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## Relationship between Post-Divorce Parental Alienation and Adolescents' Meaning in Selected High Schools in Kiambu County, Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

*Recent evidence stipulates that various parental contributions, such as parental warmth, empathetic parenting, encouragement, and parental involvement in general, are positively associated with adolescent flourishing. In this regard, post-divorce parental alienation creates an unfavourable environment that may disorganize adolescents from adaptive living. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between post-divorce parental alienation and adolescents' meaning/purpose in selected high schools in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study was anchored on PERMA well-being theory. The study employed a descriptive survey design using a mixed methods approach. Multistage sampling, inclusion, and exclusion criteria aided by cluster sampling were used to select 240 adolescents from a population of 3776. Purposive sampling was employed in the selection of 32 respondents in the FGD. Qualitative data were collected via audio-tapes recordings and field notes. Verbatim data were transcribed. Quantitative data were collected using Baker strategy questionnaire (BSQ) and the PERMA-Profiler. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, and percentages, while Chi-square analysis was used to test for the hypotheses. The computer software SPSS version 25 aided in the analysis. The findings revealed that post-divorce parental alienation affects adolescents' meaning /purpose. The study recommends that intervention measures be implemented in consideration of factors as follows. The implications of this research suggest the need for Family lawyers working with children of a divorced parents to carry out thorough investigations before awarding child custody to parents. Marriage and family therapists working with children of divorced families could profit from these results, which clearly show the negative effects of PA on adolescents' well-being. The study suggests that these professionals use the findings of the study to understand commonly employed PA tactics and how they affect those alienated in order to help them cope. Further, the study suggests these professionals use the BSQ to assess PA in this population.*

**Keywords:** Post-divorce, parental alienation, adolescents, meaning

### **1. Introduction**

According to Davids et al. (2017), recent evidence stipulates that various parental contributions, for instance, parental warmth, empathetic parenting, parental encouragement, and parental involvement, are positively associated with flourishing among adolescents. Additionally, Thomas et al. (2020) hypothesize that both the amount of time and type of association a parent dedicates to the offspring can contribute to a positive or undesirable outcome on their teenager's bodily, mental as well as social development. In addition, Baig et al. (2021) and Morawska & Sanders (2017) assert that the setting in which children are brought up is very important as far as their well-being is concerned. Moreover, Czyżowska & Gurba (2022) and Shoshani & Slone (2017) found that a supportive home environment is associated with children feeling loved, having a sense of mattering, and feeling affirmed, among others. Such an environment is required for adolescents to develop meaning and purpose in life, which is indicated by the following among adolescents: having feelings of fitting in the school, being involved in a cause greater than themselves where they get involved in doing communal service, offering themselves to do the tasks involved, and applying personal character assets. Consequently, Thomas et al. (2020) recommend that parents strive to have an affirmative influence in their adolescents' lives while satisfying the adolescents' requirement for self-sufficiency. However, parental alienation, which happens in the post-divorce divorce era, creates a hostile environment for adolescents which undermines adolescents' meaning and purpose in life.

Divorce statistics have been reported as rising globally, regionally, and locally (Kiplagat, 2020; Olofson, 2019; World Bank, 2017). In addition, studies assert that children are affected by and respond to stress, violence, and parental divorce (Erman & Harkonen, 2017; Olofsson, 2019; Warshak, 2020). It has been observed that most children of divorced/separated couples develop educational problems, including emotional challenges such as anger, loss, grief, and self-blame, among others (Garriga & Pennoni, 2022; Wambua et al., 2021). A high divorce rate could imply a higher level of parental alienation because PA is associated with parental conflicts that arise after divorce and separation (Harman et al., 2019). According to APA (2020), parental alienation denotes circumstances where an offspring is indoctrinated by one parent to reject the other. This denunciation of the parent by the child is unwarranted, or it happens for no justifiable reasons (Warshak, 2020). There seems to be a general consensus that parental alienation is common in non-intact families, particularly those contesting child guardianship disputes (Harman et al., 2019). In post-divorce parental alienation, children are involved in parental battles where children are implicated in their parent's disagreements. In addition, Camisasca et al. (2019) posit that in PA, a child is used as an envoy and a confidant about problems with the targeted parent or is enticed to become an ally in the fight. The existence of parental alienation has been widely documented (Vanderbilt university medical center study, as cited by Bernet, 2021). This institution of higher learning reports that indication of the existence of parental alienation can be found in at least 1000 books, book sections, and articles that have been made available in emotional health and legal-specific periodicals. Furthermore, Saini et al. (2016) posit that most data on parental alienation is extracted from lawsuits, expert views, methodical case studies, and qualitative investigation. Parental alienation during childhood has been associated with psychological and social problems emanating from the damaged emotional bond between the child and one parent (Mirrales et al., 2021). In order to cope with the emotional pain, those alienated have been reported to use alcohol and other substances (Tran & Lumley, 2019; Vehaar, 2022). Additionally, PA is also associated with injured peer relationships and anxiety among estranged people (Jafee, 2017; Sirbu et al., 2020).

