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## Effectiveness of Pastoral Care in Holistic Development of Secondary School Students in Nyeri County, Kenya

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### ABSTRACT

The call to develop holistic students who display aspects of moral uprightness, resilience, emotional, spiritual, social and ethical competence, problem-solving skills and autonomy in the contemporary learning institutions have been on the rise. This is from the rising cases of religious radicalizations, unhealthy social networking, uncontrollable drugs and substance abuse among young people, early teenage pregnancies among girls that affect their smooth learning process, among others. To control the effects of the latter contemporary challenges, Nyeri County secondary schools have into place complementary Christian pastoral care and counseling programmes whose aim is to help in addressing the students' pathologies alongside ensuring holistic development of students. However, the programmes' effectiveness to develop holistic students have been on the question. This paper assess the effectiveness of Christian pastoral care and counseling programmes in developing holistic secondary school students in Nyeri County, Kenya. The findings from the study confirmed the commitment of the programmes in promoting character formation through instilling Christian values that facilitates social, moral and spiritual competence of students. However, the programmes' effectiveness have been undermined by various challenges that range from social-cultural, financial, and non-cooperation from the relevant stakeholders. The paper therefore recommends that the programmes need full support from all stakeholders if they are to achieve their intended objectives.

**Keywords:** Holistic, Development, Pastoral Care, Pastoral Counseling, Sponsor.

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### 1. Introduction

Today's societies have seen an increased violence, religious radicalizations, unhealthy social networking to young people, uncontrollable use of drugs and substance abuse. In addition, most of the learning institutions today, both primary and secondary schools, have been having the challenge of

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teenage pregnancy and abortions among young school girls which have affected their smooth learning process. The multiplicity of these social, moral and spiritual challenges in secondary schools reflect disconnect on the role of Christian pastoral care and counseling programmes in developing holistic students in schools. These among other contextual social, moral and spiritual challenges facing students in secondary schools, have compelled various governments to call for an effective pastoral care programmes both in primary and secondary schools. The main aim of these programmes being to develop holistic students who display aspects of moral uprightness, resilience, emotional, spiritual, social and ethical competence, problem-solving skills and autonomy in the contemporary learning institutions.

However, questions have been on the rise through various social discourse on the nature of learners and their capability to handle the contemporary social, moral, emotional and spiritual challenges that confronts him/her. In this context, what measures should secondary schools take to wholly prepare students transverse through contemporary life successfully? It is argued in this paper that Christian pastoral care and counseling programmes in Kenyan secondary schools play a crucial role in promoting the moral, social, psychological and spiritual growth of students. This is achieved through emphasizing on Christian based values in learning institutions, hence promoting a caring aspect to students.

As early as 1964, attempts were made in Kenya to promote programmes that focuses on the holistic development of the student in their learning institutions. Nyabwari, et' al (2013), posits that different commissions, for example; the Ominde Commission of 1964; the Gachathi Report of 1976; Mackay Report of 1988, among others, were established by the government to provide recommendations on how best education system can produce holistic learners. During this time, both schools and religious sponsors collaboratively developed approaches to promote pastoral care programmes in schools. As such, various denominations developed their pastoral care curriculum to fit their religious traditions in their sponsored schools.

However, in spite of all these commissions and government reports in the Ministry of education to address the rising problems from students, Kenya, especially between 1990s to 2001 and even up to date, has reported countable number of varied indiscipline issues which include; riots, murder, rape, violence manifested in heavy destruction of property among others ( Nyabwari et al 2013). Owinyo (2008) notes that in the early nineties, the government called for guidance and counseling, along pastoral care programmes, to be introduced into all schools as a means to dealing with violence cases from students. It is noted that even with the above directive, Christian pastoral care programmes were marred by lack of sufficient funds to train teachers in pastoral care skills.

