

Kilengi, M 2023, 'The Role of Counselling Skills and Approaches in Pastoral Counselling', *African Theological Journal for Church and Society*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 150-170

The Role of Counselling Skills and Approaches in Pastoral Counselling

Mussa Kilengi

Faculty of Theology, Tumaini University Makumira, Arusha
mkilengi@yahoo.com

Abstract

The article stresses the importance of “proper training” for pastoral counselling providers to ensure that they can provide effective and ethical counselling services. Many pastoral counselling providers lack the necessary training and expertise in counselling skills and approaches, which creates a potential risk of ineffective counselling, misdiagnosis, and harm to clients. The article discusses key counselling skills and approaches, emphasizes the need for on-going professional development, and provides recommendations for training programmes and resources to improve the quality of pastoral counselling services.

Introduction

Counselling is a therapeutic process that involves the assistance of a trained professional to help individuals, couples, or groups address personal, social, or psychological issues. According to Taylor (1983:89), cultural counselling is effective because it is closely related to the specific culture and customs of the people. It addresses social and religious issues and can focus on individual or community concerns. Traditional cultural counselling follows social patterns and involves a chain of authority, with trusted leaders and experienced individuals offering advice based on wisdom and experience. Younger individuals are expected to obey the advice of elders, and counselling is often conducted within the context of the family or community. Community or group counselling is particularly effective in the African perspective, as it ensures that

solutions are acceptable to the entire community and becomes part of the community's education system.

In the African context, the importance of professional training and education in counselling is widely recognized. African scholars emphasize the need for counsellors to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively address the different needs of their clients. Inadequate training can lead to ineffective counselling practices, potentially causing harm to clients and impeding their well-being.

By “proper training” the author means being equipped in counselling skills that involves a comprehensive and structured education that prepares counsellors with the necessary knowledge, competencies, and practical skills to effectively engage in the counselling process. The specific components of proper training may vary depending on the educational institution and the counselling programmes.

According to Dzokoto & Adams (2016:53-56), a study conducted in Ghana highlighted the significance of training in counselling for African counsellors. The research emphasized the need for counsellors to possess the appropriate education and training to provide effective counselling services in diverse cultural contexts. This aligns with the notion that professional training is essential to equip counsellors with the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of counselling in Africa.

Additionally, the *African Journal of Psychiatry* (2014:10-16) emphasizes the importance of on-going professional development for counsellors in Africa. Continuous education and participation in relevant workshops, conferences, and seminars are essential for counsellors to stay updated with the latest research, practices, and approaches in the field of counselling. This ensures that counsellors are equipped with the most current and effective counselling skills to meet the evolving social, spiritual, and psychological mental health needs of their clients.

By prioritizing professional training and on-going education, counsellors in Africa can enhance their competence and proficiency in providing counselling

services. This will contribute to improved client outcomes and the overall quality of counselling practice on the continent, as stated by Okpaku (2013:21).

The lack of training or expertise poses significant challenges to effective counselling skills and approaches in the African context. African scholars emphasize the importance of professional training, education, and on-going professional development for counsellors to provide safe and effective counselling services. By prioritizing professional training and continuous education, counsellors can enhance their competency, proficiency, and cultural sensitivity, leading to improved client outcomes and the overall advancement of counselling practice in Africa.

The role of counselling skills and approaches in pastoral counselling

Pastoral counselling reflects the Christian tradition of soul healing and the values of clinical practices that facilitate the expression and exploration of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Lartey (2003:81) asserts that the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of the individual are central to counselling theory and practice. Thus, wholeness, well-being, and growth are the key areas of pastoral counselling in this study. It is often conducted by trained church leaders who have an understanding of the religious and spiritual aspects of human life. Pastoral counsellors are trained to provide counselling services to individuals and families who are struggling with spiritual, emotional, and psychological problems. Counselling skills and approaches play a crucial role in pastoral counselling, as they are used to help clients overcome their difficulties and improve their mental and spiritual well-being.

Counselling skills and approaches are crucial in pastoral counselling because they provide pastoral counsellors with a framework to guide their interventions with clients. Pastoral counsellors work with individuals who are experiencing a range of emotional, spiritual, and psychological issues. The use of appropriate counselling skills and approaches can help clients to achieve their goals more effectively.