The term 'meaning' denotes having a belief or involvement in something bigger than oneself, which could result from religion, piety, or even backing or support (Kovich et al., 2022). In addition, there has been a consensus among authors that having meaning in life is an imperative psychological requirement that plays a significant role in flourishing and also health (Czekierda et al., 2017; Disabato et al., 2017; FioRito, 2021; Flett et al., 2022; Routledge & Vail III, 2020). On the importance of having a meaning in life, Vail III (2020) mentioned that an increasing body of investigation categorizes significance in life as one of the essential human requirements that strongly impact both psychological as well as physical well-being of individuals. Many authors have posited that the term meaning in life refers to coherence, purpose, and significance (Martela & Steger, 2016). Additionally, there are those who have adopted the three-dimensional connotation of meaning in life mentioned above (Heintzelman & King, 2019). Moreover, George and park (2016) report that there are other authors who have treated the word's meaning and purpose as indistinguishable, while others have treated the two as different concepts. The term meaning in this study is used interchangeably with purpose.

### *1.1. Statement of the Problem*

Although PA through juvenile has been recognized as causing both mental and social problems, such as damaged emotional bonds between parent and the child and undesirable emotions among those alienated, few studies have been done in Kenya to affirm or refute the presence of the same despite the dissimilar population characteristics between these studies and the Kenyan setting or context. Consequently, despite the conclusion that children of divorce suffer so much impairment, a few studies have been conducted using a sample drawn from Kenya to determine if these undesirable outcomes originate from parental alienation. If this problem is left unidentified and unaddressed, there is a possibility of many adolescents having compromised psycho-social well-being, which could, in turn, undermine their meaning and purpose in life. The focus of this study was to examine the relationship between parental alienation and meaning and purpose among adolescents in selected high schools in Kiambu county.

### *1.2. Research Objective*

To investigate the relationship between parental alienation and adolescents' meaning in selected high schools in Kiambu County.

### *1.3. Hypothesis*

- $H_0$ : There is no statistically significant relationship between parental alienation and adolescents' meaning and purpose in selected public county high schools in Kiambu County.

## **2. Methodology**

The study was conducted in public high schools in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study employed a descriptive survey design using mixed methods approach. Multistage sampling, inclusion, and exclusion criteria aided by cluster sampling were used to select 240 adolescents from a population of 3776. The study was informed by PERMA theory of well-being. The justification for the use of inclusive/exclusive criteria was the fact that the target population was unknown. Specifically, Kiambu County Ministry of Education did not have a census of students whose parents had divorced or separated. All students who met the inclusion criteria were involved in the sample. Accordingly, all female and male adolescents aged between 13-19 years who were identified as coming from divorced families were selected and included in the study. Three hundred students met the inclusion criteria and were issued with questionnaires. Out of the three 300 administered questionnaires, 240 were fully filled and returned. This represented a response rate of 67.91% which was a good representation. Purposive sampling was employed in the selection of 32 respondents in the FGDs. Data was collected

via the use of audio-tapes recordings and field notes. Verbatim data were transcribed. Quantitative data was collected using Baker strategy questionnaire (BSQ) and the PERMA-Profler. Baker strategy questionnaire (BSQ) was used to collect data on parental alienation strategies, while PERMA-Profler was used to collect data on respondents' meaning (well-being). Instruments pretesting was done at the piloting stage. This was conducted in Kiambaa day mixed day high school. The rationale behind doing a pilot study, as Creswell (2017) informs to establish the content and the internal and external validity of the instrument. According to Sileyew (2020), conducting a pilot study is essential to ensure both the reliability and validity of the tools used in the study. Although the study employed standardized tools, which have been reported to have high reliability and as well as high validity, the researcher saw the need to do a pilot study. Additionally, the need to do the pilot study was driven by the fact that these instruments have been used on a sample outside of sub-Saharan Africa. It was also essential to find out if the language used was difficult for the respondents to comprehend. The adolescents used in the piloting stage had similar characteristics to those from Kikuyu sub-county in the following ways;