## **2. Role of pastoral care and counseling in secondary schools**

The 21st contemporary society is engulfed by existential issues that are pathological to a student in the learning institutions. The emerging new cultures brought about by modern technologies, socialization platforms among others, have given young people various choices that have affected their moral and ethical decision-making process. This has created a contextual social crisis which necessitates the need to guide young people in various ways of approaching contemporary life. Within these contexts, most of the young people are confronted with various forms choices or decisions to make in life guided by contemporary philosophies of life, value systems and ideologies before him/her. In this case, proper contextual guiding becomes paramount on every choice to be made.

According to Schoeman (2015), pastoral care in secondary schools should be guided by the need-focused model as proposed by Best (1990). He notes that Best identifies three types of needs that learners go through. First, there are those needs which have primarily to do with the fact that they lack maturity and experience. As learners, they need security, guidance, moral support and love. Second, there are those needs which are primarily to do with the role of the child or adolescent as a learner. Learners need opportunities to acquire concepts, learn facts, practice skills, develop attitudes, explore feelings, reflect on beliefs and examine values. Third, there are needs which follow from the requirements of social order. Without order, no learner can develop, least of all in terms of personal and social development. This brings out the overall responsibilities of any pastoral care and counselling programmes in learning institution through various approaches and methodologies. However, any approach or methodology to be used must put into consideration of the contextual case of the African

learning environment at which the programme is operating. Kagema (2012) confirm this by arguing that any content and learning experiences in the schools should aspire on the needs and interests of the learner. He therefore, note that the purpose of education should aim at acquisition of one's full capabilities and the potentials hence enabling him/her to use the realized skills for the greater good.

Magezi (2016) gives general guidance that African pastoral caregiver today should consider within the pastoral ministry. He provides two essential elements that any comprehensive functional definition of pastoral care needs to comprise. Firstly, pastoral care is an expression of human concern through activities. In this context, he supports this through Christian scriptures as articulated in the saying of Jesus recorded in John 10:10, where Jesus asserts that He came that the 'lost' might have life and have it in all its fullness. Secondly, he observes that pastoral care has to do with the total well-being of the whole person. This, therefore, calls for the Christian pastoral care and counselling services to address the overall human well-being and the surrounding challenges. The above models give the purpose and central role of pastoral care that involves; guiding, healing, reconciliation, and sustaining.

### **2.1 Effectiveness of pastoral care in healing**

Most of young people find themselves antagonized by circumstantial social, emotional and spiritual challenges which may find them in a sense of loss hence the need for personal healing from the loss. Cerni (2017), observes that healing role of the pastoral function becomes paramount as a pastoral caregiver should help the affected person to be reinstated back to the form of totality. He observes that once the healing has taken place, one is placed in a better position than he or she was before. On his part, Guthrie (2014) note that one of an essential role of a chaplain in pastoral care ministry in any institution is facilitating healing within a person's soul.

The healing role of Christian pastoral care and counselling within the school contexts, therefore, becomes paramount as most of the students may regularly experience social, moral, and spiritual loss either originating from family or social environments. In this case, students may undergo loss of self-esteem as they are traversing adolescence stage. Mostly, this may be caused by; poor academic performance, teenage pregnancy, dropping out of school, alcohol and substance abuse, body changes during adolescence, among others. This loss of positive self-esteem may have a devastating effect on his or her overall performance. Therefore, the restored students achieve a new level of spiritual insight and welfare.

### **2.2 Effectiveness of pastoral care and counseling in sustaining**

This is an essential role of the pastoral role which involves the concept of supporting and ensuring aspects of satisfaction to people. Guthrie (2014) identifies four ways in which pastoral care can undertake a sustaining role to students. First is preservation where in school contexts, centers on supporting students in their distressful situation hence helping them to reclaim a sense of control in their condition. Second, is a consolation that contributes to comfort and consoles the students' feelings. Third, the consolidation that helps the student to unite recognize and appreciate their remaining available strengths within them to seek ways to cope up with the emerging social, moral, emotional, and spiritual challenges. Finally, the redemption which is an essential step of self - acceptance and recover from their sense of loss and ultimately able to come up with different plans of approach to related problems which may emerge in the coming future.

