

Strategies for Enhancing the Quality of Family Relationships Among Students from Blended Families in Selected Private Universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya

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Accepted: 14 May 2026 || Published: 01 June 2026

Abstract

Blended families, which arise from divorce and remarriage, present complex and unique challenges that ultimately affect the pillars of a quality family relationship: emotional support, communication, family cohesion, and conflict resolution. This study examines strategies that enhance the quality of family relationships among students from blended families at selected private universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was used, with data collected from 380 students aged 18–35 at four selected universities using multistage sampling. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire completed by students. Findings from the study revealed several key strategies that can help build and maintain a healthy family relationship, led by open and respectful communication at 35%, love and emotional support at 31.88%, quality family time together at 28.44%, equity and fairness at 19%, conflict resolution (14.96%), and lastly collaboration between family members (10.2%). Additionally, spiritual and moral practices, such as praying together and shared activities, were noted as helpful (6.5%). In addition, Professional counseling was identified as another key strategy, with 90.49% of respondents agreeing that it's relevant. Overall, this finding clearly highlights the importance of intentional practices, structured interventions, and parental modelling in strengthening blended family relationships. The findings underscore that family structure alone does not determine relationship quality, highlighting the need for deliberate, targeted efforts, collaborative problem-solving, and emotional support to build family cohesion, resilience, and trust among blended-family members.

Keywords: *Blended families, family relationships, communication strategies, emotional support, conflict resolution, family counselling, university students, Nairobi, Kenya*

How to Cite: Gachira, J. N., Wamathai, A. N., & Githui, P. (2026). Strategies for Enhancing the Quality of Family Relationships Among Students from Blended Families in Selected Private Universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya. *Journal of Sociology, Psychology and Religious Studies*, 6(3), 19-32.

1. Introduction

Family serves as the primary source for socialization, human development, and emotional nurturance. Across the two families, blended families represent a very significant part of these variations. Miller (2023) defines blended families as those that form when couples marry and bring along children from their previous relationships, thus creating a complex structure of stepfamily members. This structure often originates from divorce, the death of a partner, or separation (Ganong & Coleman, 2017).

In such a structure, the quality of family relationships often depends on different factors such as open communication, ability to adapt to the new structure, and emotional support (Travers, 2021). While a significant number of these blended families successfully navigate the challenges of integration, others struggle with key issues such as role negotiation, identity formation, and boundary setting (Ganong et al., 2017). For university students and other students at institutions of higher education in the critical developmental stage of emerging adulthood, family relationships continue to play a key role in their overall well-being and academic success. These students often face unique and complex challenges compared to their peers raised in non-blended families, mainly the challenges of adapting to the new family structure and bonding with step-family members.

Despite different studies carried out focusing on identifying various strategies that can help improve family relationships, including shared activities, open communication, and family therapy, there is little empirical evidence that focuses on specific strategies that are most relevant and effective in the cultural context of Kenya, where respect for hierarchy, strong family bonds, and extended family involvement are valued. Additionally, university students' perspectives on enhancing blended family relationships remain underexplored. Without this insight, educators, families, counsellors, and policymakers are ill-equipped to provide the targeted support needed to foster students' well-being and the healthy functioning of families. This study thus seeks to bridge this gap by examining strategies to enhance the quality of blended-family relations among students at selected private universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

1.1 Problem Statement

Blended families worldwide face complex challenges that affect communication, emotional support, family cohesion, and conflict resolution. Among university students, who are also navigating the challenges of transitioning to adulthood, managing complex family dynamics is particularly significant. Despite the existing literature identifying strategies to improve family relationships in blended families, such as shared activities, open communication, conflict resolution, and family cohesion, very few studies develop effective strategies relevant to Kenya's cultural context.