- They were from public mixed day high schools,
- They Had come from divorced families, and
- They were between 13-19 years

The tools were also verified at PAC's university psychology department. BSQ was used to identify parental alienation strategies employed among the respondents in which participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (very often). The PERMA-profler, which is a brief multidimensional measure of flourishing by Butler and Kern (2016), was employed to assess levels of meaning/purpose among adolescents. The measure employs Likert -type responses where questions are on an 11-point scale ranging from 0-10, where 0 means not at all and 10 means completely. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

### 3. Findings and Discussions

This section encompasses results and discussions of the variables involved in the study. The examination was done in harmony with the stated objective of the study, which was to establish the relationship between parental alienation and adolescents' meaning. Additionally, the two variables were correlated using Pearson correlation to establish the relationship between them.

In order to establish the relationship between parental alienation and adolescents' meaning/purpose, information was gathered from the adolescent in relation to the parental alienation strategies they had been subjected to by their parents. Additionally, these results were subjected chi-square test for the purpose of identifying their meaning/purpose. The findings are presented and discussed in reference to PERMA -well-being theory of flourishing, as shown in table 1. It had been hypothesized (H0) that parental alienation was associated with meaning and purpose. Parental alienation was rated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (very often). Adolescent well-being, which consisted of three constructs - interpersonal relationships, sense of accomplishment, and purpose, was measured using an 11-point scale ranging from 0-10, where 0 meant not at all and 10 meant completely. Multivariate analysis was employed to assess the relationship between parental alienation and Adolescents' meaning. Bivariate analysis consisting of a chi-square, an odd ratio at a 95% confidence interval was used in drawing an association between parental alienation (IV) and adolescents' well-being (DV). An odds ratio (OR) was used to measure the level of association between an exposure and an outcome. The Chi-Square statistic compares the tallies or counts of categorical responses between two (or more) independent groups. To interpret the Chi-Square statistics, the convectional a p-value was used where if the p-value is less than 0.05, then we deduce that the relationship between parental alienation (IV) and adolescents' well-being, (DV) (interpersonal relationships, sense of accomplishment, and purpose) is not by chance. The findings are shown in table 1.

Meaning /Purpose PERMA Score	0-3		3-5		5-7		>7 scores		Odd Ratio	Chi- Square	P- Value
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
PA Baker score											
Severe >3	34	14.0	72	30.0	110	46.0	24	10.0	6.04	40.4	0.02
Moderate (2-3)	29	12.0	48	20.0	139	58.0	24	10.0	4.89		
Mild (1-2)	24	10.0	96	40.0	139	44.0	14	6.0	2.91		
Mild (0-1)	106	44.0	158	66.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1.2		

Table 1: Parental Alienation and Adolescents' Meaning and Purpose

The findings in table 1 show the observed and expected values for each category of the variable. The study findings revealed that there was a significant association between parental alienation (IV) and adolescents meaning /purpose construct likelihood of  $\chi^2 = 40.4 < 0.5$ , which indicates that respondents who reported being exposed to a high level of alienation also reported a high level of PERMA mean score. Respondents with severe levels of parental alienation (above 3 Baker Likert scale) were 6.04 times more likely to have a high score of above 7 in the PERMA meaning scale (OR 7.42, 95%, than any other group of, for example, Moderate Baker Score (2-3) (OR 4.89, 95% or Mild (1-2) (OR 2.91, 95% or Mild (0-1) (OR 1.2, 95%).

3.1. Testing Hypothesis Analysis

- H01: There is no statistically significant relationship between parental alienation and adolescents’ meaning and purpose in selected public county high schools in Kiambu County.

The study sought to establish the degree of association between two or more variables. The test yields Pearson correlation coefficient statistics (r) whose values lie between -1 and +1. 'r' measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two variables (Sekeran & Bougie, 2011). A value closer to +1 shows a strong positive relationship, whereas a value closer to -1 shows a strong negative relationship at a significance level of less than 0.05. In this objective, the independent variable of the study was parental alienation, and the dependent variable was adolescents' meaning and purpose. Hypothesis testing was done using Pearson correlation, where the score of parental alienation was correlated against the score of adolescent well-being construct of meaning. The findings are represented using a scatter-plot, as shown in figure 1.