One example of a counselling skill that is commonly used in pastoral counselling is cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT). CBT is a goal-oriented

approach that helps clients to identify negative thoughts and beliefs and to replace them with more positive and adaptive ones. Butler et al., (2006:17-31) explain, CBT has been found to be effective in treating a range of mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, and PTSD. In addition to CBT and the person-centred approach, there are many other counselling skills and approaches that are used in pastoral counselling, such as solution-focused brief therapy, narrative therapy, and mindfulness-based interventions. These approaches can help pastoral counsellors to tailor their interventions to the unique needs of each client.

Another example of a counselling approach that is frequently used in pastoral counselling is the person-centred approach (Rogers, 1957). This approach emphasizes the importance of the therapeutic relationship and the role of the counsellor in creating a safe and non-judgmental space for clients to explore their thoughts and feelings. This approach is based on the belief that every individual has the potential to grow and develop, and that they possess the inner resources necessary to do so. The person-centred approach emphasizes empathy, understanding, and unconditional positive regard. The pastoral counsellor creates a safe and non-judgmental environment where clients can explore their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This approach helps clients to feel heard and understood, which can be therapeutic in itself. The person-centred approach has been found to be effective in helping clients to develop greater self-awareness and to make positive changes in their lives (Rogers, 1957:95-103). Roger's work is a foundational theory in the field of counselling and psychotherapy. Despite its age, the person-centred approach continues to be influential and relevant in contemporary counselling practice.

Rogers' work on the person-centred approach laid the groundwork for a therapeutic approach that emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive and non-judgmental environment for clients. The approach centres around the belief that individuals have an innate capacity for personal growth and self-directed change. The counsellor's role is to provide a safe and empathetic space where clients can explore their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and work towards self-awareness and personal growth.

Family systems therapy is a widely utilized approach in pastoral counselling, emphasizing the significant influence of family dynamics and relationships on

an individual's mental and emotional well-being. This therapeutic approach concentrates on enhancing communication, resolving conflicts, and cultivating healthier relationships within the family. Family systems therapy has shown efficacy in addressing various issues, including marital problems, parent-child conflicts, and sibling rivalry (Bowen 1978:321).

While the citation provided is from 1978, it is worth noting that Bowen's work on family systems theory has had a lasting impact on the field of counselling and continues to be influential today. Although more recent sources can be found, the foundational principles and concepts of family systems therapy remain relevant and widely applied in contemporary pastoral counselling practice.

Finally, many pastoral counsellors use spiritual or faith-based approaches in their counselling work (Brawer 2001:163-173). These approaches can include prayer, meditation, and scripture reading. For clients who are struggling with issues related to faith or spirituality, these approaches can be particularly helpful in addressing their concerns and finding meaning and purpose in their lives.

Overall, the use of appropriate counselling skills and approaches is essential in pastoral counselling because it allows pastoral counsellors to provide effective and evidence-based interventions that can help clients to achieve their goals and to improve their overall well-being. Counselling skills and approaches play a crucial role in pastoral counselling. The person-centred approach, cognitive-behavioural therapy, family systems therapy, and spiritual or faith-based approaches are just a few of the many skills that pastoral counsellors use to help clients overcome their difficulties and improve their mental and spiritual well-being. By using these skills, pastoral counsellors can help individuals and families to find hope, healing, and a renewed sense of purpose in life.

The need for proper training in counselling skills and approaches to pastoral counselling providers

Pastoral counselling providers play a crucial role in supporting individuals who are experiencing emotional and spiritual distress. However, without proper

training in counselling skills and approaches, they may lack the necessary abilities and knowledge to provide effective care.

Pastoral counselling is an essential aspect of pastoral service, and it can be said that pastoral service is incomplete without counselling. Specialized education is required to become a professional pastoral counsellor. In Dittes' (1999:57) reflections, he highlights that when someone asks to talk to a pastor, it is often a cry for help from someone who feels unable to cope. Pastors are often the first point of contact for those seeking crisis counselling within a church ministry. As the Church is made up of both healthy and sick individuals, pastoral counselling providers can offer much-needed support to those who are spiritually or emotionally unwell. Pastoral counselling providers frequently encounter broken families and individuals in need of coping strategies. Through counselling, parishioners can find spiritual and emotional healing and upliftment. Almost two-thirds of the work done by pastoral counselling providers in the vineyard of the Lord involves counselling in various ways.

