Journal of Psychology and Behavioural Sciences

[ISSN 2958-1117]
Volume: 05 Issue: 01 | November-2026

JPBS

Influence of Family Constellations on Risky Sexual Behaviour among Undergraduate Students in Nakuru County, Kenya

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Cite this article in APA
Ndungu, A. M. (2026). Influence of family constellations on risky sexual behaviour among undergraduate students in Nakuru County, Kenya. *Journal of psychology and behavioural sciences,* 5(1), 103-115. https://doi.org/10.51317/8qv57q27

OPEN ACCESS
A publication of Editon Consortium Publishing (online)

Article history
Received: 2026-09-21
Accepted: 2026-10-17
Published: 2026-11-12

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Abstract
This study examined the influence of family constellations on risky sexual behaviour among undergraduate students in university town campuses in Nakuru County, Kenya. A descriptive correlational research design was employed within a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative data from structured questionnaires with qualitative data from focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The target population comprised 1,161 third-year undergraduate students from Egerton University, St. Paul's University and Kabarak University. A sample of 212 students was selected using proportionate stratified sampling to allocate participants across campuses, followed by simple random sampling to select students within each campus. A total of 212 questionnaires were distributed, and all were completed and returned, representing a 100 per cent response rate. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, bivariate regression and multiple regression in SPSS Version 27, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The family constellations scale recorded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .842, indicating good internal consistency. Multiple regression analysis showed that family constellations were not a statistically significant predictor of risky sexual behaviour ($\beta = -.093$, $p = .202$). Qualitative findings highlighted limited family communication about sexuality, parental absence or limited engagement, and reliance on siblings and peers for sexual information. The findings indicate that family-related experiences may shape students' understanding of sexuality, although family constellations did not significantly predict risky sexual behaviour in the quantitative model.

Key terms: Family constellations, family communication, risky sexual behaviour, undergraduate students.

INTRODUCTION

Diverse family structures and processes determine sexual behaviour (Allen & Henderson, 2017; Seltzer, 2019), and family emotions transmit values, attitudes, and behaviours that are seen as appropriate within the parents' social network (Buehler, 2020). Undergraduate students come from families with different constellations, such as stepfamilies, adoptive families, single-parent families, foster care families, grandparent-headed families, blended families, and families with different levels of religious teaching, and therefore different family scripts (Hupalovska & Avramenko, 2020; Furstenberg et al., 2020). These family structures have changed from the traditional family composed of a father, mother, and children (Rabe & Naidoo, 2015). These changing family scripts have been associated with the neglect of children, resulting in undergraduate students who have not been given life values and knowledge related to their sexuality (Elias et al., 2018).

Sexual behaviours constitute social processes shaped by scripts that individuals employ to interpret and organise encounters within specific contexts, thereby delineating each participant's role (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). These scripts evolve alongside societal transformations over time. Simon and Gagnon (1986) identify three primary domains of experience that form scripts: cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts, and intrapersonal scripts. Cultural scenarios provide societal or institutional guidelines that prescribe acceptable or obligatory practices in particular situations. Interpersonal scripts govern context-specific relational behaviours, whereas intrapersonal scripting involves the internalisation of self-dialogue regarding a situation, informed by personal desires and motivations. Sexual scripts are acquired through diverse sources, including family, media, and peers, which influence sexuality, shape interpersonal sexual interactions, and ultimately regulate individual sexual conduct (Simon & Gagnon, 1986).

According to Hamlall (2018), young men who were socialised to adopt traditional masculine norms change their masculine ideology when they go to university, as they become exposed to different and liberal cultural practices within higher education institutions. Young women, through academic exposure, are also acquiring new scripts and redefining family structures, a trend that is making the description of family increasingly complex (Yan, 2021; Smock & Schwartz, 2020).

