parentally bereaved adolescents.

4.6.3: Model Summary

The study's importance was evaluated with the use of model summaries to determine the extent to which independent variables contribute to the variation in bereaved teenagers' psychological wellness (Loyalty binds, Family culture & Parenting task). By calculating the F-statistic, the researcher tested if all of the coefficients in the model were statistically significant, and by calculating the R² (or adjusted R²), the researcher demonstrated how

much of the variance in bereaved adolescents' psychological wellness was explained by all of the independent variables (Loyalty binds, Family culture, and Parenting task) taken together. Table 4.11 displays the results.

Table 4.11
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.589 ^a	.347	.312	.41623

Predictors: Loyalty Binds, Family Culture, Parenting Task,

Table 4.11 indicates that the R-value is .589. The R-value represents the simple relationship between the dependent variable (parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological wellbeing) and independent variables (Loyalty bind, Family culture & Parenting task). In this case, the R²-value is .347 indicating that only 34.7% of the parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological wellbeing in Kiambu County can be explained using the three independent variables. The remaining 65.3% variation in parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological wellbeing can be explained by other variables not considered in the current study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1: Introduction

This chapter presents summary of findings of the study seeking to examine the influence of remarriage on parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological wellness. The chapter also gives the conclusions and recommendations.

5.2: Summary of Findings

5.2.1: Demographic Findings

The study findings were that adolescents/ children get bereaved at different ages and that although the adolescents had been bereaved at different ages, they all indicated low levels of psychological well-being. The study also indicated that the majority of widows/widowers remarried within 3 years of their bereavement and a small percentage remarried within 10 years of their bereavement, an indication that remarriage shortly after spousal death, translated to compromised psychological well-being among bereaved adolescents in reconstituted families. Another indication was that more widowers considered remarriage as compared to widows and that there were more maternal deaths as compared to paternal deaths in the county.

5.2.2: Psychological Wellness among Bereaved Adolescents

The study revealed that on average bereaved adolescents scored low (mean score of 2.47) on the autonomy parameter of psychological well-being and the self-acceptance parameter (mean 2.36). A low level of autonomy and self-acceptance among bereaved adolescents was also evident from FGD's responses where participants advocated for aloofness between bereaved adolescents and their parents in reconstituted families.

5.2.5: Loyalty Bind and Parentally Bereaved Adolescent's Psychological Wellness

The findings imply that the relationship between bereaved adolescents and remaining parents or their step-parents was strained. Further, the study indicated that bereaved adolescents related much more closely with their mother figure (mean score of 2.23) as compared to how they related with their father figure (mean score of 2.19) within a blended family setup. These findings mirrored FGD's findings where it became apparent that society still holds myths discouraging widower/widow remarriages and step-parent relationships. The inferential statistics indicated a strong positive and significant correlation between the psychological wellness and loyalty binds to a mother figure in the blended family among teenagers who have lost a parent with a beta coefficient value of .481 and a p-value of $.025 < .05$. Also there was a strong positive and significant correlation between the psychological wellness and loyalty binds to a father figure in the blended family among teenagers who have lost a parent with a beta coefficient value of .104 and the p-value of $.031 < .05$.

5.2.3: Parental Task and Parentally Bereaved Adolescents' Psychological Well-being

The study indicated that parents in reconstituted families with parentally bereaved adolescents did not execute parental roles adequately as indicated by a low mean score of 2.64. The FGD responses had similar findings where it was apparent that society discouraged close relationships between bereaved adolescents and their parents in a blended family. Inferential statistics indicated a positive relationship between parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological wellness and parenting tasks (beta coefficient value of .264 and a p-value of $.013 < 0.05$).

5.2.4: Family Culture and Parentally Bereaved Adolescents' Psychological Well-being

The study indicated that blended families with parentally bereaved members have less defined dynamics as indicated by a mean score of 2.29. Findings from FGD also gave a

strong indication of undefined culture in blended families disapproving a close relationship between bereaved adolescents and their parents in a restructured family. The inferential statistics indicated that a positive relationship between parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological wellness and family culture existed (beta coefficient value of .342 and a p-value of $.010 < .05$). Also, the model was statistically significant in predicting that loyalty binds, parenting tasks, and family culture influenced psychological wellness among parentally bereaved adolescents. The null hypotheses were rejected because data from regression analysis indicated a strong positive and significant association between the parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological wellness and loyalty binds, family culture, and parenting tasks.

