



FACTORS AFFECTING PROVISION OF PASTORAL COUNSELLING SERVICES BY PASTORS OF THE AFRICA BROTHERHOOD CHURCH IN MAKUENI COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract:

Pastoral Counseling roles are major components of the wider responsibilities of Pastoral care among Pastors in all Christian affiliations. A Pastoral Counselor uses different therapeutic methods in helping their clients resolve issues and crises in life and in a developmental way help them find healing in their brokenness. The purpose of this study was to identify the factors affecting effective provision of pastoral counseling services by pastors of the African Brotherhood church in Makueni County and was guided by two objectives namely: the study employed descriptive research design to draw a sample of 35 pastors was selected using simple random sampling from population comprised of 176 pastors serving in Makueni County. Mixed methodology was used to obtain quantitative data using questionnaires and qualitative data using interview schedules. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively and inferentially, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The study found out that Many Christians seek counsel from their religious leaders on virtually all issues and crises that confront them in life. However the study found out that a pastor's level of education, lack of training counselling, community cultural values, and the changing family structure and orientation negatively influenced the pastor's role of offering counseling services. The study recommends that church leadership should ensure that pastors are trained on emerging counselling issues among their flock to ensure quality counselling service delivery.

Keywords: pastoral counselling, pastoral counselor, the church, parishioner's counselee

1. Introduction

Christians in their daily lives are faced with dilemmas on how to respond to issues and crises that confront them in contemporary life, on matters such as pain and

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suffering, sickness and death, family relationships and crises, issues of morality relationship with unbelievers and other believers, attitude towards wealth, role and relevance of cultural beliefs and practices among others. Generally Christians turn to their pastors as the first source of counsel whenever such issues confront them. Gibson and Michael (2008), Opines that pastors and other religious leaders are indeed very frequently the first source to whom parishioners in trouble or crisis turn to for help because of the importance they attach to their counsel. It therefore behoves the clergy to be well informed on both the theory and practice in Pastoral counseling in order to provide correct and timely pastoral counseling to those who seek it.

According to Ikenye (2014), a pastoral counselor should have a clear understanding of the role and place of scriptures in the pastoral counseling process. He looks at Pastoral counseling as a dynamics conversation involving the pastoral counselor, the counselee and God, whose voice and stand is reflected in scriptures. [Mathwasa \(2019\)](#) holds that away authentic pastoral counseling process must pay dues attention to the theories in both general and pastoral counseling ([Gibson, 2008](#)). Farther, pastoral counseling process ought to be in the context of a church and the community of the counselee. It should also connect with the counselee's ethnics and cultural environments. An appropriate pastoral counseling model should view the counselee as God's creations that bears the image and likeness of God and whose problems of living must also be addressed within a theological framework ([Gibson, 2008](#); [Muriithi, 2018](#)).

2. Literature Review

Church ministers as pastoral counselors ought to have the basic knowledge and qualifications in the theory and practice in counseling because pastoral counseling ought to be done in an ethical and professional way ([Louw, 2015](#)). Pastoral counselors lacking these qualifications often tend to use the scripture in a prescriptive and judgmental way during counseling encounters, leaving the parishioners seeking counseling services feeling judged and condemned. According to a pastoral counselor ought to see the problems of the parishioners who comes to seek pastoral counseling help, with a conviction that God's will and desire about all humankind is that they should live a productive and abundant life ([Nabwire, 2016](#)). A pastoral counselor should see themselves as sharing with the counsees a common story and identity of salvation as sharing with the counselee common story and identity of salvation in Christ Jesus. [Stanford and Philpott \(2011\)](#), opines that an effective Pastoral Counselor ought to be conversant with not only the scripture but also an ability to relate it to cultural and ethnic context in which the pastoral counseling activity is taking place. [Lartey \(2002\)](#), gives farther credence to this view by holding that Pastoral counselors who lack the skill to relate the scripture to the context of the counseling encounter will end up applying it in a judgmental way during the counseling encounter. This will leave those parishioners seeking pastoral counsel services feeling judged and condemned.