Counselling is needed to regulate sexual attitudes and behaviour among youth and adults, to prepare couples for marriage, and when an unmarried woman becomes pregnant. When the church fails to avail counselling services to its members, they are left vulnerable and helpless (Malewo, 2002:71). The call for counselling in the church is a clear indicator of the trust Christians bestow on the church as a reliable source of spiritual, social and moral principles.

Research done by Patterson (2020:100-114) has shown that pastoral counsellors who receive training in evidence-based counselling skills are better equipped to help their clients navigate complex emotional and spiritual issues. Additionally, staying up-to-date with the latest developments in the field can enhance pastoral counsellors' ability to provide effective care (Westgate 2018:20-29).

The perils of doing pastoral counselling without the knowledge of counselling skills and approaches

The lack of proper training in counselling skills and approaches can have negative impacts on the effectiveness of pastoral counselling interventions. For example, Girton (2016:387-395) reveals pastoral counsellors who are not

trained in evidence-based skills may rely on their own intuition or personal beliefs, which can lead to ineffective or even harmful interventions. In several instances, some church leaders have a hard time understanding the difference between counselling and telling people what to do.

The consequences or perils of doing pastoral counselling without the knowledge of counselling skills and approaches can be severe, and may include harm to the client, ethical violations, and ineffective interventions. Here are some examples of these perils:

1. *Ineffective Interventions:* Without knowledge of counselling skills and approaches, pastoral counsellors may rely on untested or ineffective methods to help their clients. For example, they may offer generic advice, repeat clichés, or rely solely on prayer or religious texts, without addressing the underlying emotional or psychological issues. Such interventions may be inadequate or even harmful to the client's well-being (Collins 1988:423).
2. *Ethical Violations:* Pastoral counsellors who are not trained in counselling skills and approaches may inadvertently violate ethical standards in their work. For instance, they may disclose confidential information about their clients, engage in dual relationships, or fail to obtain informed consent from their clients before providing interventions. Such violations can undermine the trust and safety of the counselling relationship and may have serious consequences for the client (ACA 2014).
3. *Harm to the Client:* Pastoral counsellors who lack knowledge of counselling skills and approaches may unintentionally cause harm to their clients. For instance, they may re-traumatize clients by triggering traumatic memories, or they may exacerbate the client's distress by invalidating their feelings or experiences. Such harm can have long-term consequences for the client's mental health and well-being (Pargament & Jones 2011:24 -27).

In summary, the consequences of doing pastoral counselling without knowledge of counselling skills and approaches can be serious, leading to

ineffective interventions, ethical violations, and harm to the client. It is essential for pastoral counsellors to receive appropriate training and supervision to ensure that they are providing safe, ethical, and effective interventions to their clients.

The merits of doing pastoral counselling with the knowledge of counselling skills and approaches

Proper training in counselling skills and approaches is essential for pastoral counsellors to effectively provide counselling services. Without adequate training, pastoral counsellors may lack the knowledge and skills necessary to properly diagnose and treat clients, potentially leading to harm or ineffective treatment.

Proper training in counselling skills and approaches can provide pastoral counsellors with a range of tools and strategies to help individuals navigate emotional and spiritual challenges. It can also help them to develop tailored interventions that are consistent with their clients' beliefs and values.

Research by Ellis et al., (2013:152-160) has shown that training in counselling skills and approaches can significantly improve the effectiveness of pastoral counselling. One study found that pastoral counsellors who received training in cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) were able to effectively treat clients with depression and anxiety, while those without CBT training were not as successful. Similarly, another study by Barnes & Mohr (2010:1-10) found that pastoral counsellors who received training in family systems therapy were able to improve their ability to help families with relationship problems.