5.3 Conclusions

The study revealed that bereaved adolescents whose parents had remarried expressed low levels of psychological wellness. The three independent variables (Loyalty binds, parental task, and family culture) used in the study could only explain 34.7% of the parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological well-being in Kiambu County. This indicated that other factors can explain the remaining 65.3% variation in parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological well-being. Findings indicated the presence of loyalty binds in a reconstituted family involving parentally bereaved adolescents corresponds to low psychological wellness among the adolescents. The study findings also indicated that the consequences of ambivalent parental tasks are low psychological well-being among parentally bereaved adolescents in reconstituted families.

Another finding was that undefined family culture relates to low psychological well-being among parentally bereaved adolescents in reconstituted families.

This understanding calls for practicable and acceptable interventions aimed at enhancing the relationship between parentally bereaved children and their remaining parent/stepparent to promote psychological well-being among such family members.

5.4 Recommendations

The study makes the following recommendations;

5.4.1 Recommendation to Psychologists

1. The study findings point out that loyalty binds do exist in the relationship between parentally bereaved adolescents and their surviving parents as well as with step-parents. Psychologists need to use the findings as a guide in creating interventions in the school, religious institutions, community, and home aimed at increasing a healthy relationship between parentally bereaved adolescents and their parents in a reconstituted family setup.
2. The findings also indicate reduced parental tasks towards parentally bereaved adolescents. Psychologists should use the findings to guide in creating interventions in the school, religious institutions, communities, and homes, aimed at reducing ambiguity in parenting parentally bereaved adolescents and other siblings (step and half) in a reconstituted family setup.
3. Findings indicate characteristics of undefined culture in a blended family involving parentally bereaved adolescents. Psychologists need to use the information as a guide in creating interventions in the school, religious institutions, community, and home aimed at assisting members of a blended family to create a family culture that reduces conflict between parentally bereaved adolescents and their parents.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Studies

To complement the findings of this study, more research needs to be done focusing on other factors that influence bereaved psychological well-being among parentally bereaved adolescents in blended families. More studies need to be done under topics such as:

- a). A comparative study on parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological well-being before and after family reconstitution through marriage.
- b). A comparative study on family functioning before and after reconstitution through marriage and their implication on parentally bereaved adolescents' psychological well-being.
- c). A similar study incorporating more aspects of psychological wellness beyond autonomy and self-acceptance.

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Appendix I: Data Collection Tools

Section A1: Demographic Questions

1. What is your Gender? _____
2. How old were you when your parent passed on? _____
3. How old were you when your remaining biological parent remarried? _____
4. Which of your parent passed away? Father Mother (tick appropriately)

Section B1: Psychological Wellbeing (Autonomy)

1. Sometimes I change the way I act or think to be more like those around me.
*1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree*
2. I am not afraid to voice my opinions (share my thoughts), even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people.
*1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree*
3. I tend to worry about what other people think of me.
*1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree*
4. Being happy with myself is more important to me than having others approve of me.
*1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree*
5. My parents rarely talk me into doing things I don't want to do.
*1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree*
6. It is more important to me to "fit in" with others than to stand alone on my principles.
*1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree*

7. I have confidence in my opinions (beliefs), even if they are contrary (opposing) to the general consensus (agreement).

*1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree*

8. It's difficult for me to voice my own opinions on controversial matters (likely to cause disagreement).

*1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree*

9. I am concerned about how other people evaluate the choices I have made in my life.

*1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree*

10. I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important.

*1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree*

Section B2: Psychological Wellbeing (Self-acceptance)

1. When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out.

*1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree*

2. I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have.

*1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree*

3. Given the opportunity, there are many things about myself that I would change.

*1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree*

4. I like most aspects of my personality (how I behave).

*1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree*

5. I made some mistakes in the past, but I feel that all in all everything has worked out for the best.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree

4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree

6. In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree

4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree

7. For the most part, I am proud of whom I am and the life I lead.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree

4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree

8. Many days I wake up feeling discouraged about how I have lived my life.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree

4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree

9. The past had its ups and downs, but in general, I wouldn't want to change it.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree

4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree

10. When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Moderately disagree 3. Slightly disagree

4. Slightly agree 5. Moderately agree 6. Strongly agree

Section C1: Loyalty Binds

Part I (Mother)