Pastoral diagnosis of the problem of living is key in proving the correct pastoral counseling help during counseling encounters ([Nabwire, 2016](#); [Stanford & Philpott, 2011](#)). According to [Pembroke \(2016\)](#) pastoral diagnosis is a process through which a pastoral counselor determines the parishioner's faith and spirituality and how events taking place in the parishioner's life are to be understood from the standpoint of Christian's faith. Ikenye (2014) look at pastoral diagnosis as the skill and ability to correctly identify the problem of living in the counselee through utilization of skills on theory and practice of pastoral and general counseling under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He prefers farther that a competent pastoral diagnostic model should understand the close relationships between the counselee's faith and cultural context, and the issues being considered in a counseling encounter.

Magezi (2006) narrows farther to the idea of African pastoral diagnosis and raised important insights into African worldview about suffering and distress in life. He opines that many Africans Christians still believe very strongly that the spirit world of their ancestors and evil forces in the spirit world profoundly influence the direction of life among the living ([Brunsdon, 2015](#); [Hays, 2015](#)). According to Noble (2003) when Africans Christians are facing distress, the pressure to conform to their community advice and opinions is quite high, because of their penalties that the community may impose for failure to conform. Thus an African Pastoral counselor ought to have a comprehensive knowledge of the Africans worldview of their clients in order for them to successfully bring to surface all underlying issues that lie hinder behind the problem of living for which the client is seeking pastoral help ([Lartey, 2002](#); [Mwiti & Dueck, 2006](#)).

There are several factors that tend to impact negatively on pastoral counseling efforts, according to pierce and Refu (2015). Firstly, pastors face competing demands for their time which ultimately reduce the amount of time available for pastoral counseling roles priority tends to go preaching and teaching, church administrative work and private time with families Secondly must summaries provide for very minimal content on pastoral counseling in the pastors training curriculum leading to pastors graduating with very minimal content on pastoral counseling skills. Thirdly, when pastors go to their go to the mission field they tend to automatically look at their core mandate as being to preach and teach the word of God to their parishioners. Pastoral counseling along other responsibilities is viewed as less important ([Hays, 2015](#); [Mathwasa, 2019](#)).

Fourthly, many churches especially those in the poor neighborhood many churches, especially those in the poor neighborhood of urban Centre's and most of those in the rural areas have very minimal or no resources to draw upon in the provision of pastoral counseling services ([Stanford & Philpott, 2011](#)). Fifthly, there is a misconception among many parishioners that pastors have readymade solutions to their issues and crises in life. Finally many parishioners struggle with their problems of living until they get quite far before they overcome their pride or shame and come for pastoral helped ([Ali, Mawani, Bano, & Ali, 2016](#)). According to [Muriithi \(2018\)](#), there are key personal attributes that an effective pastoral counselor ought to have. There are humility selflessness, empathy, sympathy, genuine concern for the counselee,

unconditional love for the counselee, an intentional listeners, a good communicator have an ability to clarify the emotions and thoughts of the client in order to help them understand themselves. McClatchy (2009) adds more personal attributes that include being available and approachable and appropriate use of probing questions in order to make correct diagnosis, self-esteem, integrity, knowledge on theory and practice of pastoral and general counseling appropriate use of biblical authority in the counseling relationship and appropriate education levels and continuous advancement.

3. Methodology

This study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- 1) To establishing the pastoral training levels attained by the Africa Brotherhood church pastors in Makueni county Kenya
- 2) To determine specific areas in counseling that pastors covered during and after pastoral training.
- 3) To establish what factors pastors cited as affecting their effectiveness in pastoral counseling roles.

This research employed descriptive design to help in collecting data that was descriptive in nature. The approach is appropriate in collecting information on attitudes, opinions and habits on a variety of social issues (Orodho, 2003). The study area was Makueni County in Kenya. The research target population was all pastors (176 in number) serving in the six church administrative zones within the County. Simple random sampling was used to identify a sample of 35 pastors which is 20% of the population. The research employed questionnaires in data collection. The questionnaires were first pre-tested on six pastors who results were not part of the sample used in the actual research. Data was analyzed through both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. Descriptive content analysis was used to analyze data from the open ended questions. Dominant themes were picked from the responses and categories in order to identify frequent participant responses. These resources were then explained interpreted and conclusions regarding the closed ended questions, the research employed quantitative data analysis through use rise of SPSS version 20.