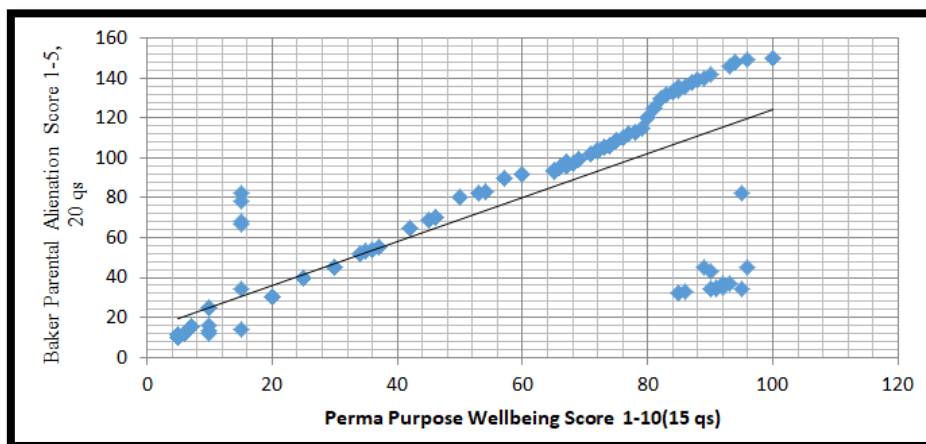


Figure 1: Purpose Well-being Scores

The findings presented in the Scatter-plot show that there was a significant association between parental alienation (IV) and adolescents’ meaning construct, and therefore the null hypothesis was rejected ( $R^2 = 0.565$ ,  $p$  value < 0.05). This implies that parental alienation scores accounted for 56.5% of PERMA meaning scores. Holding all other factors constant, a unit increase in parental alienation scores was attributed to an increase of 12.0 PERMA scores in adolescents’ meaning and purpose construct. The more the scores of parental alienations, the more the scores for meaning/ purpose damage in adolescents. The likelihood of this emotional disturbance seems to increase in line with the severity of parental alienation. Within the framework of PERMA, meaning is connected with the sensation of having a purpose in one’s lifetime or being involved in a cause bigger than one’s self (Steger, 2018). Those with a life purpose have been reported to experience life gratification, and self-realization, to have emotions of contentment in several domains (Natalia & Ewa, 2022). The study findings revealed that most of the respondents were struggling with a negative sense of self, with feelings of self-stigma, and had rigid unhelpful beliefs about their experiences, and these hampered the life-meaning construct of well-being. Most did not have self-acceptance, and thus, it was challenging to be involved in matters outside themselves that touched on others. The following themes emerged from the FGDs, namely: self-blame, anti-mattering feelings, sense of mattering, adaptive coping, and maladaptive coping. These are shown in table 2 below.

3.2. Qualitative Themes from Focus Group Discussion

Self-blame	Guilt, Self-loathing
Anti-mattering feelings/low self-esteem	Powered by the belief parent does not need them, care for them, or show no interest in them:
Sense of mattering	Feeling worthwhile, mattering to society
Adaptive coping	Prayers, meaning-making, listening to soothing music,
Maladaptive coping	Use of alcohol and drugs, externalized behaviors, repression of painful emotions

Table 2: Themes and Sub-Themes as Indicators of Meaning/Purpose

3.3. First Emergent Theme: Self-Blame

Some adolescents struggled with guilt feeling, blaming themselves and others. This finding concurred with Tran & Lumley (2019) and Lai & Oei (2017) who established that adolescents use maladaptive coping during stressful situations like parental conflicts. In this study findings, the respondents irrationally blamed themselves for both parental divorces. They also blamed themselves for rejecting the TP for no justifiable reasons.