In Kenya, where extended family relationships, respect for hierarchy, and family bond are valued, the dynamics in blended families may differ when compared to those from a Western context, the steps of integrating the different step-parents and step siblings into a functional family unit can be very challenging when existing cultural norms focus on traditional family structure and discourage remarriages and divorces (Nduati et al., 2020). The perspectives of university students on how to effectively enhance the quality of family relationships also remain highly underexplored, despite their being part of these families and having first-hand experience of its influence.

Additionally, students' perspectives on how to strengthen blended-family relationships remain underexplored. Most existing studies either targeted adolescents or focused on Western culture, leaving a gap in understanding the strategies relevant to young adults in the Kenyan cultural context. A lack of this population-targeted, context-specific understanding leaves different stakeholders, including parents, educators, and policymakers, ill-equipped to address the challenges faced in this family structure.

Insufficient empirical evidence from existing studies on the same issue further suggests that the interventions used are often based on assumptions rather than factual data. Accordingly, this study seeks to address this gap by examining the strategies that university students from blended families in Nairobi City County, Kenya, perceive as effective for improving the quality of family relationships.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine relevant strategies that, when applied, can enhance the quality of family relationships among students from selected private universities in Nairobi City County. Specifically, it seeks to identify the strategies students perceive as effective for enhancing relationships among members of blended families.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Open Communication

Open communication is important for improving the quality of relationships among university students from blended families, as it fosters family cohesion and trust. Findings from existing research also show that well-structured, intentional, and targeted communication among blended families, including frequent family meetings, helps foster a safe, supportive environment in which family members can express their concerns, feelings, and fears (Kariuki & Wambui, 2021). When parents, mostly step-parents in these families, advocate for open dialogue and listening and show empathy, they are successful in creating blended families with fewer issues, as the children feel a sense of security and belonging. (Brown & Stone, 2020). 'Families that allow their children to freely and openly express themselves are always better positioned to resolve problems and achieve a constructive outcome. (Kiura et al., 2020). In addition, strategies such as targeted education programs that focus on open and effective communication significantly improve family trust, cohesion, and satisfaction (Gyuris et al., 2020; Krejčová et al., 2023).

Additionally, beyond enhancing family cohesion, open and effective communication is crucial for establishing family roles and expectations, especially in blended families. It's worth noting that family restructuring often creates significant confusion for both parents and children, particularly regarding discipline, authority, and emotional boundaries. Research carried out by Ganong and Coleman (2017) on family systems viewpoints highlights the important role of communication in role definition and boundary negotiation, enabling both stepchildren and step-parents to establish and maintain overlapping expectations.

Open and effective communication in families, whether blended or non-blended, helps build a strong family bond and a sense of identity among its members, improving psychological safety and reducing ambiguity. By affirming children's experiences and engaging in supportive, open family dialogues, the likelihood of building a long, trust-based relationship with step-parents is high (Sanner et al., 2018). Existing studies focused on adolescents, with the findings mostly

showing that those who experience open communication in their families often experience a higher level of self-esteem and lower anxiety when compared to those raised in restrictive families (Wagner et al., 2025). This shows that communication patterns directly impact both relational satisfaction and individual psychological outcomes.

The timing and frequency of open communication are also important. Adequate dialogue among blended family members can be achieved through joint decision-making, regular meetings, and common goal-setting, which help normalize freedom of expression and minimize the risk of unresolved family grievances that may accumulate over time and negatively affect the family relationship. (Kariuki & Wambui, 2021). Additionally, communication in blended families is also influenced by cultural factors. For instance, communication in collective cultures, such as those in most Kenyan cultures, might focus on respect for ranks and authority, and on indirect forms of communication. Because of these, communication patterns and interventions in the Kenyan environment should be limited to strike a balance between cultural values and the promotion and support of positive openness. communication strategies that focus on culture, such as conversations supported by parents, elders, and counsellors, can help reduce internal family friction and increase acceptance (Njoki et al., 2025).