4. Results and Discussions

The results of the study were presented both descriptively and inferentially. Descriptive data was represented using graphs and charts.

4.1 Sample Characteristics of the Respondents

This section represents the demographic characteristics of agendas and age of the factors.

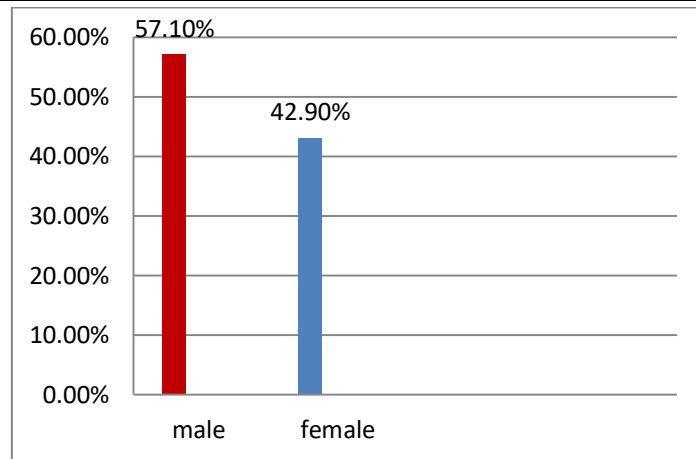


Figure 1: Gender of Pastors

The study revealed that 20 pastors (57.1%) of the pastors interviewed were male with the rest being females. However, female parishioners were found to be the majority (56.0%) compared to their male counterpart (44.0%). The findings therefore indicate that majority of the pastors were mostly men while majority of the parishioners were female.

4.2. Pastor Distribution by Age

This item sought to establish the distribution of pastors by gender. The study revealed that majority (37.1%) of pastors was aged between 41-50 years followed closely by 34.2% of those who were aged between 31-40 years. Further, the parishioners were seen to be fairly distributed across all the ages where 32.0% of them were aged between 31-40 years, 24.0% were aged between 18-30 years (youth) while 20.0% were aged between 41-50 years old. However, 24.0% of the parishioners were over 50 years old.

Table 1: Distribution of Pastors by Age

Age/years	N=35	%
18-30	4	11.4
31-40	12	34.3
41-50	13	37.1
51-60	0	0
Above 60	6	17.1
Total	35	100

The study revealed that the largest percentage (37.1%) of the factors was aged between 41-50 years, while the smallest percentage (11.4%) was age between 18-30 years.

4.3 Distribution of Parishioners by their Level of Education

It was observed that majority (48%) of the parishioners had secondary education as their highest level of education followed by 44% of those who said that they had studied up to post-secondary education level whereas only a very small proportion (8%) of them had primary education as their highest level of education. This implies

that majority of the parishioners had basic education which was very vital in making life decision.

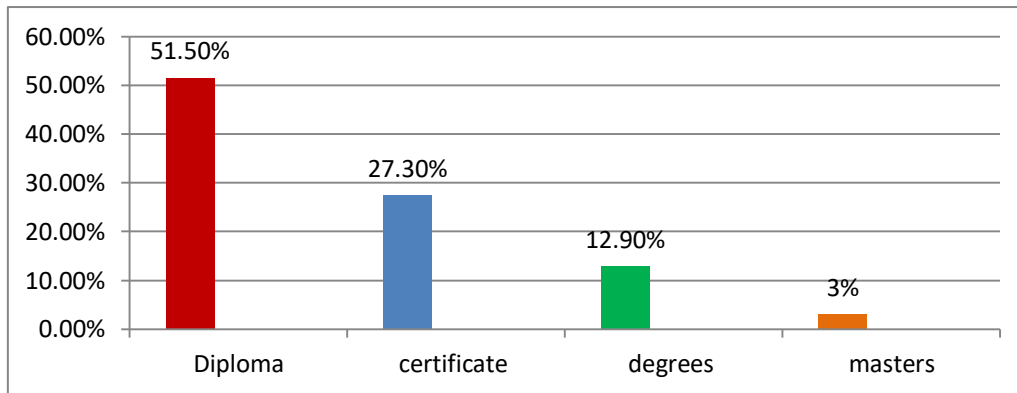


Figure 2: Percentages of Pastors who have done some studies on Pastoral Counseling