In Kenya, undergraduate university students engage in risky sexual behaviours (Mbuthia et al., 2019). At Machakos University, a study on sexting prevalence among undergraduates indicated that 57 per cent of respondents participated in sexting, while 48 per cent were two-way sexters (Mukonyo et al., 2020). At the University of Nairobi, prevalent behaviours included casual sex, multiple sexual partners, and transactional sex (Mutiso & Mbuya, 2021). Research conducted in Nairobi and Busia Counties demonstrated that young people initiate multiple sexual partnerships as early as secondary school, rendering them sexually active upon university entry (Wamukoya, 2018). Cohabitation among Kenyan youth is also increasing, elevating the risks of premarital sex and multiple partnerships (Wamukoya, 2018).

At a prominent public university in Nakuru County, records from the students' welfare department reveal that over 50 per cent of handled cases are sex-related, encompassing multiple sexual relationships, conflicts over sexual partners, suicide attempts stemming from broken sexual relationships, and rape among undergraduate students. University dispensary records further document elevated rates of emergency contraceptive pill consumption among undergraduates, signalling a high prevalence of unprotected sex. A study conducted on the main campuses of Egerton and Kabarak Universities in Nakuru County found that many undergraduate students, particularly males and females from low socioeconomic status families, readily conform to university sexual norms, engaging in transactional sex and cohabitation (Langat et al., 2020).

The study sought to establish the influence of family constellations on risky sexual behaviour among undergraduate students in university towns in Nakuru County, Kenya. It focused on how family relationships, parental engagement and communication about sexuality shape students' sexual values and behaviours. The findings provide insight into the role of family environments in influencing students' sexual decision-making and engagement in risky sexual behaviour. The study was guided by the null

hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between family constellations and risky sexual behaviour among undergraduate students in Nakuru County, Kenya (H_{01}).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ramos and Ramos (2022) studied the process of change and the effectiveness of family constellations. Using a mixed-methods design, this single case study triangulated data from quantitative (DASS-21) and qualitative sources (consultation notes and the patient's responses to the Psychotherapeutic Process Data Mining Questionnaire, or PPDMQ). The Reliable Change Index (RCI) was used to gauge clinical change in the DASS-21 scores. RCI analysis showed a clinically and statistically significant change at process termination and at the 6-month follow-up in the patient's symptoms of anxiety and depression. As a member of a couple on the verge of divorce, by undoing that drive to divorce, the patient's suicidal ideation seemed to stop. Two focuses of interventions are proposed to mitigate divorce rates, suicide rates linked to divorce, as well as depression and anxiety levels associated with divorce and suicidal ideation. Facilitated Communication, as a psychotherapy, seems to have substantial potential for positive financial and societal change (e.g., in the judicial sphere) and may need to be addressed from an unbiased perspective. The proposed study will analyse the influence of the changing family constellations on the sexual behaviour of undergraduate students in university town campuses in Nakuru County.

Savioja (2019) investigated sexual behaviour during adolescence, with particular emphasis on the roles of depression, delinquency, and family-related factors. The study utilised a population-based national sample of 186,632 Finnish adolescents, comprising 50.4 per cent girls, drawn from the 2010–2011 School Health Promotion Study. Data were collected through self-administered surveys conducted in school settings. The main outcome variables concerned sexual experience and, among sexually active adolescents, the number of sexual partners. The data were initially examined using chi-square tests to establish bivariate relationships, followed by logistic regression analyses to determine the independent associations between depression, delinquency, family factors, and sexual behaviour. The multivariate analyses were conducted separately for girls and boys and across early, middle, and late adolescence.

The findings indicated that self-reported depression and delinquency were independently associated with adolescent sexual behaviour, even after controlling for parenting and other family-related factors. Depression was particularly associated with having experienced sexual intercourse during early and middle adolescence. Family-related factors were also important. Low parental involvement was associated with sexual experience and, among sexually active adolescents, having multiple sexual partners during early and middle adolescence. Similarly, low parental educational attainment was associated with sexual experience and multiple sexual partners among adolescents in the early and middle stages of adolescence. Living in a two-parent family emerged as one of the clearest family-related factors, showing an inverse association with sexual intercourse experience and multiple sexual partners across adolescence. These findings demonstrate that family structure, parental involvement, and other psychosocial conditions can be associated with young people's sexual behaviour.