2.2 Role of technology in communication

Advances in technology have influenced various sectors of life, including communication. It has positively helped bridge the gap in blended families. Through technology, blended family members can now communicate effectively and consistently via social platforms such as WhatsApp, and even schedule and run family meetings. This has increased communication, which would otherwise be impossible in the hectic urban setting, where even visiting family members becomes difficult (Brown & Stone, 2020). Results of a study by Njoki et al. (2025) indicate that when blended families adopt technological advancements to enhance communication among family members, including step-siblings, this positively influences family members' mental health and increases family cohesion. Through technological advancements such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram, biological parents and step-parents can communicate consistently with their biological children and step-siblings without having any problem related to distance due to migration, work, and custody of children. This constant, frequent communication enhances the quality of family relationships as issues are easily solved. Technology is even more effective for university students who mostly shift to their areas in search of education, as the bond can be created and maintained through communication channels such as video calls and instant messages, which provide a conducive opportunity for emotional reassurance and parental involvement, thus in the end sustaining relational continuity despite the presence of physical distance.

Despite the advantages of using technology in communication, families should also minimize overreliance on digital communication, as it can negatively affect physical, nonverbal, and emotional connections; overdependence on it reduces opportunities for family members to meet and have face-to-face conversations (Mutuku et al., 2021). The most effective approach is to integrate traditional communication practices and technological tools to optimize both relational depth and practical family communication (Smith, 2020). Over time, technology has also been incorporated into therapeutic interventions and counselling to enhance accessibility, trust-building, and engagement among members of blended families (Kiura et al., 2020).

2.3 Problem solving

In blended families, problem-solving has also been identified as a key strategy for enhancing the quality of family relationships. This is because family roles, relationships, and the incorporation of step-siblings and step-parents are always complex for the newly formed family. Such families are often characterized by different parenting styles, expectations, and disciplinary strategies, which may ultimately lead to misunderstandings or conflict, particularly between step-siblings and step-parents (Ganong & Coleman, 2017). A lack of a strong and effective problem-solving strategy often leads to conflicts that can escalate into tension among family members, thereby negatively affecting the quality of relationships, particularly parent-child relationships (Hellard et al., 2023). Additionally, studies have further shown that blended families that practice conflict resolution techniques including shared setting of rules, notations, active listening, compromise and also shared rule settings are often characterized by enhanced family cohesion, emotional security and relational satisfaction when compared to those blended families that employ avoidant, authoritarian or punitive styles when solving conflicts (Gorrell et al., 2019; Ganong & Coleman, 2017). Additionally, structured family meetings can significantly help resolve family conflicts, as they provide a conducive platform for family members to air their grievances, collectively clarify behavioral norms, and clarify expectations (Liu et al., 2025).

Different Family-based therapy interventions also emphasize the role of adaptive parenting in problem-solving. According to Gorrell et al. (2019), parents who swallow their ego, acknowledge their mistakes, apologize when needed, and engage in solution-focused problem-solving often transfer these positive conflict-resolution skills and strategies to their children. Within the complex blended family structure, where conflicts are common (Smith, 2020), modeling different problem-solving strategies for all family members is crucial, as it helps reduce anxiety, build trust, and promote cooperative interactions.

Moreover, interventions at the school and community levels will play a major role in facilitating blended families' engagement in problem-solving. For instance, educational and conflict-resolution programs, as well as peer group interactions, provide useful tips within the family that foster collaboration (Liu et al., 2025).

2.4 Feedback Mechanism

An effective feedback process is essential for fostering productive communication among family members, especially in blended families (Ganong et al., 2019). Feedback will enhance understanding among family members, resolve disputes, and foster trust and harmony within blended families. Effective communication through feedback is achieved through techniques such as clarifying messages and confirming intentions. This will reduce misunderstandings between family members and enhance positive relations (Ganong & Coleman, 2017). Feedback is also used to encourage family members to recognize their efforts. Positive feedback also encourages inclusiveness. Moreover, feedback is used as a process to resolve disputes arising from varied parenting styles and sibling rivalry (Sadeeq & Aatiq, 2024). Feedback is also helpful in addressing any co-parenting issues through consistent communication among family members.