Respondents reported:

Respondent No. 001 said, "I think that I was responsible for my parents' divorce and my falling out with my mother. This makes me feel guilty ... I keep asking myself what I would do differently if the clock and time

*could be reversed. I had a great relationship with my mother, which I really miss. Anyway, I am to blame for what I am currently experiencing."*

*Respondent No.007 said, "Sometimes I blame myself for being gullible. I listened to the negative remarks my mother made about my father, and I ended up hating him for opinions that were my mother's .... if only I had used my own judgment ..."*

### 3.4. Second Emergent Theme: Anti-Mattering/Low-Self-Esteem

The above-mentioned negative emotions and negative view of self agree with Rosenberg and McCullough (as cited by Flett et al., 2022) concept of anti-mattering. This concept postulates that the person who unswervingly feels a sense of mattering to others ought to have a central sense of self-worth. In sharp contrast, the individual with a high sense of anti-mattering will have an undesirable self-worth fueled by a sense of not being cherished by other people. These authors acknowledged four components of mattering, namely: the sense that other persons depend on us, the insight that other individuals deem us significant, and the consciousness that other persons are enthusiastically paying attention to us. A fourth element is the feeling that other people would miss us if we were no longer around. In parental alienation, one parent wittingly seeks to isolate the targeted parent (AP) from their offspring. The prevailing alienation course, in effect, cuts the association with the embattled parent and aids in aligning the children's devotion to the alienating parent (AP). In addition, When the children display any love, attention, or affection to the embattled parent, they primarily feel as though they're being unfaithful and unloving to the estranging parent.

The low self-esteem was caused and augmented by the internalization of inflexible beliefs of having instigated both parental divorce and rejecting the TP. Despite being an adult, a parent was largely responsible for it. These subjective illogical beliefs were largely responsible for adolescents' development of anti-mattering feelings and other undesirable emotions like rage, embarrassment, and frustrations reported by the respondents, amongst others. These results significantly agree with Mak and Cheung (2008), who confirmed that low self-esteem and self-stigma were connected with undesirable emotions, for instance, rage, self-blame, embarrassment, and depression. Consequently, these undesirable emotions impeded the adolescents' purpose in life and self-acceptance caused and maintained by their illogical beliefs that they were responsible for their predicament. Some general feelings shared by these respondents were; not feeling seen, not feeling heard, or valued by parents and others. These responses indicated that the respondents did not feel they were leading a purposeful life; they did not believe what they did in life was valuable and worthwhile to others.

Respondents mentioned:

*Respondent 003 reported, "I do not feel enough or important. When the teacher asks me to answer a question in class, I hesitate to give the answer. I always doubt my capability to give the correct answers."*

*Respondent no 014 said, "I do not feel worthy. When my friends ask me to attend a party, I usually decline. I feel like I will be the odd one out."*

*Respondent 031 said, "I do not believe I am likable or lovable. I see no need to reach out to others. I guess no one would notice me or say I did a good thing."*

*Respondent no 020 mentioned, "I feel guilty when I say no to people. I guess I like pleasing people too much, and I do not know why."*

### 3.5. Third Emergent Theme: Having A Sense of Mattering.

On a positive note, the study also established that although the respondents were coerced into believing the negative comments about the TP without them establishing their authenticity, and therefore self-loathed, some still had healthy levels of the purpose of life. They were indicated by positivism, optimism, and being involved in a cause greater than themselves. They shared the following feedback, which implied they were leading a purposeful life. The responses also demonstrated that respondents felt what they did with their lives was valuable and worthwhile. This also showed they had a sense of direction in their lives.

Respondents remarked:

*Respondent No. 024 said, "I am always happy regardless of my situation."*

Other adolescents expressed optimism about their destinies.

*Respondent No. 025 remarked, "I am going to be a pilot. Nothing or no one except God can stop me from realizing my dream."*

This demonstration of having a life purpose was beneficial to the respondents in that individuals with a purpose in life have a lesser amount of conflict when making health-related choices and are also more likely to self-regulate when making these choices and accordingly experience better psychological consequences (Kang et al., 2019). Additionally, having a purpose in life can assist in overpowering stress, depression, anxiety, and other mental problem (Freedland, 2019). Moreover, Lewis et al. (2017) posit that having a robust life purpose is associated with decreased risk of enduring conditions such as cognitive damage. This sense of mattering could be said to have been a protective factor against stress, anxiety, and depression among the respondents (Kang et al., 2019).