Savioja's (2019) study is relevant to the present research because it provides empirical evidence that family circumstances and family relationships are associated with sexual behaviour. In particular, the finding that family structure and parental involvement were associated with sexual experience and multiple sexual partners provides support for examining family constellation as a potential psychosocial factor influencing sexual behaviour. The study therefore provides a useful foundation for the present research, particularly because both studies consider family-related circumstances in explaining differences in sexual behaviour.

Despite these similarities, there are important differences in population, methodology, variables, and geographical context. First, Savioja (2019) focused on adolescents in Finland, whereas the present study focuses on undergraduate university students in university town campuses in Nakuru County, Kenya. The developmental and social contexts of adolescents and university students are therefore different. Second, the Finnish study examined depression,

delinquency, parental involvement, parental education, and family structure as predictors or correlates of sexual behaviour, whereas the present study specifically examines family constellation trends and their influence on sexual behaviour. Third, Savioja used a very large population-based national sample and analysed quantitative survey data using chi-square tests and logistic regression, while the present study will collect primary data from a more specifically defined university population and examine the relationship between family constellation and sexual behaviour. Fourth, there is a geographical and cultural gap, since the previous study was conducted in Finland, while the present study is situated within the Kenyan context, specifically Nakuru County.

The study also differs from the present research in its interpretation of family-related influences. Savioja (2019) primarily examined family factors as part of a broader model involving depression and delinquency, whereas the present study seeks to examine family constellation as a distinct psychosocial factor. Family constellation may encompass not only whether students come from two-parent or other family structures, but also the nature of family relationships and the social experiences associated with one's position within the family. Thus, the present study extends the previous research by examining family constellation more directly in relation to students' sexual behaviour.

Overall, Savioja (2019) provides evidence that family structure and parental involvement are associated with sexual experience and multiple sexual partnerships. However, the study did not specifically examine family constellation trends among university students, nor was it conducted within the Kenyan university context. The present study seeks to fill this conceptual, population, methodological, and geographical gap by examining the influence of family constellation trends on sexual behaviour among undergraduate students in university town campuses in Nakuru County, Kenya. This extension is important because it moves beyond adolescent family circumstances and examines how family-related psychosocial experiences may be associated with sexual behaviour during the university stage of development.

Begall, Nappe, Hohrenk, Schmidt, Burda, Sahm, and Henning (2021) examined the relationship between life expectancy, family constellation, and stress in giant mole-rats. The study investigated whether the social and family environment influenced behavioural and physiological outcomes among group-living animals. Behavioural data were collected to assess agonistic behaviour in relation to family constellation, particularly the presence or absence of parents. To measure long-term stress, the researchers developed a non-invasive method of extracting and measuring cortisol from hair samples. The data were used to compare stress levels and mortality among different family and social groups. The findings indicated that family constellation, particularly parental presence or absence, influenced agonistic behaviour. Interestingly, orphaned non-breeding giant mole-rats exhibited significantly lower cortisol levels and lower mortality rates than non-breeders living with both parents. The authors suggested that intra-familial stress may contribute to differences in ageing and lifespan and emphasised the importance of the social environment in understanding behavioural and physiological outcomes.

The study is relevant to the present research because it demonstrates that family constellation and the broader social environment can influence individual behaviour and psychosocial outcomes. The finding that differences in family composition and parental presence were associated with differences in behaviour and stress provides a basis for considering family constellation as an important contextual factor in behavioural research. This is consistent with the present study's assumption that family-related experiences and configurations may contribute to differences in how individuals behave in social and intimate relationships. The study therefore provides indirect support for examining family constellation as a psychosocial factor that may be associated with sexual behaviour.

However, there are substantial differences in population, methodology, variables, and context between Begall et al. (2021) and the present study. First, the previous research was conducted on giant mole-rats, whereas the present study focuses on human undergraduate students. Consequently, the behavioural and social processes examined in the two

studies cannot be assumed to operate in exactly the same manner. Second, Begall et al. focused on life expectancy, mortality, stress, cortisol levels, and agonistic behaviour, while the present study focuses on sexual behaviour. Third, the previous study relied on behavioural observations and a biological measure of long-term stress through hair cortisol, whereas the present research will obtain data directly from undergraduate students concerning their family experiences and sexual behaviour. Thus, the two studies differ considerably in their methods of data collection and analysis as well as their outcome variables.