Expressing empathy for others' emotional experiences, referred to as emotional validation, has also been shown to reduce emotional dysregulation and facilitate psychological adaptation among young adults when repeated in a blended family (Sheasgreen, 2025). Children in such

households might face uncertainty about their parents' roles and divided loyalties. These issues can be resolved with regular reassurances and feedback.

Co-parenting effectiveness involves caregivers' proficiency in coordinating parenting practices and communication. It is associated with the ability to regulate emotions effectively and positively socialize the child (Pan et al., 2025). Coordination among caregivers through feedback can avoid misunderstandings and minimize conflicts that could emotionally confuse and disorient children. In blended families, biological and step-parents might have different parenting styles and beliefs. Therefore, providing feedback and coordination through constructive conversations can instill confidence and predictability in children. Moreover, coparenting effectiveness can also be affected by the nature and tone of feedback. Giving feedback in an empathic manner makes the person less defensive and more likely to understand. Conversely, feedback can be provocative and exacerbate conflict if delivered in an aggressive or condescending manner (Sheasgreen, 2025).

2.5 Trust and emotional bond

As noted by Volodarska (2019), emotional bonding encompasses a variety of connection patterns, such as connectedness, closeness, and affection, which help individuals form significant and enduring relationships and help ensure family harmony and psychological safety. There are to be emotional connections; trust is key, which, in turn, is defined by Lee et al. (2023) as the assurance and belief among family members in each other's sincerity, reliability, and commitment to an individual's welfare. In addition, emotional connections and trust are vital for blended families, as these families require a deliberate process of attachment formation (Brown & Stone, 2020). Trust is developed through regular, open communication and time spent together as a family, with a focus on validating emotions, sense of identity, and perception (Brown & Stone, 2020; Lee et al., 2023). Existing Empirical evidence by Gyuris et al. (2020) shows that in blended families, secure emotional bonds are often viewed as protective factors for adolescents, children, and even young adults. adolescents, children, and even young adults who report a strong bond and attachment to both biological and step parents often demonstrate higher levels of resilience, better mental health, and improved social competence (Mutuku et al., 2021).

Intentional participation in joint family activities, including sharing meals, work, leisure moments, and even creative projects, fosters mutual interaction and recognition. Such hard activities and time together often serve as key relational currency, helping build trust among family members and a strong family bond over time. Open, intentional communication about family boundaries, expectations, and rules helps minimize misconceptions and demonstrates respect for members' voices, which is key to fostering relational clarity and trust (Hernandez & Cortes, 2023).

Parental modelling is another key contributor to family emotional trust and bonding. Step-parents who willingly engage in difficult conversations without being defensive often demonstrate emotional safety and reliability, which helps family members in blended family structures build emotional trust and bond. Additionally, this bond and trust in blended families is further supported with the help of structured therapeutic interventions. To enable blended family members to fully express themselves, develop interactive patterns, and resolve conflicts, family counselling programs that use psych-educational elements and guided dialogue play a very important role (Kiura et al., 2020; Brown & Stone, 2020).

2.6 Synthesis and Research Gap

This literature review demonstrates that several key intentional strategies can enhance the quality of family relationships among members of blended families. Constructive feedback mechanisms, Open communication, effective problem-solving, and the development of trust and emotional bonds have been identified as key factors in promoting family bonds and ties. In addition to these, the intentional application of parental modelling, technology, and different therapeutic interventions has been found to support different healthy family relationships. Despite all this evidence, significant, undisputed gaps remain in understanding which strategies are most effective in the Kenyan context, where cultural values emphasize hierarchy, respect, and extended-family involvement. Additionally, university students' perspectives on the quality of family relationships in blended families are underexplored. This study sought to address these gaps by examining practical strategies that, when implemented, can enhance the quality of relationships among blended-family members.