In addition, pastoral care and counselling providers in secondary schools, should enhance positive altitudes to students by developing coping strategies such as positive statements, self-control is an important aspect of personal resilience in life. Bradly (2016) sums up the sustaining role by arguing that pastoral caregivers give support during the challenging times not by promising a satisfactory outcome or better times, but by facilitating and helping coping mechanisms within them.

### **2.3 Effectiveness of pastoral care and counseling in guiding**

According to Guthrie (2014) guiding must be contextual, where it should meet individual's right while addressing the specific question at hand. However, he notes that the main aim is not to provide advice, but reaching the internal state of the distressed individual. Besides, Cerni (2017) describes the pastoral guiding role as an aspect of supporting confounded persons to make confident decisions

between alternate paths of thought and action. He notes that this role is needed when such choices are viewed as affecting the present and the prospect state of the social totality.

Within the school context, students in their school and home environment may find themselves in contextual dilemmas of making life decisions. As adolescents, they may not have the independence of making life decision as their peers move most, most also possess moral and spiritual relativism. It is at this teenage period that most are introduced into drug and substance abuse, premature sex, cyber-crimes, practice to be gangsters, and many others. This calls for a need for rigorous guiding in their decision-making processes where pastoral caregivers instill in them values that help them to be resilient in life.

#### **2.4 Effectiveness of pastoral care and counseling in reconciling**

In terms of reconciling, pastoral care has helped people look for ways to bring people and themselves together in ways that are respectful of their differences. Alexandru (2014), acknowledges that reconciling function seeks to re-establish the broken relationship between people, themselves, and God. Importantly, this aspect of helping to reorganize and reestablish self has promoted psychological and emotional relief to an individual that is crucial for emotional well-being. Guthrie (2014) adds that reconciliation centers on reinstating the damaged relationships triggered by the problematic situation. He also notes that relationship may be internal, where people need to reconcile within themselves, between their compromised values, or external, between them and other people in the family and the community.

If Christian pastoral care and counseling programmes in secondary school context are accorded the rightful attention, great positive impact will be realized on the student's overall social, moral, spiritual development and ultimately leading to academic excellence. In this case, students will show aspects of moral uprightness, resilience, emotional competence, will be spiritually equipped, social competent, acquire problem-solving skills and develop self-autonomy, hence holistically developed. This will lead to an over-all social balance.

### **3. Objectives of the study**

- i To examine the role of pastoral care programmes in Nyeri County secondary schools in development of holistic students.
- ii To assess challenges undermining the efforts of pastoral care in holistic development of students in Nyeri County.

### **4. Justification of the study**

The need to have students that have been developed and nurtured holistically in Kenyan secondary schools has been on the rise. The countable cases of rot in students' moral, social and spiritual values, clearly shows disconnect in the effective role of Christian pastoral care and counseling programmes in secondary schools. This study argues that emphases on effective pastoral care programmes in secondary schools have a major impact in students' holistic development if schools are to curb some of the major and alarming issues originating from students. In addition, the paper aims to provide a good ground which will broaden and provoke the current discussions on the need and place of effective pastoral care and counseling programmes in secondary schools in Kenya and Nyeri County in particular. There is a great need to reconstruct and review the current theological methodologies and theories within youth ministry in Christian context.

### **5. Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design where the data was collected using both questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The design was useful as it helped to describe and explain the nature of pastoral care and counselling programs, moral, social, and spiritual needs from students, how the programmes have been, and its future trends. Simple random sampling method was used to acquire a sample size of 68 school administration, 68 chaplain/CU or CA patrons and 99 students from the latter target population in 217 public secondary school in Nyeri County, Kenya. Yamane (1967)

formula,  $N / 1 + N(e)^2$ , with a 10% level of precision was used to acquire the representative sample of respondents.

## 6. Research findings and discussions

Having looked at the methodology we now turn to research findings before we give a conclusion and recommendation of the research.