There is also a significant contextual and conceptual gap. Begall et al. (2021) examined family constellation primarily as a component of the social environment affecting stress and longevity in a group-living animal species. The study did not investigate how family constellation may influence sexual attitudes, decision-making, or sexual behaviour among humans. Furthermore, it did not examine family constellation as a psychosocial or developmental factor within a university environment. This study seeks to extend this line of inquiry by examining family constellation trends among human participants and determining their relationship with sexual behaviour.

Therefore, although Begall et al. (2021) is biologically and methodologically different from the present research, it provides useful evidence that family composition and social environment can be associated with behavioural outcomes. The present study addresses the identified gap by shifting the focus from animal social behaviour, stress, and life expectancy to human sexual behaviour, and from biological measures to psychosocial experiences. Specifically, it will examine the influence of family constellation trends on sexual behaviour among undergraduate students in university town campuses in Nakuru County, Kenya. This provides a conceptual, population, outcome, methodological, and geographical extension of the existing literature.

Edbrooke-Childs and Deighton (2021) conducted a narrative review of reviews of interconnecting risks (IR) of mental health problems for young people. Overall, ten databases were searched for published literature reviews, and from 1,556 unique hits, 91 reviews examining individual risks were included, with 35 reviews examining interconnecting risks. The findings suggest that interpersonal connection plays a central role in interconnecting risks, as indicated by the number of interconnections between social groups, interpersonal, parental relationships and family cohesion with other risk themes. Family and systemic approaches have clear value in supporting young people by enabling the development of a secure relational foundation on which to build future protective interpersonal connections. The current study was based on the interconnected risks of mental health caused by family factors, whereas the proposed study will be based on the analysis of the influence of family constellation trends on the sexual behaviour of undergraduate students in university town campuses in Nakuru County.

Njoroge (2017) studied the effects of Blended Family Dynamics on the Wellbeing of Children in Kenya: Case of Kabete Sub-County in Kiambu County. The study employed a descriptive design using both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies and primary data to achieve its objectives. The study employed purposive sampling techniques to select a sample size of 50 secondary school age-going children from blended families, focusing on the 14–19–year age group. The governing theory underpinning the study was the Attachment Theory by Bowlby, complemented by the theory of Structural Family Therapy by Minuchin. The data were collected through the use of structured questionnaires. The data were analysed using descriptive analysis methods in terms of frequencies, cross-tabulations, and graphs with the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Regarding psychological wellbeing, the study revealed that most of the respondents did not spend time with their stepparents often, and that they trusted their biological parents with secrets and not their stepparents. Within different blended family dynamics, a higher proportion of respondents with delinquent behaviours such as cheating, stealing, fighting and school absenteeism were found within stepmother families than in stepfather families or a combination of stepfather and stepmother. The results on academic wellbeing showed that a higher proportion of the respondents with fair or bad academic wellbeing were from the stepfather families than from the stepmother families. This study was

conducted among children based on family wellbeing, as opposed to the current study, which will analyse the influence of family constellations trends on sexual behaviour of undergraduate students in university town campuses in Nakuru County.

Kai (2021) studied the integration of mainstream psychotherapies within an epistemological framework. Different forms of psychotherapy often construct theories and techniques based on varying epistemological frameworks. Due to these epistemological conflicts, some psychotherapies appear incompatible with one another. However, the problems encountered in psychotherapy are complex and multifaceted, and each approach has demonstrated its shortcomings. Consequently, many researchers and practitioners have sought to combine treatment techniques and integrate various psychotherapies into a single treatment plan. Integrating different schools of psychotherapy requires an epistemological framework that can accommodate diverse psychotherapies, enabling them to leverage their strengths and avoid conflicts. This paper proposes an epistemological framework based on systems theory and the uncertainty principle. Through this framework, this paper attempts to reinterpret some mainstream psychotherapies and identify the underlying factors that are effective in their treatment. Finally, this paper proposed methods and directions for integrating these psychotherapies into an epistemological framework. This study was based on psychotherapies, as opposed to the current study, which analyses the influence of family constellation on the sexual behaviour of undergraduate students in university town campuses in Nakuru Count.