3. Methodology

A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was used in this research study. It was the most preferred because it allowed the simultaneous collection of both quantitative and qualitative data to better understand the strategies suggested by students. This research used students aged 18 to 35 years from selected private universities in Nairobi City County. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select participants. Private universities were initially stratified into two strata based on their religious affiliation. Two private universities were then randomly picked from each of these two strata. They comprised the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Pan Africa Christian University, USIU, and KCA University, with a total population of 32,000 individuals. A sample size of 380 students was used in this research, determined using Cochran's formula. In addition, a semi-structured questionnaire with both closed- and open-ended questions was used to collect data. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to analyze quantitative data, with SPSS version 31 further aiding the analysis. Quantitative data were also analyzed through thematic analysis, which entailed systematic coding and categorization to identify emerging themes. For these to be successful, all ethical considerations were strictly observed, including obtaining approval from relevant review boards, such as the Institutional Review Board, ensuring voluntary participation through informed consent, and maintaining anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study.

4. Results and Discussion

This study aims to identify strategies to improve the quality of family relationships among students from blended families at selected private universities in Nairobi City County. A total of 380 students were targeted, of whom 310 responded to the questionnaire. Strategies to improve the quality of blended-family relationships. Among the strategies, the most cited by the students was open communication, supported by 35% of respondents, followed by love and emotional support at 31.88%, and quality family time together at 28.44%. In addition, 19% support the role of equity and fairness, with 19% and 14.96% pointing to conflict resolution. Other strategies included collaboration and shared responsibilities (10.2%), Moral and spiritual practices (6.5%). Lastly, professional counseling was identified as a key strategy, with at least 90.49% of respondents supporting its importance. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Strategies for Enhancing Family Relationships

No.	Strategy	Percentage
1.	Open Respectful Communication	35.00%
2.	Love and Emotional Support	31.88%
3.	Quality Family Time Together	28.44%
4.	Equity and Fairness	19.00%
5.	Conflict Resolution	14.96%
6.	Collaboration/Shared Responsibilities	10.20%
7.	Professional Counseling	9.63%
8.	Moral and Spiritual Practices	6.50%

Additionally, qualitative responses further supported these findings, with one respondent noting that "Consistent togetherness, whether through joint tasks or joyful activities, strengthens family bonds," with another respondent indicating that "Effective dealing with disagreements in a level-headed and polite manner keeps misunderstandings from growing, and sets a good example for family problem-solving."

4.1 Role of Parents in Fostering Healthy Family Relationships

The students were also asked what they thought the parents' role was in fostering healthy family relationships. The results show that strong, healthy, and harmonious family relationships are impossible without parental guidance and support. Positive role models (5.94%), such as parents and other caregivers, teach children to love, be patient, respect, and be honest. A common theme was justice and equality (13.13%), with survey respondents stressing the importance of treating children fairly and providing them with equal attention, resources, and emotional support. Additionally, being an attentive listener and communicating openly were crucial (21.09%), with Social, emotional, and moral support also highlighted (31.88%). Moreover, Conflict resolution and discipline were also key to creating family harmony (14.96%). Respondents indicated that Family conflicts can be resolved peacefully and in private, which promotes cooperation and respect. The final guiding principles identified were leadership, direction, and shared responsibility (10%); thus, parents should guide, advise, and supervise while encouraging autonomy, involvement, and shared activities. Overall, the results of this study suggest that counselling and guided family leadership play a significant role in strengthening overall family functioning.

4.2 What Respondents Can Do to Improve Family Relationships

Students were also asked what they thought was their individual role in improving family relationships. The results show that at least 35% of the respondents believe that open, respectful, and honest communication is among the first and main steps in improving the quality of family relationships. Most students clearly identified politeness, honesty about difficult issues, and listening without interrupting as communication features that can help improve family relationships. Additionally, they stress staying in touch, communicating constructively, remaining calm, and allowing every family member to express themselves. Kindness and acceptance were also identified as key themes, with 29.44 percent noting this. The students vowed not only to value but also to respect all family members, regardless of age, gender, or relationship, whether step or biological. They also emphasize the importance of accepting different opinions regardless of emotions, perspectives, or personalities.