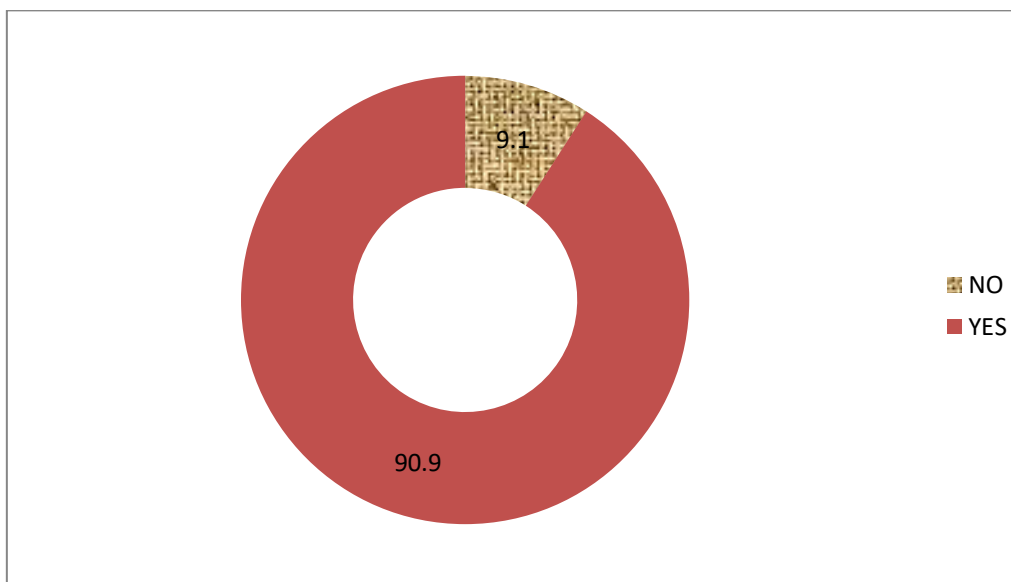


Figure 3: Percentage of Pastors Who Have Done Some Studies on Pastoral Counselling

A big majority of pastors (over 90%) indicated that they had studied some training in pastoral counseling.

However only 20% of the Pastors had a fairly clear understanding of what entails Pastoral counseling. This showed that level of content coverage on essence of topics covered in Pastoral Counseling.

4.4. Areas of Pastoral Training

Marriage counseling youth counseling, death/grief, counseling, skills in decision makes HIV/AIDS counseling conflicts management counseling anger and stress management. It appeared that these were topics selected in isolation and thought to the pastors without details of theory and practice of pastoral counseling. According to the responses from the pastor common issues that parishioners sought counseling on included.

Table 2: Nature of Issues in Counselling

Issues	Proportion (%)
Pre-marital counseling issues	85
Marriage counseling issues.	86
Counseling the sick and bereaved and decision making skills	67
Counseling children and youth	78

This clearly indicated that marital issues and youth were highly ranked showing that they took a lot of precedence as far as pastoral counselling was concerned. Therefore this confirmed that pastors need to have prior knowledge and experience in such matters. Pastors ranked the following pastoral duties and responsibilities higher those pastoral counseling roles. The rank of the items and their proportion is shown in the table below.

Table 3: Role of Pastors

Issues	Proportion (%)
Preaching and teaching the word to the parishioners	87
Presiding over church administrative work.	87
Fundraising for church projects	67
Spending some private time with their families.	74

4.5. Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Pastoral Counselling Roles

This item sought to address the last objective of the study i.e.: to establish that pastors considered as affecting their effectiveness in pastoral counseling roles. The following attributes were considered as key to effective pastoral counseling role. The factors included:

- 1) Experience. The amount of years in pastoral minister provided for adequate practice and experience in pastoral counseling roles.
- 2) Good investments. This attribute would enable the pastoral counselor to clearly understand the parishioners presenting problem. This would lead to correct diagnosis.
- 3) Adequate training in theory and practice of pastoral counseling.
- 4) Adequate education and training. As members of their congregations become more and more educated pastors should be able to connect with them and win their confidence and trust.
- 5) Pastoral counselors should keep in confidence any information disclosed to them by parishioners during counseling encounters.
- 6) Pastor counselors need to be well grounded on scripture knowledge.
- 7) Pastoral counselors should be good role models through actions and lifestyle to those that come to them for counseling.