- 1) My mother respects my feelings and accepts me as I am.
 - a) *Almost never true or never true; b) not very often true; c) sometimes true; d) often true; e) almost always or always true*
- 2) I wish I had a different mother.
 - a. *Almost never true or never true; b) not very often true; c) sometimes true; d) often true; e) almost always or always true*
- 3) I like to get my mother's point of view on things I'm concerned about.
 - a) *Almost never true or never true; b) not very often true; c) sometimes true; d) often true; e) almost always or always true*
- 4) Talking over my problems with my mother makes me feel ashamed or foolish. a)
Almost never true or never true; b) not very often true; c) sometimes true; d) often true; e) almost always or always true
- 5) My mother expects too much from me. a) *Almost never true or never true; b) not very often true; c) sometimes true; d) often true; e) almost always or always true*
- 6) When we discuss things, my mother cares about my point of view. a) *Almost never true or never true; b) not very often true; c) sometimes true; d) often true; e) almost always or always true*
- 7) My mother has her own problem so I don't bother her with mine. a) *Almost never true or never true; b) not very often true; c) sometimes true; d) often true; e) almost always or always true*

- 8) My mother helps me to understand myself better. a) *Almost never true or never true;*
b) *not very often true;* c) *sometimes true;* d) *often true;* e) *almost always or always true*
- 9) I can count on my mother when I need to get something off my chest/ share an issue bothering me.
a) *Almost never true or never true;* b) *not very often true;* c) *sometimes true;* d) *often true;* e) *almost always or always true*
- 10) If my mother knows something is bothering me, she asks me about it.
a) *Almost never true or never true;* b) *not very often true;* c) *sometimes true;* d) *often true;* e) *almost always or always true*

Part II (father)

- 11) My father respects my feelings and accepts me as I am.
a. *Almost never true or never true;* b) *not very often true;* c) *sometimes true;* d) *often true;* e) *almost always or always true*
- 12) I wish I had a different father.
a. *Almost never true or never true;* b) *not very often true;* c) *sometimes true;* d) *often true;* e) *almost always or always true*
- 13) I like to get my father's point of view on things I'm concerned about.
a) *Almost never true or never true;* b) *not very often true;* c) *sometimes true;* d) *often true;* e) *almost always or always true*
- 14) Talking over my problems with my father makes me feel ashamed or foolish.
a) *Almost never true or never true;* b) *not very often true;* c) *sometimes true;* d) *often true;* e) *almost always or always true*
- 15) My father expects too much from me.

a) *Almost never true or never true; b) not very often true; c) sometimes true; d) often true; e) almost always or always true*

16) When we discuss things, my father cares about my point of view.

a) *Almost never true or never true; b) not very often true; c) sometimes true; d) often true; e) almost always or always true*

b)

17) My father has his own problem so I don't bother him with mine.

a) *Almost never true or never true; b) not very often true; c) sometimes true; d) often true; e) almost always or always true*

18) My father helps me to understand myself better.

a) *Almost never true or never true; b) not very often true; c) sometimes true; d) often true; e) Almost always or always true*

19) I can count on my father when I need to get something off my chest/ share an issue bothering me.

a) *Almost never true or never true; b) not very often true; c) sometimes true; d) often true; e) almost always or always true*

20) If my father knows something is bothering me, he asks me about it.

a) *Almost never true or never true; b) not very often true; c) sometimes true; d) often true; e) almost always or always true*

Section C2: Parenting Task

1. I live happily with my parents under the same roof. (1) *strongly disagree* (2) *disagree* (3) *not sure* (4) *agree* (5) *strongly agree*.

2. My parents ensure that they treat all my siblings without favoritism. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree. (1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*
3. My parents provide for my needs (clothing and food) to their level best. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*
4. Most of my interactions with my parent are conflicting and associated with a state of anxiety. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*
5. My parents encourage me to study hard. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*
6. My parents check my school work often. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*
7. My parents make me feel guilty when I perform poorly in school. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*
8. I discuss with my parents about my feelings. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*
9. My parents talk sternly (firmly) when I do something they disapprove. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*
10. We often celebrate birthdays and have fun together as a family. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*

Section C3: Family Culture Tool

1. My parent's value my ideas but they always question them. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*
2. In my family we are allowed to interact with non-members freely. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*