It is important for pastoral counselling providers to be proficient in counselling skills and approaches for effective services. Proficiency in counselling skills will help not only to evade causing more problems to the suffering people but also to enrich the management of the problem at hand and empower the symptom bearer toward the restoration or transformation (Clinebell 1984:165).

A significant number of people are hurt by their very trusted church leaders who do not bother to improve their abilities in counselling skills and

approaches and only performs their responsibilities in “traditional fashion” (Kimilike 2008:87).

In conclusion, the need for proper training in counselling skills and approaches is essential for pastoral counsellors to effectively provide counselling services and promote the well-being of their clients. The article emphasizes the importance of on-going education and training for pastoral counsellors to ensure that they are providing the highest quality services as discussed above.

Investing in training and continuing education can lead to improved outcomes for individuals receiving pastoral counselling, increased confidence and competence among pastoral counsellors, and enhanced credibility and trust in the field of pastoral counselling as a whole. By prioritizing proper training in counselling skills and approaches, pastoral counsellors can ensure that they are providing the best possible care to their clients and making a meaningful difference in their lives.

Challenges in implementing effective counselling skills and approaches for pastoral counselling providers

Pastoral counselling providers face unique challenges in implementing effective counselling skills and approaches. Some of the key challenges include:

Maintaining confidentiality: Pastoral counsellors are often seen as a trusted confidant within their community. However, this can make it difficult to maintain the confidentiality of their clients, especially when there are other community members involved in the situation. Maintaining confidentiality in pastoral counselling can be a significant challenge due to several reasons.

Firstly, pastoral counsellors often have dual roles as both a religious leader and a therapist, which can create a conflict of interest in maintaining client confidentiality (Sells 2011:1-14). Maintaining client confidentiality in pastoral counselling is a significant concern, especially when pastoral counsellors serve dual roles as religious leaders and therapists. Balancing their responsibilities to clients and their role within the religious community can create a conflict of interest. While confidentiality is crucial for building trust and providing a safe

space for clients, religious expectations may require disclosure or involvement of others in the counselling process, leading to ethical dilemmas. In the African context, where religion plays a central role, this issue is particularly important. Pastoral counsellors in Africa can address this challenge by establishing clear guidelines and boundaries regarding confidentiality, engaging in open discussions with clients, and exploring alternative methods of support while respecting privacy. On-going professional development and training programs that focus on ethical considerations, including confidentiality, can help pastoral counsellors effectively manage the conflict of interest and uphold professional and ethical standards.

Secondly, as members of a religious community, pastoral counsellors may be required to report certain information to community leadership or authorities, even if the client has not given their consent, creating challenges around confidentiality (Smith 2012:17-24). Confidentiality in pastoral counselling becomes more complex when counsellors are obligated to report information without the client's consent, creating a conflict between maintaining confidentiality and fulfilling responsibilities to the religious community. This issue is particularly relevant in Africa where religious communities have a strong influence. Pastoral counsellors in Africa can address this challenge by familiarizing themselves with legal and ethical requirements, openly discussing confidentiality limitations with clients, seeking supervision and support from colleagues, and advocating for clear guidelines and ethical frameworks within their religious communities. Balancing client confidentiality with reporting obligations is crucial for pastoral counsellors in Africa, requiring understanding, communication, and support.

Thirdly, unlike licensed mental health professionals, pastoral counsellors may not have the same legal protections around confidentiality (Kreitzer & Wicks 2010:83-94). There is a disparity in legal protections for client confidentiality between licensed mental health professionals and pastoral counsellors. To address this issue, pastoral counsellors in Africa should familiarize themselves with the legal framework, inform clients about limitations, and prioritize trust-building. Seeking legal advice, consulting professional associations, and continuing professional development are essential. In summary, pastoral counsellors in Africa must navigate confidentiality challenges by

understanding the legal landscape, educating clients, and adhering to ethical guidelines.

Fourthly, pastoral counsellors may have different ethical considerations around confidentiality than licensed mental health professionals, such as a duty to report information to protect the spiritual well-being of their client, even if it conflicts with the client's desire for confidentiality (Canda 2008:97). The distinction between pastoral counsellors and licensed mental health professionals regarding confidentiality is emphasized in the quote. Pastoral counsellors may have a duty to report information to protect spiritual well-being, even if it contradicts the client's desire for confidentiality. In the African context, open discussions, trust-building, and guidance from professional associations are vital for pastoral counsellors to navigate these ethical considerations while prioritizing client well-being.