### 6.1 Assessment of pastoral care and counseling programmes in holistic development of secondary schools students in Nyeri County, Kenya

The study found that Christian pastoral care and counseling programmes in Nyeri County secondary schools have been contributing positively to the student's holistic development. This is despite the low turn-out of students who seek Christian pastoral care services as 60% of the schools recording less than 10 students. The figure below represents various roles and ways in which pastoral care and counseling services promotes holistic development to students in Nyeri County secondary schools.

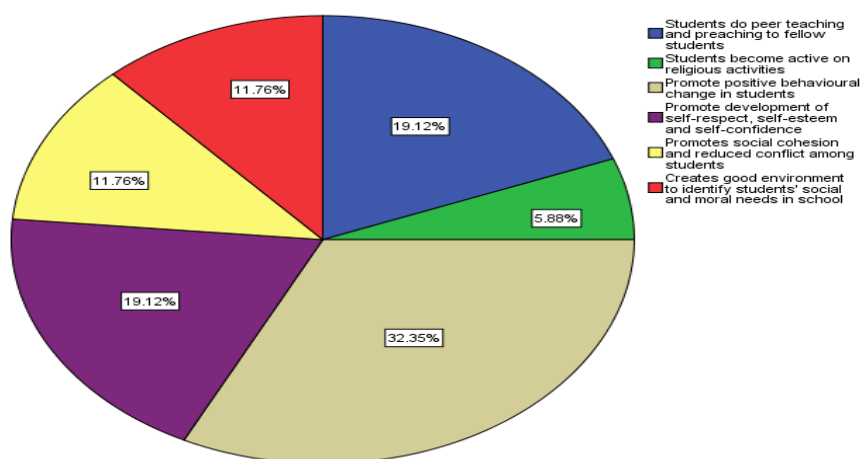


Figure 1. Roles of pastoral care and counseling programmes in holistic development of students

#### 6.1.1 Promotes peer counseling and teaching among the students

To support the above opinions, 19% of pastoral care providers noted that students who positively adopt Christian pastoral care and counseling programmes, do peer to peer teaching and preaching to each other in school. In addition, after frequent guidance on pastoral issues, students become very active on church issues especially in mass, choir and preaching to other students. Through frequent Bible studies, students develop interests in Bible reading as well as leading religious activities such as prayers during assemblies. Great commitment in religious issues by students especially from Catholic sponsored schools, was seen to have contributed to students' interests in joining seminary as part of their religious vocation.

#### 6.1.2 Promote development of self-esteem, self-respect and self-confidence

19% of the respondents who saw some positive impact of the programmes claimed that majority of students have been developing respect for human life, have positive thinking and high self-esteem. 17% of pastoral care and counseling providers noted that majority of the students who needed pastoral care had internal challenges of low self-esteem, identity crisis and self-awareness. These were seen to lower the self-confidence of students which affect their expression of thoughts and opinions. Christian Pastoral care and counseling was therefore necessary to increase their self-worth. This was confirmed by the 95% of pastoral care providers who argued that the programmes had a positive impact on students' social, moral and academic life.

Nyabwari (2016) confirmed this by arguing that such pastoral education enables them to develop positive self-image, self-appreciation, self-understanding, self-forgiveness and self-acceptance.



The church's education system also helps students to cope with academic, interpersonal, intercultural and social challenges. In addition, students were seen to acquire skills and knowledge that manifest in charity work in school and neighboring school community while the students destruction of property have declined. Within this holistic perspective, Mahmoudi (2012) argues that the student is positioned as an active, participatory and critical learner who perceives and understands him/her as dysfunctional. The holistic vision includes a sense of the whole person who is connected to his or her surrounding context and environment.