Obande-Ogbuinya et al. (2022) examined the prevalence of sexual harassment and its relationship with family birth order among female undergraduates, drawing on new findings from an institution-based cross-sectional study in southeast Nigeria. The family, as a microcosm of broader society, provides care that moulds children's behaviour. However, disparities in parental attention may influence children's behaviour and self-esteem, rendering them more vulnerable to sexual harassment. An institution-based cross-sectional survey was conducted from March to August 2021 to assess the association between family birth order and sexual harassment prevalence. Multistage sampling yielded 1,070 participants. Data were analysed using percentages, means, and multivariate logistic regression. The latter estimated adjusted odds ratios (AORs) with 95% confidence intervals (CIs). The level of significance was set at $P < 0.05$. The findings revealed a prevalence of sexual harassment (73.6%), and the two forms, verbal (x = 2.63) and non-verbal sexual harassment (x = 2.56), were high. The multivariate logistic regression odds ratios adjusted show that the middle-born were approximately 2-fold (AOR = 1.62; CI = 1.14 – 2.30; P = 0.008 0.05) more likely to experience sexual harassment. This study was conducted in Nigeria, whereas the proposed study will be conducted among Kenyan university students, analysing the influence of family constellations trends on sexual behaviour of undergraduate students in university town campuses in Nakuru County.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive correlational research design and a mixed-methods approach to examine the influence of family constellations on risky sexual behaviour among undergraduate students in university town campuses in Nakuru County, Kenya. The target population comprised 1,161 third-year undergraduate students from Egerton University, St. Paul's University and Kabarak University. A sample of 212 students was selected using proportionate stratified sampling to allocate participants across the three campuses, followed by simple random sampling to select individual students. A total of 212 questionnaires were distributed, and all were completed and returned, representing a 100 per cent response rate. Legally married students were excluded.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires, three focus group discussions involving 19 students, and three semi-structured key informant interviews with university counsellors. A pilot study involving 20 third-year students at Egerton University's main campus was conducted to assess the research instruments. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, bivariate regression and multiple regression in SPSS Version 27, while qualitative data

were analysed thematically. The family constellations scale recorded a Cronbach's alpha of .842, indicating good internal consistency.

Ethical approval was sought from the Kabarak University Ethics Committee, and a research permit was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Permission was also sought from the relevant government agencies. Informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity and participants' right to withdraw were observed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The self-perceptions of sexuality variable were measured using ten items (items 1-10 in Section B of the questionnaire) on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree).

Family constellations represent the primary context for what Sexual Script Theory calls interpersonal scripts: the relational dynamics through which sexual norms are communicated and negotiated (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). Psychoanalytic Theory further suggests that early family experiences shape personality and behaviour, with the family serving as the first context for socialisation (Freud, 1939; Neely, 1982). The empirical literature reports inconsistent findings: Runo (2019) found no significant difference in emotional intelligence across family structures in Nakuru County, while Savioja (2019) found that low parental involvement was associated with multiple sexual partners in Finland. The present study examined whether family constellations, as measured, would predict risky sexual behaviour in the Kenyan university context.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution for Family Constellations

		Missing	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My family talks less about Christian values these days than when I was young	Count	3	76	49	55	29
	Row N %	1.4%	35.8%	23.1%	25.9%	13.7%
Sharing personal issues in our family has been decreasing with time.	Count	2	34	43	77	56
	Row N %	0.9%	16.0%	20.3%	36.3%	26.4%
Religious values are less emphasized now in our home than it was some time back.	Count	4	64	46	66	32
	Row N %	1.9%	30.2%	21.7%	31.1%	15.1%
I feel less connected to my family members.	Count	3	67	57	51	34
	Row N %	1.4%	31.6%	26.9%	24.1%	16.0%
I am more closely connected to my friends at the university than to my family members.	Count	4	69	53	53	33
	Row N %	1.9%	32.5%	25.0%	25.0%	15.6%
I hardly understand my position and my roles as a member of my family	Count	3	75	72	43	19
	Row N %	1.4%	35.4%	34.0%	20.3%	9.0%
The social media have influenced my sexual behavior more than my family.	Count	4	46	38	74	50
	Row N %	1.9%	21.7%	17.9%	34.9%	23.6%
I interact very little with members of my family.	Count	4	68	58	55	27
	Row N %	1.9%	32.1%	27.4%	25.9%	12.7%
My family members show very little concern over my sexual wellbeing.	Count	5	39	55	63	50
	Row N %	2.4%	18.4%	25.9%	29.7%	23.6%