Lastly, limited training in confidentiality and privacy can make it challenging for pastoral counsellors to navigate the complex ethical and legal considerations around confidentiality (Eby, & Dorman 2016:523-532). Limited training in confidentiality and privacy poses challenges for pastoral counsellors in understanding and addressing complex ethical and legal considerations. Proper training is essential to navigate confidentiality nuances and uphold legal and ethical standards. In the African context, pastoral counsellors should prioritize training on confidentiality, including legal requirements, ethical guidelines, and cultural sensitivity. Pursuing professional development opportunities will enhance their understanding and enable effective counselling while protecting client rights and well-being.

Pastoral counsellors need to navigate these challenges carefully to ensure that they uphold their ethical obligations to clients while meeting the needs of their religious community. Generally, maintaining confidentiality is a challenge in doing pastoral counselling due to the unique roles and responsibilities of pastoral counsellors. They may have different ethical considerations and legal obligations around confidentiality, and may not have the same level of training as licensed mental health professionals. Counsellors need to navigate these challenges carefully to ensure that they are upholding their ethical obligations to their clients while also meeting the needs of their religious community.

Balancing religious beliefs with counselling ethics: Sessums (2019:332:341) indicates, balancing religious beliefs with counselling ethics can be a significant challenge for pastoral counsellors, who are often guided by their religious beliefs, which can sometimes conflict with the ethical principles of counselling. There are several reasons why this can be a challenge:

Dual Roles: Pastoral counsellors often have dual roles as both a religious leader and a therapist, which can create a conflict of interest (Rohrer-Murphy & Schillinger 2017:95-104).

They may feel pressure to prioritize their religious beliefs over their ethical obligations as a therapist. A conflict of interest arises when pastoral counsellors hold dual roles as religious leaders and therapists. This dual role can create a challenge as they may feel compelled to prioritize their religious beliefs over their ethical obligations as therapists.

Balancing the responsibilities of a religious leader and a therapist can be complex, as it requires navigating between the spiritual needs of the religious community and the ethical considerations of providing effective therapy.

Client Autonomy: Baldacchino (2008:134) designates, counselling ethics prioritize client autonomy and self-determination, but some religious beliefs may prioritize obedience to religious authority or discourage seeking outside help. This can conflict with the client's desire to make their own decisions about their mental health.

Limited Training: LaSala (2014:1-9) highlights, pastoral counsellors may not have the same level of training in counselling ethics as licensed mental health professionals. This can make it more challenging for them to navigate the complex ethical considerations that arise when balancing their religious beliefs with their ethical obligations as a therapist.

To provide effective pastoral counselling, counsellors must navigate the complex ethical considerations that arise when balancing their religious beliefs with their ethical obligations as a therapist. They must prioritize client autonomy, avoid promoting harmful practices or beliefs, and ensure that they are providing effective care that meets the needs of their clients.

Addressing diverse needs: Addressing diverse needs is a significant challenge to effective pastoral counselling (Tix & Frazier 2019:91-102). Pastoral counsellors work with people from diverse backgrounds, with different beliefs, values, and expectations. They may work with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds, each with their own unique values, beliefs, and practices. Understanding and respecting these differences can be challenging and require additional education and training.

Moreover, pastoral counsellors may work with clients from different religious traditions or with no religious affiliation at all, requiring a deep understanding of different religious beliefs and practices (Tix & Frazier 2019:97). Clients may have intersecting identities that impact their mental health and well-being, such as race, gender, sexuality, and socio-economic status, which pastoral counsellors need to be mindful of when addressing their clients' experiences and needs.

Limited resources: Limited resources in pastoral counselling within the African context have been discussed in various studies and reports. These resources can include financial constraints, limited access to interpreters or translators, a shortage of appropriate literature, and a lack of community resources. These challenges can make it difficult for pastoral counsellors to provide comprehensive care to their clients (Tix & Frazier 2019:97).