### **6.1.3 Promotes positive behavioral change**

The study established that 32% the of the respondents observed that pastoral care and counseling programmes had positive impact on student's behavioral change. In this case, pastoral care has helped to address some of the anti-social behaviors such as drug and substance abuse, theft cases among the students among others. As such, good spirituality nurtured students to act as good role models to other students. The therefore, observed that religious students are likely to be more disciplined compared to less religious students who are frequently punished. Additionally, majority of school administrators explained that there has been reduced indiscipline cases handled by the school administration. Pastoral care and counseling in this case, was seen to help students avoid activities that would affect their moral standing. In relation to this, 11% of the respondents noted that the programmes noted that pastoral care and counseling programmes have been promoting respect and good cohesiveness among learners which discourages conflict among them. Though the school rules and regulations play a more significant role in controlling unwanted behaviors, Christian pastoral care and counseling help to maintain the status quo of the school traditions. As such, the respondents observed that students acquire a sense of self responsibility in school life and sensitive to human needs hence motivate good ethical behaviors. This is confirmed by Nyabwari (2013) who argues that students exposed to holistic Christian education are introduced to the sense of responsibility, ideas of right in relation to the surrounding world and are inculcated with skills necessary for life and service.

### **6.1.4 Create good environment to identify students' social, moral and spiritual challenges**

The study also established that in most of the schools where pastoral care and counseling are active, the department is able to identify emerging issues and needs from students as reported by 11% of the pastoral care and counseling providers. In this case, to most of the affected students, godly counseling was seen to instill hope to the students who are almost giving up especially on issues on identity crisis, family break-ups, and abandonment by the parents and drug abuse. These issues that may lead to students openly displaying indiscipline cases, were seen to be highly addressed through Christian pastoral care intervention hence that students acquire positive mental health leading to positive academic performance.

## **7. Challenges to effective pastoral care programmes in Nyeri County secondary schools**

Under this objective, the study aimed at establishing major challenges undermining the efforts of Christian pastoral care and counselling programmes in school. School administrators represented by the principals and deputy principal, became resourceful as they are the main managers of the school programmes running in the school. Chaplain and CU/CA patrons provided important information since they are the custodian and organizers of the programmes.

The following hindrances that have affected the efforts of Christian pastoral care and counselling its efforts to promote holistic development of students were identifies. These ranges from financial, inadequate time, social-cultural and non-cooperation from the school stakeholders as presented below.

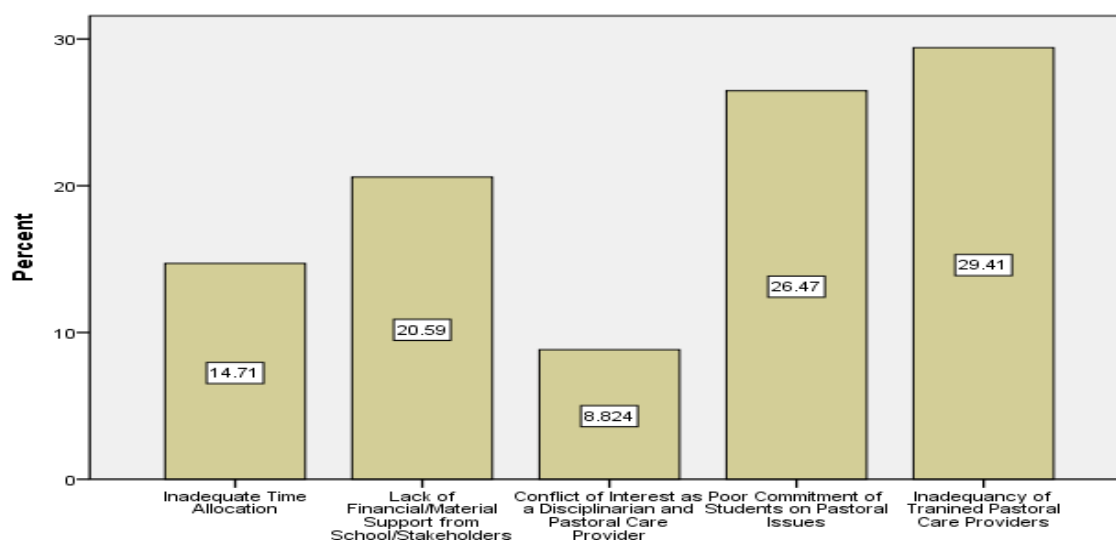


Figure 2. Major challenges to effective Christian pastoral care and counseling programmes