The frequency distribution of responses to the 9-item family constellations of sexuality scale is presented in the table above, with a total of 212 respondents answering each item on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Missing responses ranged from 0.9 per cent to 2.4 per cent across items, with item 9, 'My family members show very little concern over my sexual being ', recording the highest proportion of missing data (2.4%), suggesting possible discomfort among respondents to engage with this topic.

From the findings, the following items received a majority of agreement from respondents: item 2, 'Sharing personal issues in our family has been decreasing with time', whereby the majority (n=133, 62.7%) agreed that sharing personal issues with their family has been decreasing. Item 7, 'Social media has influenced my sexual behaviour more than my family' (n=124, 58.5%) of the respondents agreed that social media has more influence than their family. Item 9, 'My family members show very little concern over my sexual wellbeing' (n=113, 53.3%) of the respondents agreed that their family members are not concerned with sexual wellbeing.

From the findings, the following items received the majority of disagreement from respondents: item 6, 'I hardly understand my position and my roles as a member of my family,' whereby the majority (n=147, 69.4%) disagreed with this statement; they hardly understand their position or know their roles in the family. Item 8, 'I interact very little with members of my family' (n=126, 59.5%): respondents disagreed that they interact very little with members of their family. Item 1 'My family talks less about Christian values these days than when I was young' (n=125, 58.9%): respondents disagreed that their family talks less about Christian values. Item 4 'I feel less connected to my family members' (n=124, 58.5%) disagreed that they feel less connect to their family members. Item 5 'I am more closely connected to my friends at the university than to my family members' (n=122, 57.5%): respondents disagreed that they are more closely connected to their friends than family members. Item 3, 'Religious values are less emphasised now in our home than it was some time back' (n=110, 51.9%): respondents disagreed that religious values are less emphasised. From the findings, it can be noted that while the vast majority agreed that sharing personal issues in the family has been declining, when it comes to them, they hardly understand their position and roles as members of the family; this was largely disputed, meaning they are fully aware of both their positions and roles.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Family Constellations

		Missing	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My family talks less about Christian values these days than when I was young	Count	3	76	49	55	29
	Row N %	1.4%	35.8%	23.1%	25.9%	13.7%
Sharing personal issues in our family has been decreasing with time.	Count	2	34	43	77	56
	Row N %	0.9%	16.0%	20.3%	36.3%	26.4%
Religious values are less emphasized now in our home than it was some time back.	Count	4	64	46	66	32
	Row N %	1.9%	30.2%	21.7%	31.1%	15.1%
I feel less connected to my family members.	Count	3	67	57	51	34
	Row N %	1.4%	31.6%	26.9%	24.1%	16.0%
I am more closely connected to my friends at the university than to my family members.	Count	4	69	53	53	33
	Row N %	1.9%	32.5%	25.0%	25.0%	15.6%
I hardly understand my position and my roles as a member of my family	Count	3	75	72	43	19
	Row N %	1.4%	35.4%	34.0%	20.3%	9.0%
The social media have influenced my sexual behavior more than my family.	Count	4	46	38	74	50
	Row N %	1.9%	21.7%	17.9%	34.9%	23.6%
I interact very little with members of my family.	Count	4	68	58	55	27
	Row N %	1.9%	32.1%	27.4%	25.9%	12.7%
My family members show very little concern over my sexual wellbeing.	Count	5	39	55	63	50
	Row N %	2.4%	18.4%	25.9%	29.7%	23.6%

The descriptive statistics provide a nuanced portrait of contemporary family dynamics among this sample. The highest mean score (*M*= 2.71) for decreased emotional sharing reinforces the frequency analysis finding that this is the most widely perceived issue, potentially reflecting broader societal shifts toward individualisation or increased digital mediation of relationships.