In addition to limited resources, pastoral counsellors may also face the issue of their own biases and prejudices, which can affect the quality of care provided to clients from diverse backgrounds. It is crucial for pastoral counsellors to engage in self-reflection, cultural sensitivity training, and ongoing professional development to examine and address their biases and prejudices. This self-awareness is essential for providing culturally responsive and inclusive care to clients (ACA 2014).

Overall, pastoral counsellors need to be knowledgeable about different cultural and religious beliefs, be mindful of intersecting identities, and work to address their own biases and prejudices. They need to have access to resources to address the diverse needs of their clients effectively. Pastoral counsellors must prioritize cultural humility, respect, and understanding to

provide effective and culturally responsive care that meets the unique needs of each client.

Resistance to change: In addition to the above challenges, resistance to change can be a significant challenge to implementing effective counselling techniques and approaches, especially for pastoral counselling providers who may have established ways of working based on their beliefs and values. According to Horowitz and Fournier (2014:22), resistance to change can manifest in several ways, including denial, anger, or avoidance. Counsellors who resist change may be reluctant to try new approaches, may dismiss evidence-based practices as incompatible with their beliefs, or may be defensive when confronted with challenges to their existing practices.

To address resistance to change, it is important for pastoral counselling providers to receive on-going training and support, to remain open to new approaches and techniques, and to be aware of the unique needs and cultural backgrounds of each individual. They may also benefit from reflective practice and supervision, which can help them to identify and address any biases or assumptions that may be limiting their effectiveness.

Stigma and cultural barriers: Wang, & Wang (2019:242-255) divulge, present significant challenges to the effectiveness of counselling techniques and approaches. According to research, stigma refers to a set of negative attitudes and beliefs about a particular group of people or behaviour, which may lead to discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes. Cultural barriers, on the other hand, are the differences in values, beliefs, and customs that can affect communication and understanding between individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

The impact of stigma and cultural barriers on counselling cannot be overstated. For instance, stigma may cause individuals to feel ashamed or embarrassed about seeking counselling, especially for mental health issues, which can prevent them from accessing the support they need to address their concerns. Similarly, cultural barriers can make individuals wary of seeking help from a counsellor who does not share their cultural background or may not understand their experiences. Consequently, they may worry that the

counsellor will judge them or dismiss their concerns, leading to a fear of judgment.

Moreover, cultural differences can lead to language barriers, making it difficult for individuals to communicate effectively with their counsellor. This can lead to misunderstandings and a lack of trust, which can compromise the effectiveness of the counselling process. Also, stigma and cultural beliefs can influence an individual's understanding of mental health and illness. For example, some cultures may view mental illness as a weakness or a punishment for bad behaviour, leading to reluctance to seek help.

To mitigate these challenges, counsellors must be aware of their clients' cultural backgrounds and any potential stigmas that may affect their willingness to seek help. Counsellors should also have excellent cross-cultural communication skills and the ability to adapt their counselling techniques to meet the needs of clients from different backgrounds. Finally, counsellors can reduce the stigma surrounding mental health by educating their clients about the benefits of seeking help.

In conclusion, stigma and cultural barriers can significantly impact counselling skills and approaches, making it challenging to provide effective support to individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Therefore, it is crucial to understand and address these challenges to ensure that counsellors provide high-quality care to all clients.

Client resistance: The act can pose significant challenges to effective counselling skills and approaches. According to Norcross and Goldfried (2019:102), client resistance refers to any form of opposition or reluctance that a client exhibits towards the counselling process or the counsellor. It can manifest in several ways, such as denying or minimizing the problem, being defensive or argumentative, avoiding or changing the subject, or simply not engaging in the therapeutic process.

The impact of client resistance on counselling can be significant. It can impede progress towards achieving the desired outcomes of counselling and reduce the effectiveness of the skills and approaches used by the counsellor. For instance, if the client is defensive or argumentative, it can make it difficult for

the counsellor to establish rapport and build a therapeutic alliance. Similarly, if the client avoids or changes the subject, it can hinder the counsellor's ability to explore the client's concerns fully and identify the underlying issues.