### 3.6. Fourth Emergent Theme: Adaptive Coping

The current study also found that though some of the adolescents used maladaptive coping, there were others who employed adaptive coping as a way of responding to PA. Among the examples given in the FGDs were the following:

- Meaning-making,
- Spirituality,
- Desire to raise awareness of parental alienation,

- Desire to create support groups in which they could share their experiences with others with similar experiences

This way, alienated respondents and others would cope better with the phenomenon. Some of these adapting coping methods are discussed here below. These are meaning-making, adolescents' faith in God, and the desire to raise awareness of parental alienation.

### 3.7. Meaning-Making

Some adolescents made attempts to make sense of their experiences which was identified as an example of adaptive coping skills. Some of the respondents mentioned that they had made meaning out of their experiences of PA. There were those respondents who reported that, in some instances, they stayed alone for some time, reflecting on the meaning of what they had gone through. This finding significantly concurs with that of Ryff (2014), who asserts that a person's capability to accept several aspects of self, comprising the positive and undesirable, is a step in the correct direction towards augmenting their affirmative self-acceptance, thus increasing their mental well-being.

Respondents remarked:

*Respondent No. 010 remarked, "Sometimes it is like I daydream. I lock myself in my bedroom for at least one hour to try to reflect on the meaning of PA and why it has to happen to me. I try to ask myself what blessings and lessons it has for me because my grandmother once told me that in all tough situations, there is both a blessing and a lesson. I, therefore, look for this as I would not want to miss the two."*

The second identified theme in adaptive coping was adolescents' faith in God. Most of the adolescent contributors in this study professed Christian faith and most had a solid belief in God.

Respondent reported:

Respondent No. 009 expressed her faith and reliance on God:

*"I do not know how things could have turned out for me were not for my belief that God is all-knowing; therefore, nothing happens without him knowing. Guess my suffering has a reason. God gives me hope and strength to carry on when times are difficult. I always make sure I remain close to God by praying consistently and praising him. Nothing is impossible with God, and I am confident he will give me peace and even reunite me with my father, whom I rejected for no good reason. Sure, he has forgiven me already."*

Thus, it is evident from the study findings that the adolescent's faith in God aided most of them in making sense of their experiences. Their belief that what was happening to them was in the will of God assisted them in cultivating a self-positive approach, thus enhancing their capability to attain self-acceptance. This helped the respondents to keep moving as opposed to stagnation while doing their best in academics, notwithstanding the endless trials they encountered. Dependence on God acts as a spring of hope and well-being to those who are sorrowful, strength to the feeble, and aids those suffering in making sense of their lives (Matthew 7:7, New International Version, 1984). Hope acts as a cushion against despondency and desperation while struggling with perpetual challenges or problems.

Desire to Raise Awareness on Parental Alienation. Another identified adaptive coping theme was the desire to raise awareness of the phenomenon of parental alienation. Most of the respondents desired to be involved in making other people, especially parents and adolescents, understand what parental alienation is and how it negatively impacts those alienated. Through this creation of awareness, the alienated adolescents felt they would be useful by serving others. This desire to be involved in the creation of awareness about the existence of PA demonstrated a desire on the part of the respondents to be involved in a cause greater than themselves which was a pointer to life purpose. This was a positive coping strategy. This way, the adolescents would contribute to the parental alienation research. These study findings agree with Verhaar et al. (2022), who found that many of the respondents wanted to raise awareness and thus help others cope better despite the difficulties PA had presented to them.

Respondents remarked:

*Respondent 011 remarked, "I am glad to have participated in this study because I believe it will help in creating awareness about the existence of the phenomenal and its oncomes on children."*

*Respondent no 006 mentioned, "I would love to be included in a support group for those children who have been subjected to parental alienation behaviours so that we can encourage each other."*

### 3.8. Fifth Emergent Theme: Maladaptive Coping

Maladaptive coping includes the use of the following tactics:

- Defense mechanisms,
- Dodging,
- Emotive coping,
- Emotional reactivity,
- Disconnection or detachment,
- Use of drugs and substances,
- Blaming self and others,
- Being in denial and internalization of emotions, among others (Tran & Lumley, 2019)

In the course of parental alienation, the AP puts very inflexible boundaries between the offspring and the TP which ultimately results in emotional detachment between the children and the TP. The study findings thus concurred with those of Tran and Lumley (2019) because most of the adolescent participants reported using coping styles that were maladaptive. Some of the ineffective coping methods included the following: indifference, suspicion, creation of barriers,

Use of alcohol and drugs, and withdrawal, among others. These methods are ineffective in nature and have a negative effect on adolescents' well-being.