The relatively moderate means for religious value items (*M*= 2.15 and 2.27) suggest that while some families have moved away from traditional Christian emphasis, this change is not uniform across the sample. The standard deviations (approximately 1.10 for most items) indicate substantial variability in responses, highlighting that family experiences differ considerably among respondents.

Of particular concern are the elevated means for social media influence (*M*= 2.57) and perceived family unconcern regarding sexual wellbeing (*M*= 2.54). These findings suggest a gap between family engagement and external influences in the domain of sexuality, which may indicate a need for families to engage more openly in discussions about sexual health and digital media literacy.

Conversely, the lowest mean (*M*= 2.00) for role clarity, combined with relatively lower means for connectedness items (ranging from 2.16 to 2.22), suggests that most respondents continue to feel connected to their families and understand their familial roles. These factors may serve as protective elements against the more disruptive trends observed in communication and external influence.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Family Constellations Score

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
FamilyScore	212	.00	3.89	2.3118	.70634
Valid N (listwise)	212				

The composite variable, FamilyScore, representing the average of all nine items, had a mean of 2.31 (*SD*= 0.706), with scores ranging from 0.00 to 3.89. This overall mean, falling slightly above the scale midpoint of 1.5, indicates that respondents, on average, reported a moderate level of perceived family dysfunction across the domains assessed. The standard deviation of 0.71 suggests moderate variability among respondents' overall family perceptions.

Bivariate and Multivariate Results for Family Constellations

The bivariate regression analysis showed that family constellations were not significantly associated with risky sexual behaviour (B = −0.340, t(210) = −0.895, p = 0.372), accounting for only 0.4 per cent of the variance (R^2 = .004). In the multiple regression model, the Family constellations script demonstrated no significant unique relationship with risky sexual behaviour (B = −0.514, SE = 0.401, β = −.093, t(207) = −1.280, p = .202). Consequently, the null hypothesis that family constellations do not significantly influence risky sexual behaviour was not rejected.

The non-significant finding is theoretically consistent with the proposition that family influence operates through the transmission of cultural scenarios and interpersonal scripts. When families are silent on sexuality, as the qualitative findings demonstrate, this transmission mechanism is disrupted. Participants described sex as a taboo topic, absent or busy parents, and a reliance on siblings or friends for sexual information. This pattern aligns with Kinoti (2021), who found low communication on sexuality between adolescents and significant people in their lives, and extends Savioja (2019) and Orgiles et al. (2014), who found that parental involvement and communication rather than family structure are the critical determinants of sexual behaviour. The finding diverges from Obande-Ogbuniya et al. (2022), who found that family birth order predicted sexual harassment in Nigeria, suggesting that cultural and contextual differences may moderate the relationship between family constellations and sexual outcomes.

Qualitative Findings

This section presents the qualitative findings obtained from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted with undergraduate students and counsellors in town campuses in Nakuru County. The qualitative strand was designed to complement the quantitative findings by providing contextual depth, explanatory power, and participant voice to the statistical patterns.

The section begins with the analytical procedure, followed by the presentation of emergent themes. Each theme is illustrated with verbatim quotes from participants and linked to the corresponding research objective.

Qualitative Data Analysis Procedure

The qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis following the six-phase framework of Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. Familiarisation: transcripts were read and re-read to gain familiarity with the data.
2. Initial: salient features were coded inductively using open coding.
3. Searching for themes: codes were grouped into candidate themes based on patterns of meaning.
4. Reviewing themes: themes were reviewed against the coded extracts and the full dataset.
5. Defining and naming themes: each theme was refined and given a clear definition.
6. Producing the report: themes were written up with supporting quotes and linked to research objectives.

Coding was conducted manually, and trustworthiness was established through member checking (preliminary findings shared with three participants), peer debriefing (with a fellow researcher), and maintenance of an audit trail. Disconfirming evidence was actively sought and is reported where relevant.