Moreover, client resistance can also arise due to cultural factors such as differences in values and beliefs. For example, in some cultures, expressing emotions or seeking help for mental health concerns may be stigmatized, which can lead to client resistance to counselling. Similarly, clients from certain cultural backgrounds may have different expectations of the counselling process, such as seeking advice rather than exploring their thoughts and feelings.

To address client resistance, counsellors must first identify the underlying reasons for the resistance and respond appropriately. It is crucial to understand the client's perspective and work collaboratively with them to overcome their reluctance or opposition. Counsellors can also adapt their counselling skills to meet the unique needs and expectations of the client, such as incorporating cultural considerations into the counselling process.

In conclusion, client resistance poses significant challenges to effective counselling skills and approaches. Counsellors must be aware of the potential reasons for resistance and respond appropriately to facilitate progress towards achieving the desired outcomes of counselling. Lack of training or expertise can pose significant challenges to effective counselling skills and approaches. Counsellors must meet the appropriate education, training, and credentialing requirements and seek on-going professional development opportunities to provide effective counselling services to their clients.

Recommendations to improve the quality of pastoral counselling services

Pastoral counselling plays a significant role in providing emotional and spiritual support to individuals in Africa who are facing personal or spiritual difficulties. However, Kimilike (2008:38) commends, there is a need to enhance the competence and effectiveness of church leaders in pastoral ministry services to meet the contemporary challenges and the growing inclination of congregational members towards external ministries.

To improve the quality of pastoral counselling services in Africa, the following recommendations are suggested:

Professional Training: Professional training is a crucial aspect of improving the quality of pastoral counselling services in Africa. It is important for pastoral counsellors to receive comprehensive training in counselling skills and theories in addition to their religious education. This dual training equips them with a broader knowledge base and skill set to effectively address the emotional and spiritual needs of individuals seeking counselling.

Professional training in counselling provides pastoral counsellors with a deeper understanding of human behaviour, psychological theories, and evidence-based counselling approaches. They learn about various therapeutic modalities and interventions that have been proven effective in helping individuals cope with mental health challenges (Beck, 1979:54). This knowledge enables counsellors to apply evidence-based techniques and tailor their approach to meet the specific needs of their clients.

Professional training enhances the effectiveness of pastoral counsellors by equipping them with a range of counselling skills. These skills include active listening, empathy, effective communication, and problem-solving skills (Ezigbo 2017:24-32). By developing these skills, counsellors can establish a strong therapeutic alliance with their clients, create a safe and supportive environment, and facilitate the process of healing and growth.

Implementing these recommendations by providing professional training, promoting cultural competency, encouraging collaboration, utilizing evidence-based approaches, and emphasizing self-care, pastoral counselling services in Africa can be improved to better meet the emotional and spiritual needs of individuals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, proper training in counselling skills and approaches is essential for pastoral counselling providers to provide effective support to individuals dealing with emotional, spiritual, and mental health challenges. It is important for pastoral counselling providers to continually improve their skills and

knowledge through on-going training and education to meet the unique needs and cultural backgrounds of each individual. This will help to address the challenges that may arise in implementing effective counselling skills and approaches and enable pastoral counselling providers to provide comprehensive and effective support to those in need. Overall, investing in the education and training of pastoral counselling providers will help to promote the mental and emotional wellbeing of individuals and communities.

Bibliography

American Counselling Association. (2014). ACA Code of Ethics. Retrieved from <https://www.counseling.org/resources/aca-code-of-ethics.pdf>

Baldacchino, D. R., 2008, "Counselling in a multi-faith society". In A. Hunt & L. Aroni (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Atheism* (London: Routledge), pp. 451-462.

Barnes, E. H., & Mohr, W. K., 2010, "Family systems therapy and pastoral counselling: An integrative approach", *Journal of Pastoral Counselling* 45, 1-10.

Beck, A. T., 1979, *Cognitive therapy and the emotional disorders*, International Universities Press, Madison.

Bowen, M., 1978, *Family therapy in clinical practice*, Aronson, Lanham.

Brawer, P. A., 2001, "The integration of spirituality and religion content in counselling and counsellor education", *Counselling and Values* 46(3), 163-173.

