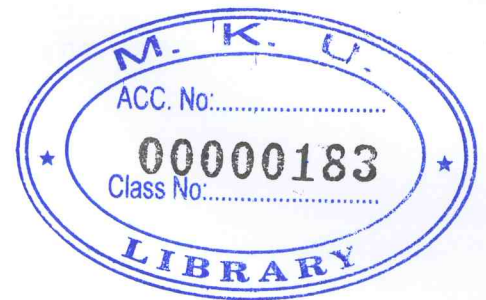


AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PASTORAL COUNSELING IN THE
COMMUNITY COUNSELING SERVICES IN MERU TOWN-MERU COUNTY -KENYA.



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A RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
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ABSTRACT

The Kenyan society is in transition status in the Global village, the traditional psycho-social and economic systems; these have been impacted by myriad of psycho-social problems, trickling from the global dynamics. Further, these have resulted into widespread psycho-social problem needing psychotherapy. This research sought to investigate themes, such as, the role, challenges, the intervention strategies and effectiveness of Integrated Pastoral counseling therapy, in alleviating the problems in the community to promote holistic mental health. This was based on the assumption that, Pastors form an essential segment of counseling service providers in the community. The Integration of pastors as counseling therapists, however, has not been fully exploited due to various challenges, which affect their optimal effective participation in their role, as counselors in the community. The objectives of the study was to establish if the community sought counseling services, to find out the Educational and Professional level of the counselor, to examine the major counseling issues that pastoral counselors encounter in their practice, to identify the challenges the pastoral counselors experience and the intervening strategies they adopt to cope with the challenges. The locale of the study was in Meru Town in Meru County - Kenya. It covered the community of fifty Churches of diverse doctrinal orientations. It was assumed that many pastors were educationally and professionally equipped and that they had basic counseling skills and competence to offer these services at various levels and spend time counseling. Pastors, however, face various challenges in performing their roles. Strategic intervention strategies are required to overcome these challenges in order to make pastors more effective in the community counseling. The study adopted descriptive survey design which was considered appropriate, as it was deemed to provide information on samples that was collected or their occurrences discovered in the area of the study. Data analysis was both qualitative and quantitative. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the quantitative data obtained. Content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data using The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (*SPSS. version 17*). After editing and a code-book for a data entry had been made, Percentages, means and frequency distribution tables were used for data analysis. Presentation was done through tabulation; pie charts and simple bar graphs. The final findings, the project report and recommendations were then made. The research established that Meru Town, has an acute need of counseling services. However, there are very few professional counselors available. The few that are available are inaccessible due to exorbitant cost. There are pastors who do, and would be available and willing, to offer pastoral therapy. The integration of this segment of counselors would alleviate the dire shortage. Finding established that their services would be harnessed, if they are given support through specialized training and integration in the community counseling services. The research recommended further research on the subject, Governmental, community and institutional intervention to enhance formal integration. The study was hoped to provide useful suggestions to: the community counseling services providers, theological schools, researchers, professional counselors, related professional and health agencies, to foster support and integration of the pastoral counseling services in the community counseling. Further significance of the study was to address policies which pose challenges to pastors' effective participation in counseling and arouse interest of consumers such as, public Institutions to recognize pastoral counseling as a therapeutically effective agency for alleviating psycho-social problems. such that, the Government and community might utilize pastoral counseling to supplement the scarce counseling resources available.