3. I often spend time with both of my parents and enjoy their company. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*
4. In our family we often talk about topics like politics and religion where some persons disagree with others. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*
5. Every member of our family has some say in family decisions. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*
6. My parents allow me to challenge their ideas and beliefs. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*
7. Getting my ideas across is important, even if others don't like them. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*
8. Every person in our family mind about each others' affairs. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*
9. The best way to stay out of trouble with my parents is to keep away from them. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*
10. We often celebrate birthdays and have fun together as a family. *(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) not sure (4) agree (5) strongly agree.*

Appendix II: Focused Group Discussion Questionnaire

1. Please explain what concerns come to your mind when you hear a person known to you has lost a spouse through death?
2. From your point of view, should a widow/widower with children remarry? Explain your answer.
3. From your point of view, what parental role should be played by parents to their children in a blended family?
4. What are the unique challenges faced by widows/widowers and their children after forming a reconstituted family?
5. Citing well versed examples, how do parentally bereaved adolescents relate with the others in the society?

Appendix III: Informed Consent Form

Name: Margaret M. Muchiri

Institution: Kenya Methodist University

Project: Thesis

I am from Kenya Methodist University and am asking you to be in a research study. We do research studies to learn more about how the world works and why people act the way they do. In this study, I want to learn about the *Influence of Remarriage on Psychological Wellbeing of Bereaved Adolescents*.

What I am asking you to do

I would like to ask you to take about 40 minutes to answer questions about yourself. A list of questions will be given to you; you can skip any question if it makes you uncomfortable.

Do you have to be in this study?

It's not a must that you participate in this study. You are free to make a choice. You can say no now or you can even change your mind later. No one will be upset with you if you decide not to be in this study.

Will being in this study hurt or help me in any way?

Being in this study will cause you no harm. There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. It will hopefully help us learn more about how young people are affected when their surviving parent gets married after one biological parent has died. The study findings will however be useful in advising young people and their parents/guardians on how to maximize their happiness in such families.

What will you do with information about me?

I will be very careful to keep your answers to the survey questions private. Before and after the study I will keep all information I collect about you locked up.

If you want to stop doing the study, contact Margaret Muchiri at 0721-229597 or murikommu@yahoo.com. If you choose to stop before we are finished, any answers you already gave will be destroyed. There is no penalty for stopping. If you decide that you don't want your materials in the study but you already turned them in, just inform Margaret Muchiri.

If you have questions about the study, contact:

Margaret M. Muchiri

0721-229597

murikommu@yahoo.com

If you have questions about your rights in the study, contact:

Kenya Methodist University

Phone number:

Email address:

Agreement:

By signing this form, I agree to be in the research study described above.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

You will receive a copy of this form.

Appendix IV: Area of Study
CONSTITUENCIES IN KIAMBU COUNTY



Appendix V: Ethical Clearance KEMU



KENYA METHODIST UNIVERSITY

PO 00 BOX 267 MERU) 60200, KENYA

TEL: 254-064-30301/31229/30367/31171

FAX: 254-64-30162

EMAIL: serc@kemu.ac.ke

September 9 2021

KeMU/SERC/MCP/46/2021

Margaret Muriko Muchiri
Kenya Methodist University

Dear Margaret,

SUBJECT: INFLUENCE OF REMARRIAGE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING OF PARENTALLY BEREAVED ADOLESCENTS IN KIAMBU COUNTY

This is to inform you that Kenya Methodist University Scientific Ethics and Review Committee has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is KeMU /SERC/MCP/46/2021. The approval period is 9th September 2021 -9th September 2022.

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 Kenya Methodist University Scientific Ethics and Review committee.
- 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 KeMU SERC 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 KeMU SERC 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 an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to KeMU SERC.

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 also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. B. WAMACHI
Chair, SERC

The image shows a circular blue ink stamp from KeMU SERC University. The stamp contains the text 'KEMU SERC UNIVERSITY' around the top edge and 'P.O. BOX 287 - 60200, MERU' around the bottom edge. A handwritten signature in blue ink is written across the stamp. Below the signature, the name 'Dr. B. WAMACHI' and the title 'Chair, SERC' are printed in bold black text.

Appendix VI: Nacosti Research Permit



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

Ref No: **202098**

Date of Issue **27/September 2021**

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Ms.. MARGARET MURIKO MUCHIRI of Kenya Methodist University, has been licensed to conduct research in Kiambu on the topic: Influence of Remarriage on Psychological Wellbeing of Parentally Bereaved Adolescents in Kiambu County for the period ending : 27/September/2022.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/21/13073**

202098

Applicant Identification Number

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

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