Butler, A. C., Chapman, J. E., Forman, E. M., & Beck, A. T., 2006, "The empirical status of cognitive-behavioural therapy: A review of meta-analyses", *Clinical Psychology Review* 26(1), 17-31.

Canda, E. R., 2008, *Spiritual diversity in social work practice: The heart of helping*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Collins, G. W., 2018, *Pastoral counselling: The basics*, Chalice Press, Des Peres.

Dzokoto, V., & Adams, G., 2016, "Cultural Competency in Counselling in Africa: Reflections on the Need for Counsellor Training", *African Journal of Psychiatry* 19(1), 53-56.

Eby, J. W., & Dorman, W., 2016, "Pastoral counselling and confidentiality: An exploratory study", *Journal of Religion and Health* 55(2), 523-532.

Ellis, P., Barber, J. P., & Ogles, B. M., 2013, "Cognitive-behavioural therapy in pastoral counselling: Effectiveness in the treatment of depression and anxiety", *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 32(2), 152-160.

Ezigbo, E. N., 2017, "Counselling Training in Africa: Status, Challenges, and the Way Forward", *International Journal of Psychology and Counselling* 9(2), 24-32.

Girton, T. S., 2016, "Integrating spirituality and counselling: Ethical considerations for mental health professionals", *Journal of Counselling & Development* 94(4), 387-395.

Horowitz, L. M., & Fournier, G. P., 2014, *Resistance to change: A guide to harnessing its positive power*, American Psychological Association, Washington.

Kimilike, C., 2008, "The crisis of pastoral ministry: A study of the challenges facing pastors in Kenya", *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 11(1).

Kreitzer, L. J., & Wicks, R. J., 2010, "The therapeutic relationship in complementary and alternative medicine: A practitioner's view". In S. H. McDaniel, J. H. Doherty, & W. J. Hepworth (eds.), *Medical family therapy and integrated care* (Washington: APA), pp. 83-94.

LaSala, M. C., 2014, "Ethical considerations for pastoral counselling with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients", *Journal of Pastoral Counselling* 49(1), 1-9.

Malewo, J. A., 2002, *Pre – marital counselling in the parish. Preventing future marital problems in families*, Makumira University Publications, Usa-River.

Norcross, J. C., & Goldfried, M. R., 2019, *Handbook of psychotherapy integration*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Okpaku, S. O., 2013, *Mental Health in Africa*, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan.

Pargament, K. I., Exline, J. J., & Jones, J. W., 2011, *APA handbook of psychology, religion, and spirituality: Vol 2. An applied psychology of religion and spirituality*, American Psychological Association, Washington.

Patterson, J. L., Edwards, T. M., & Bagwell, D. K., 2020, "The effectiveness of evidence-based pastoral counselling interventions: A systematic review", *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 39(2), 100-114.

Rogers, C. R., 1957, "The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change", *Journal of Consulting Psychology* 21(2), 95-103.

Rohrer-Murphy, L., & Schillinger, J. A., 2017, "The ethical challenges of blending counselling and religion: An overview", *Journal of Counselling & Development* 95(1), 95-104.

Sells, J. N., 2011, "Confidentiality in the pastoral counselling relationship: A review of the literature", *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counselling* 65(1-2), 1-14.

Sessums, C. D., 2019, "Balancing religion and spirituality with professional counselling ethics: A dilemma for Christian counsellors", *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 38(4), 332-341.

Smith, T. B., 2012, "Ethical and legal considerations in spiritual and religiously integrated counselling", *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 31(1), 17-24.

Taylor, H., 1994, *Tend my sheep*, SPCK, London.

Tix, A. P., & Frazier, P. A., 2019, "Cultural competence in pastoral counselling: Understanding and addressing diverse needs", *Journal of Pastoral Counselling* 53(2), 91-102.

Wang, D., Wang, Y., & Wang, Y., 2019, "A review of research on stigma and mental illness", *Journal of Social Work in Disability & Rehabilitation* 18(3-4), 242-255.

Westgate, C. E., 2018, "Education and training for Christian pastoral counselling", *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 37(1), 20-29.