Use of Alcohol and Drugs. Some of the participants confessed to the use of alcohol and other substance. Among the listed drugs include alcohol and cannabis sativa. Respondent No 016 had fallen out with both parents as a result of using drugs. He was very bitter about the falling out, which he perceived as rejection.

Respondents shared:

*Respondent no 16 shared, "I started using alcohol and bhang because I could not cope with the pain I was going through. I was dragged into my parents' conflicts and was duped into hating my father. The sad thing is that both of my parents have now given up on me. They caused me pain which made me use alcohol and drugs in order to numb the pain."*

These study findings considerably agree with those of Verhaar et al. (2022) who reported that over half of the respondents were using drugs of substance to cope with parental alienation. Additionally, similar to Verhaar et al. (2022) findings, some of the participants reported reliance on cannabis on a daily basis to survive the day or needing to use recreational drugs when involved in social occasions in order to have a nice time. The finding significantly agrees with those of Tran and Lumley (2019), who established that offspring disengaged from their parents are likely to utilize maladaptive coping mechanisms like avoidance and use drugs and substances to cope with stressful situations like parental alienation.

#### 4. Conclusion

The study findings revealed a significant relationship between parental alienation and adolescents' meaning and purpose. Specifically, alienated respondents struggled with negative emotions such as self-blame, guilt, and anti-mattering as far as their relationships with parents, peers, and society were concerned. In order to cope, some of the respondents used maladaptive coping strategies such as the use of alcohol and other substance employment of defense mechanisms, among others. On a positive note, some of the respondents employed adaptive coping mechanisms like using spirituality and meaning-making in order to cope with the experience of parental alienation. Therefore, this latter category of respondents demonstrated having meaning and purpose in their lives.

#### 5. Recommendations

In order to lessen the adverse effects of post-divorce parental alienation on adolescents' meaning and purpose, the study took into consideration the involvement of different shareholders, namely: the divorcing parents, religious leaders, ministry of education, marriage, and family therapists, as well as policymakers. These recommendations were based on the findings of the study.

- The study recommends that divorcing parents take an interest in understanding the adolescence stage and its challenges. This is aimed at helping these parents understand that dragging their children into post-divorce conflicts puts a heavy weight on their children, who are already going through a difficult period. Further, the study recommends the following; the divorcing parents remain involved in their teenager's life, practice peaceful co-parenting, ensure communication lines with their children are open, take their children for counselling and also join divorce support groups in order to cope.
- The study recommends that the ministry of education provides schools with trained counsellors to help adolescents cope with the aftermath of PA. Additionally, there is an urgent need for the ministry of education to ensure all schools come up with a database on those students coming from divorced families and who are at risk of PA.
- Marriage and family therapists working with children of divorced families could profit from these results, clearly showing the negative effects of PA on adolescents' well-being. The study suggests that these professionals use the findings of the study to understand commonly employed PA tactics and how they affect those alienated in order to help them cope. Further, the study suggests these professionals use the BSQ to assess PA in this population.
- The study acknowledged that post-divorce parental alienation and its effects on the well-being of adolescents is an area not widely researched. Consequently, the study research confirmed that the prevalence of parental alienation is not well documented in policies that safeguard the interests of children from divorced families. Based on these findings, the study joins other researchers in calling for establishing an official parental alienation behaviour rate in Kenya.
- Family lawyers working with children of divorced parents could use the results as their eye-opener that there is a need for them to carry out thorough investigations before awarding child custody to parents.

#### 6. Recommendations for Further Research

This study concentrated on the relationship between post-divorce parental alienation and adolescents' well-being. Conducting another study to discover whether alienated adolescents develop parental alienation syndrome (PAS) would be stimulating. This is because scholars have reported that children going through parental alienation develop parental alienation syndrome (Baker, 2020; Sirbu et al., 2020). It would also be interesting to conduct research on the relationship between post-divorce parental alienation and the targeted parents' well-being. This implies conducting another study from the targeted parents' perspective. This is because despite the huge body of literature recounting the targeted child and estranging parents, the viewpoint of the targeted parent remains under investigation, especially in sub-Saharan

countries like Kenya. Moreover, to gain more comprehensive knowledge on parental alienation, it would be exciting to research the coping strategies employed by adolescents subjected to parental alienation strategies.

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