Love, emotional support, and forgiveness were also mentioned by 20.63%. These university students agree that helping one another, being affectionate, and showing love strengthen family bonds and relationships. To be able to enhance harmony, the different family members need to relax when addressing issues, apologize when they have done a mistake, forgiving quickly and also let go past harmful occurrences, additionally 18.13% of university students pointed out different home initiatives, including helping others with household chores and also working on shared projects and activities, following set family rules and acting as expected when called upon. Investing time in these efforts was also another key strategy, with at least (20.50%) of respondents pointing out that family traditions, shared meals and activities, and going for vacations together are instrumental in strengthening family bonds. Lastly, the students also pointed out their need to strengthen emotional and spiritual stability, with a sixth supporting the role of prayer by indicating that they prayed for the family, while 6.5% indicated that they provide spiritual support to family members and also sought therapy or counselling if needed. Finally, self-improvement, including modesty, perseverance, humility, optimism, healthy boundary-setting, and deliberate behavior change, was also valued and practiced by 17.19% of respondents.

4.3 Discussion

These findings provide valuable insights into the strategies university students consider instrumental for enhancing the quality of family relationships. Some of the dominant strategies reported by respondents included Open communication, emotional support, quality time together, equity and fairness, and collaboration and conflict resolution, which align with findings from existing studies that focus on how stepfamilies function or integrate. Open communication received the highest level of support (35%), aligning with Smith (2020), who showed that effective communication helps reduce family conflicts, thereby enhancing family relationships. This is further supported by findings from a study by Kariuki and Wambui (2021), which showed that frequent family conversations create a supportive and dependable environment among all members by allowing them to share their emotions and worries.

Similarly, the importance of communication in identifying family roles aligns with family systems theory, which emphasizes the significance of boundary negotiation and role definition in blended families (Ganong & Coleman, 2017). As discussed above, one role of communication in shaping the quality of family relations involves attachment security. This is supported by (2018), whose study reveals the important role communication plays in fostering

this aspect. Communication via technology use has also been identified. The findings of this research are consistent with those of Brown and Stone (2020), who suggested that digital means are crucial for communication, given the hectic urban lifestyle. However, as Mutuku et al. (2021) argue, technology should be regarded as a supplement, not a substitute, for face-to-face communication.

Respondents also placed great importance on love and emotional support (31.88%) and on quality family time (28.44%). It shows the importance of joint activities and emotional support in strengthening parental influence. The results of our study coincide with the conclusions of Volodarska (2019), whose study was devoted to emotional ties between parents and children, and the findings of Lee et al. (2023), whose study focused on building trust based on reliable behaviour. Moreover, the strategy of equity and fairness was another strategy in our survey (19%), with respondents pointing to the need to pay attention to all children and treat them equally. These results align with those of Rodriguez et al. (2023), who have shown that unbiased parenting fosters positive sibling relationships and stabilizes their emotional states. Besides, fairness helps reduce behavioral problems (Kim & Woo, 2022).

In addition, the respondents pointed out that conflict resolution (14.96%) among family members and family collaboration (10.2%) were other key strategies. These findings align with those of Hellard et al. (2023), who noted that resolving family conflicts in a timely and effective manner fosters emotional bonds, trust, and cohesion among family members across the two structures. Additionally, findings by Gorrell et al. (2019) indicate that students point to well-planned family meetings and joint decision-making as fundamental to creating harmony. Moral and spiritual practices, such as prayer, were also noted (6.5%), reflecting Kenya's cultural context. These findings align with those showing that when families engage in shared spiritual activities, their bonds are strengthened and well-being is boosted. (Carr, 2020). The finding further aligns with that of Puffer et al. (2020), who reported that lay counselor-delivered family therapy in Kenya improves the mental health of children and their caregivers. The small minority (8.52%) who don't agree with the majority viewpoint may reflect stigma, cultural barriers, and a lack of awareness.