Family Silence and Disconnection

Taboo of Sex Talk

Participants consistently described families as silent on matters of sexuality.

> *No discussion of sexual matters in families. Not adequately cultured. No boundaries.* (KII-C)
> *How free are you to discuss sexual matters in your home? No. Fear of judgment. Leave first; they are not good. The picture they paint towards a gender is bad. How do you start sexual matters?* (FGD 1, RM1 and RM2)

> *Parents nope. Sibling yes. Fathers do give a warning. No friendly discussion. Advised to focus on education. Parents are used to old ways, hence not easy to talk about.* (FGD 1, RW1)
> *Something that we rarely talk about. Not really. Depends more on who initiates the topic.* (FGD 3, REW2)

Absent or Busy Parents

Many participants described emotional or physical absence of parents, particularly fathers.

> *Most of the students come from homes with single parents, as some parents work away from home. A father or a mother could be promiscuous.* (KII-A)
> *Families: it cuts across from single parenthood, especially single mothers; lack of men makes them look for men out. Boys lacking fathers are weak. Orphans are vulnerable. Busy parents, left alone. No one to monitor them.* (KII-B)

> *Rarely speaks with my dad; if so, only for 2 minutes. I earn my own money, but my parents don't know about it, and I still ask for money.* (FGD 1, RM2)

> *Parents only call when it comes to exams, or the students call to tell them. Parents call to remind them to be careful during the protest.* (FGD 1, RM2)

Religious Strictness and Rebellion

Participants noted a disconnection between religious teachings and family practice, with strictness sometimes leading to rebellion.

> *Family beliefs are religious but very strict; therefore, the young people rebel against their parents' rules. They want to explore and be involved in what they may have missed while growing up.* (KII-A)

> *Christians, religious. Give caution, e.g., are trained to abstain. A girl and a boy from CU; the lady said no to sex because of her family faith, and did not have sex. Strict family; they say mwili ni mwili, tuko campus, peer pressure contributes a lot.* (KII-B)

> *I feel like the odd one out, not drinking and not engaging in sexual activities. Am I not beautiful enough?* (KII-B)

Link to Objective

These findings helped to explain why family constellations were not significantly associated with risky behaviour in the quantitative model. The qualitative data suggest that the absence of family communication about sexuality may be the norm rather than the exception, meaning that there is little variance in family influence to detect statistically. Alternatively, the effect of family may be indirect (through peer influence or social media) rather than direct. This theme aligns with Elias et al. (2018), who found that changing family scripts have led to negligence of children, and extends Kinoti (2021), who found low communication on sexuality between adolescents and significant persons. It also supports Savioja (2019) and Orgiles et al. (2014), who found that

parental involvement and communication, rather than family structure, are the critical determinants of sexual behaviour.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The study concludes that family constellations do not significantly influence risky sexual behaviour among undergraduate students in town campuses in Nakuru County. The qualitative findings revealed that families are silent on matters of sexuality, with sex being a taboo topic, parents being absent or busy, and religious strictness sometimes leading to rebellion. This silence creates a vacuum that is filled by peer norms and social media.

The non-significant quantitative finding is theoretically consistent with the proposition that family influence operates through the transmission of cultural scenarios and interpersonal scripts; when families are silent on sexuality, this transmission mechanism is disrupted.

Recommendations: Parents and guardians should promote open, age-appropriate and non-judgemental communication about sexuality, relationships, consent and sexual health. Such communication should provide young people with reliable information and opportunities to discuss concerns without fear of stigma or punishment. Families should also strengthen emotional engagement and maintain supportive relationships with their university-going children, even when they live away from home.

University counselling departments should provide accessible sexual health information and confidential counselling for students who may lack reliable family support. These services should help students evaluate information obtained from peers and social media and make informed decisions about their sexual health. Universities should also consider parent-focused educational initiatives that encourage constructive communication about sexuality.

Further research should investigate how specific family processes, including parental communication, emotional support and family relationships, interact with peer influence and social media exposure in shaping risky sexual behaviour. Future studies should use reliable measures and diverse student samples to establish whether particular aspects of family functioning are associated with sexual behaviour in different university settings.

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