### 7.1 Poor commitment of students on pastoral care programmes in schools

The study noted that most of students have low interest to utilize pastoral care and counseling as well as lack of interest on religious matters from students as reported by 26% of pastoral care and counseling providers. As such, most of the students adopts a religious relativism aspect in their life. This is confirmed from the low turn-out of students where the study established that 60% of secondary school gets less than ten students who seek pastoral care assistance. Also, 57% of the students reported that they rarely seek pastoral care services from chaplain or CU/CA patrons in the school. Additionally, 35% of the students prefer consulting and sharing their problem with fellow students. This may pose a challenge where some students are given misleading social, moral, and spiritual advice by their fellow students who may be incompetent. However, 31% and 13% would consult teachers and Chaplain or CA/CU patrons, respectively. Among the 41% of the students who sought pastoral care guidance, pastoral care providers noted that they did it with inconsistency. Mainly, this low torn out of students to pastoral care and counseling programmes in secondary schools was observed to be as a result of inadequate popularization of pastoral care programmes in the schools.

To address this challenge, Waweru and Otieno (2018) advises that secondary school system, need to develop a strong chaplaincy structure that encourages self-expression for learners to candidly open up their own struggles while inviting others to give out their views freely. In this case, students will be confident of specialized pastoral care personnel who is different from academic environments. This call for proper strategies to be put into place so as students to see the importance of seeking assistance to help address their emerging challenges as they arise in and out of school.

### 7.2. Inadequate emphasis/time of pastoral programmes in schools

From the research we see that 29% of the respondents noted that pastoral care programmes conflicted with the routine academic school programmes. In this case, the respondents noted that school academic programmes were preferred at the expense of the pastoral care programmes at the time scheduled. This led to inconsistency of provision of Christian pastoral care and counseling services in schools to the students when necessary. The study noted that 51% of the schools offer pastoral care services once per week, 42% twice per week and 5% once per month.

It is also noted that most of the schools do not utilize pastoral care approach in handling students' indiscipline cases in school. As noted, 39% of students had engaged in various forms of indiscipline example, fighting, stealing textbooks in the class, drug and substance abuse and making noise to fellow students during study periods among others. Among the students who reported of having engaged on various indiscipline cases, 28% reported that they were given punishments within the school. 5% of the were suspended from school for two to three weeks but rarely are they referred to school chaplain or pastoral care providers. However, only 7% of the students reported of being

referred to relevant pastoral care providers for pastoral counseling and guidance. This reveals that pastoral care programmes are not adequately owned in Nyeri County secondary schools.

### 7.3 Inadequate financial/ material support to pastoral care programmes

From the research we note that 20% of pastoral care providers complained of poor material and financial support from both the school administration and other stakeholders. This has led to inadequate pastoral materials, for example, Bible study guides and other related materials. In addition, they reported that the school administrators support other school academic programmes at the expense of Christian pastoral care and counseling programmes. According to Waweru and Otieno (2018), most of the school chaplains blame this scenario to hands off approach employed by school administrators and church officials. They observe that chaplains are not provided with any financial support or given token of appreciation hence they are not motivated. In fact, most of the school chaplains are only left to depend on church offerings given by students to finance most of their activities in schools which is inadequate.

### 7.4. Inadequate religious sponsors' involvement in students' affairs

The study established that religious sponsors are rarely actively involved in students' affairs in school. This is confirmed by the distribution of pastoral care providers where 14%, are Chaplain, CU/CA patron-60%, guidance and counselling teachers-20% and others (Students-based missionary groups) 2%. Only 27% of school administrators agreed that religious sponsors is part of discipline committee in the school. This reveals that either the school administrations or the respective religious sponsor inadequately emphasizes and recognizes pastoral care and counseling roles in the schools. Also, this shows poor students' oriented education policies by the church for their holistic well-being.