Finally, strategies such as being kind, praying, forgiveness, helping with family roles, quality time together, and self-improvement were identified by students as personal initiatives they take to improve the quality of family relationships. This demonstrates that students understand their role in helping improve the quality of family relationships. Overall, these findings demonstrate that intention-based relational practices, such as communication, fairness, emotional bonds, shared responsibilities, and spending quality time together, are more important for improving the quality of family relationships than family structure alone. These findings support the overall position that different family processes (Jensen & Shafer, 2019).

4.4 Summary of Main Findings

This study examined the strategies that enhance the quality of family relationships among students from blended families at selected private universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The study found that students identified various strategies key to enhancing family relationships, with open communication being the most cited, followed by love and emotional support. Other strategies identified included quality family time, conflict resolution based on equity and fairness, shared responsibilities, and collaboration. Spiritual and moral practices, such as shared values and praying together, were also noted. On all the strategies, professional

counselling emerged as a key strategy, with an overwhelming majority supporting its importance. This study further highlighted the critical role of parents in fostering healthy family relationships through fairness, positive modelling, attentive listening, shared responsibility, and emotional support. Students further identified their own sense of urgency regarding forgiveness, kindness, spending quality time together as a family, and helping with the highlighted responsibilities.

5. Conclusion

The study establishes that students at private universities in Nairobi City County perceive quality family relationships to be shaped more by intentional relationship practices, such as communication, conflict resolution, joint activities, equal treatment, shared responsibility, therapy, and praying together, than by family structure. The findings indicate that open communication is a central determinant of quality family relationships, as it enhances conflict resolution, attachment security, and emotional support among family members. Emotional support, effective conflict resolution, family collaboration, and quality family time were also identified as important factors in strengthening trust, cohesion, and psychological well-being within families.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made.

Families and Stepparents: It is essential for family members to clearly define their roles and responsibilities to avoid any confusion and conflicts. Open, consistent, and respectful communication should be encouraged within the family. Parents and stepparents should focus on providing emotional support to adolescents by listening to their feelings and engaging in individual interactions. Families should engage in planned family activities to foster family cohesion and unity. Parents should teach and model appropriate strategies for resolving conflicts, which may help adolescents manage differences and stressful situations.

Schools and Community Programs: Schools should focus on implementing a range of social-emotional workshops and learning programs that equip adolescents with relevant skills in stress management, communication, and problem-solving. They should also establish peer support groups, which would give students a chance not only to share but also to build resilience. Parental workshops and training sessions should also be offered to guide both biological and step-parents in nurturing positive family relationships and managing the complexities of blended family dynamics.

Counsellors and therapists: Professional counselling might involve the use of family therapy sessions for blended families, particularly those consisting of several step-parents or step siblings, which could deal with issues such as role confusion, conflicts, and poor family cohesion. Individual counselling sessions for adolescents might also prove to be helpful in dealing with their emotions and coping strategies in relation to family issues. Collaborative family counselling sessions involving all members of the blended family might also be suggested.

For Policy Makers and Social Service Providers: Policy makers may be encouraged to consider the special needs of blended families while developing supportive policies and programs. Inclusive family guidelines that provide access to counselling, mentoring, and education may be effective in improving family functioning and adolescent outcomes. Public

awareness campaigns about the challenges and benefits of blended families may also be effective in educating the public and improving best practices in this area. Longitudinal and intervention studies may also be funded to develop appropriate strategies for addressing the different types of blended families.

Future Research: Further research is needed to evaluate the efficacy of interventions aimed at strengthening family communication, emotional support, conflict resolution, and cohesion within blended families. Longitudinal studies are also called for to investigate the impact of family counselling and other methods on the mental well-being, social life, and academic performance of teenagers. It will be worthwhile to study the influence of culture on the dynamics of blended families. This would be useful for understanding how Kenya's cultural context affects the effectiveness of particular strategies. It would be useful to conduct comparative research with adolescents from different types of blended family structures.

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