The study also established a number of factors that negatively impact on pastoral counseling roles and they included:

- 1) Inadequate education and training levels must pastors felt that they needed to advance in their education and training levels to be more effective as pastoral

counselors. They felt that their current levels where overwhelming majority were diploma holders in divinity needed to be upgraded to a degree level and above.

- 2) Lack of adequate time for pastoral counseling- majority of pastor felt that time for pastoral counseling was competing with other more urgent pastoral duties.
- 3) Lack of resources like office facilities fiancés and information resources to enable them effectively discharge their pastoral counseling roles.
- 4) Failure by counselees to make full disclosure of their problems of living for while they seek counseling.
- 5) Lack of support from church authorities especially in areas of farther training and provision of required resources like relevant literature and office facilities for counseling activities.
- 6) Parishioners felt that not all pastors can keep confidential personal issues that are disclosed to them during pastoral counseling encounters.
- 7) Majority of the pastors felt that the following aspects of Kamba cultural beliefs impact negatively our pastoral counseling process.

A belief by some practicing Christians that traditional divines and witch doctors provide more immediate solutions to their problems than their pastors.

- a. Reluctance by the elderly people to disclose their issued to young pastors.
- b. Reluctance by newfolk to share their personal issues to pastors of the female genders.
- c. A teaching among many men that declining their issues to a pastoral counselor is a sign of weakness.

5. Findings

From the foregoing findings, it can be concluded that there is need for ABC ministry to provide supportive services for their pastors to access a lot more training on pastoral counseling. Owing to heterogeneity of Christian needs and diversity of issues, pastors ought to acquire specialized skills which would aid in availing support to parishioners to make informed decisions in life, handle conflict, stress management and facilitate peer counseling. With recent trends in information technology and social media platforms, there is need for customized skills on how to handle social media related pressures and conflicts which may emerge from their use especially by the young generation that spends a lot of time in social media engagement.

It was notable that most of the pastors had undertaken some selected pastoral counseling topics during their formations. Those who had undertaken pastoral counseling were trained on areas such as premarital counseling, conflict management, anger management, grief and bereavement counseling, depression and stress counseling and peer counseling. While the pastors had indicated that they had undertaken such units in pastoral counseling but majority appeared not conversant with the concept and essence of pastoral counseling. Their general understanding of pastoral counseling appeared to suggest a biblical prescription of solutions to the problems that parishioners would bring to them for pastoral counseling help. Findings

further indicated that there is average uptake of counseling services amongst ABC parishioners. Most commonly sought-after counseling services were premarital counseling, life skills on decision making and on marital related issues. Most pastors perceived pastoral counseling as an important responsibility bestowed upon them even though they ranked preaching and teaching the word highest, and the least was fund raising and overseeing church-based projects.

5.1. Recommendations

1. The pastoral training curriculum should be expanded include more facts on counseling like theories and practice of counseling and steps in the counseling process in order to make the pastors competent to address wider range of parishes counseling needs in a more comprehensive manner. The enhance curriculum should also include use and application of scriptures in the counseling process.
2. There is need for formation of pastoral counseling in –service training program for Pastoral who is already serving in order to enhance their pastoral counseling competence.
3. Pastors should create resources sharing platform in order to share ideas and information among themselves in various areas of pastoral counseling and how they are dealing with challenges in their ministry.
4. Pastoral need to acknowledge that cultural beliefs values among their parishioners have a lot of influence on how parishioners would espouse pastoral counseling services. Pastors should be conversant with the cultural beliefs of the congregants, so that cultural issues that have a bearing of the beliefs systems of the congregants are considered during counseling encounters.

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