The study also noted that secondary schools especially those under the management of County Education Board (CEB), have no defined and formal religious sponsors. In this case, most of the school administrators in the latter class of schools, noted that they rely on the Christian ministries provided by religious groups such as Kenya Student Christian Fellowship (KSCF) and the volunteering neighboring churches. This was seen to create inconsistency of pastoral care provision to students.

As Waweru and Otieno (2018) note in their work on *chaplaincy and students behavioral change in Siaya County secondary schools, Kenya*, chaplaincy activities has not been regularly included in most of the school routines. Hence, they observed that this has made it difficult to plan and carry out chaplaincy programmes in a structured manner. As a result Ouma (2011) observes that most of the schools in the country are missing out on the full benefits of the synergies that would be generated through maximum involvement of religious sponsors in the provision of education.

### 7.5 Inadequate trained pastoral care and counseling providers in schools

From the study's findings, 29% of pastoral care service providers reported that they have a challenge of lack of professionally trained pastoral care providers. This is confirmed by the 69% of pastoral care and counseling providers who reported that they have no professional skills on Christian pastoral care and counseling. In this case, the study noted that among the pastoral care providers in school, 60% are teachers who are given responsibilities as CU or CA patrons.

Inadequate training of pastoral care providers in secondary schools means that those responsible in provision of pastoral services have no proper skills and competence to properly handle students' social, moral, and spiritual needs in Christian pastoral care and counseling perspective. However, this study argues that in contemporary social context, religious sponsors should take full responsibilities to ensure that respective pastoral care and counseling providers are given proper pastoral training. Because of inadequate training and time pressures, Nduku (2015) observes that many Christian pastoral care providers find counselling to be a frustrating and unfulfilled facet of their call to provide spiritual direction and guidance.

Besides, despite 31% of the pastoral care providers being trained, 72% of the schools have no Christian pastoral care and counseling syllabus that guides them in the provision of the services to the students. However, among the 28% of pastoral care providers who have the pastoral care syllabus, majority claimed that the content in the syllabus is not well organized and structured to properly help address real-life contemporary issues that affect the students.



### **7.6 Conflict of interest as a disciplinarian and pastoral care provider**

8% of pastoral care and counseling providers, who comprised CU/CA patrons reported that they sometime experience conflict of interest as teachers and responsible pastoral care and counseling providers in school. In most cases, this may arise since the pastoral care programme demands use of Biblical based approach and methodology, which is different from other academic programmes approach in the school. However, this study argues that it is the responsibility of religious sponsors to provide proper training to teachers for necessary and requisite skills to handle the emerging moral, social, and spiritual needs from the students.

The above identified challenges were seen to hinder effective pastoral care and counseling services in Nyeri County secondary schools. If Christian pastoral care and counseling services in secondary schools are to be effective, the above discussed challenges that hampers their effectiveness needs a collaborative approach in reducing their impacts on the programmes. This is from the fact that formation of character among students should be a communal responsibility; family, community, learning institution, and the church.

## **8. Conclusion**

In this article we have looked at the effectiveness of Christian pastoral care and counseling programmes in development of holistic students in Nyeri County secondary schools. We have established that though the pastoral care programmes have been in existence, there has been inadequate emphasis on their role in promoting social, moral and spiritual competence in students. It is argued that if the pastoral care programmes are to be successful in achieving their objectives, major challenges that hamper their effectiveness need a collaborative approach from all stakeholders. In this case, religious sponsors who are the custodian of moral and ethical values in the society, should play their vital role of promotion and emphasizing on Christian pastoral care and counseling programmes in secondary schools.

## **9. Recommendations and policy implications**

From the findings, we recommend the following.

- i. Teachers during their training in colleges and universities, should be given special pastoral care and counselling training. This will help to address the inadequacy of pastoral care providers in the school as well as ensure competence of pastoral care providers in schools.
- ii. Ministry of education through Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development should help in development of Christian pastoral care syllabus based on the contemporary needs of students.
- iii. Christian pastoral care and counselling programmes should be given adequate time alongside the normal school academic timetables. This will ensure that the programmes get enough time to adequately address the frequent emerging students' needs.

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