Transformations in religious experience: social context and psychic aspects of religion in Estonia. Explorative studies

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Chapter 4.
Estonian Evangelical Pastors' Opinions Towards Pastoral Counseling. An Empirical Study

Introduction

This article addresses the opinions of the pastors of Estonian Evangelical churches towards their problems, education and needs as pastoral counselors. The last 50 years of totalitarian communistic history have contributed to similar problems and situations in pastoral counseling among all of the Estonian churches. In analyzing the impact of our history on today's pastoral counseling, I would like to point out four main contributing factors (Kurg, 1993; Lehtsaar, 1990; Tammo, 1992):

1. Isolation from professional contacts with foreign colleagues.
2. Difficulties in obtaining access to professional literature.
3. No provision of systematic training for pastoral counselors.
4. Translated foreign materials and skills derived from actual practice were the primary means of obtaining knowledge in pastoral counseling.

All of these factors played a part in limiting the possibilities for research and practice in the field of pastoral counseling. In the last four years the situation has been changing rapidly. Changes in society as a whole have impacted pastoral counseling as well. It is possible to see the new developments in three main interrelated directions: the theoretical basis of pastoral counseling, organizational developments and international contacts.

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Chapter 4

Exterior Events in Passover: Opinion Toward Passover Counseling: An Empirical Study

Introduction

This article provides an overview of the influence of exterior events on opinion toward Passover counseling. Over 30 years of research has shown that the occurrence of significant external events can shape public opinion and influence decisions. In this context, the impact of current events on opinion toward Passover counseling is explored. It is hypothesized that certain external factors may influence public opinion regarding counseling on Passover.

Historical Context

1. The development of counseling services with increased awareness.
2. The influence of media reports on public opinion.
3. The role of significant events in shaping public opinion.
4. The impact of external factors on decision-making.

A Framework for Understanding the Influence of Exterior Events on Opinion Toward Passover Counseling

All of these factors indicate a need to understand the potential influence of exterior events on opinion toward Passover counseling. In this chapter, the relationship between external events and opinion toward Passover counseling is examined. Changes in public opinion in response to these events are analyzed, providing insights into the dynamics of opinion formation during Passover.
The theoretical basis of pastoral counseling is developing through several means. The first, and, in my opinion, the most important for Estonia, are research and publications about counseling by Estonian authors. Several books have already been published (Lehtsaar, 1994; Pöld, 1992), as well as several articles in professional and denominational journals and other publications. The second important means is translated textbooks that reveal the theological and psychological foundations of pastoral counseling.

Organizational development means creating new denominational and ecumenical organization to deal with pastoral counseling. The main organization, created in the last three years, is the Estonian Organization of Hospital Chaplaincy, founded in 1993. Of import for the future is the inclusion of several counseling courses in the curriculum of denominational schools such as the Institute of Religious Sciences of Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Theological Seminary of the Union of Evangelical Christian-Baptist Union and ecumenical schools such as the Academy of Religious Sciences of Tartu. At the (state) University of Tartu there are three different courses: Pastoral Counseling, Psychology of Religion, and Psychology of New Religious Movements. Additionally important are the numerous workshops and seminars for those interested in pastoral counseling.

The University Seminary for Pastoral Sciences in Breda has played a pioneering role in the development of international contacts since 1990. Today, it has already become impossible to count all the contacts that have been made. Maybe the most important development is that Estonia has its own representative in the European Association of Pastoral Care and Counseling. Our professionals are members in organizations such as the American Association of Clinical Pastoral Education and the American Association of Pastoral Counseling.

Challenges for future development include the increasing interest of ministers and lay people in pastoral counseling, increases in theoretical knowledge, continuing organizational developments, and an expansion of international contacts. During this stage of rapid development in Estonian pastoral care, the question becomes “How do we find the most adequate theoretical, organizational, and relational ways to advance Estonian pastoral counseling?” To answer that question, it is necessary to understand our present situation, needs, and possibilities.
Method

Questionnaire used

The Faculty of Theology at the University of Tartu conducted research in order to analyze the current state of pastoral counseling in the Estonian evangelical churches. A written questionnaire, containing seventeen questions, was mailed. The questionnaire consisted of two parts (see appendix).

In the first section, general information was requested concerning objective characteristics such as age, education, location of congregation, membership of the congregation, and number of counseling contacts. In the second part, questions were asked about situations, problems and expectations in the field of pastoral counseling.

The second part of the questionnaire was made up of two types of questions: 1) open-ended questions in which the respondent was expected to provide three different answers and rank them according to their importance; and 2) selective answer questions. This article does not deal with the entire questionnaire, but rather will analyze the answers to only five of the most substantial questions.

Sample

The questionnaire was mailed to 196 pastors from three major Estonian Evangelical Churches: the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC), the Evangelical Christian and Baptist Union of Estonia (ECBUE), and the Estonian Methodist Church (EMC). The number of respondents and the percentile distribution of the 67 respondents were as follows: EELC (29, 43.3%), ECBUE (32, 47.8%) and EMC (6, 9.0%).

All of the respondents were male, with representatives from each of the different age groups. The group of respondents included 7 pastors younger than age 30, 29 pastors in the 30-50 age bracket, and 31 pastors older than 50 years of age. The number of respondents with less than ten years of pastoral experience was 26; there were 22 with 10-20 years; and 19 who had pastored more than 20 years.

This sample represents 25% of EELC, 30% of ECBUE and 50% of EMC pastors. This sample can be considered representative of all the Estonian evangelical pastors.
because the variety in sex, age and work experience represents the general trends among Estonian evangelical pastors.

Method of analyzing the results

The method of content analysis was used on the responses to the open-ended questions. After reading the responses, categories for analysis were developed. The responses were then grouped into specific categories. Next, the importance of each category was determined based on how many respondents ranked problems within a particular category as being of primary or secondary importance. The more respondents that ranked a particular category as first or second, the more important this category was considered to be. The numbers and percentages of total responses were described in the analysis of the answers to the selective questions.

Results

In this section, the answers will be presented to two of the open-ended and two of the selective questions. The method for presenting the responses to the open-ended questions is as follows: First, the question is presented. Following that are the categories used for analysis, the number of responses belonging in those categories, and the corresponding percentage of total responses. Some examples of answers are presented for each category. The answers to the selective questions will be grouped according to the number of respondents.

1. Please rank, according to their importance, three main problems you have in your work as a pastoral counselor (question III). The responses to this question can be divided into five categories.

1. Communication problems (CP) - 34 responses; 50.7% of the total number of respondents. Problems related to getting along, cooperation and information exchange.
The project of establishing a database of scientific and technological information is of extreme importance. In the current situation, major emphasis must be placed on improving the quality and efficiency of scientific information. This database will be a source of information and assistance for scientific and technological development. The database will serve as a repository for the accumulation of scientific information. It will also provide a mechanism for the dissemination and updating of scientific information. The database will be an invaluable resource for researchers, educators, and policymakers. It will be a platform for the integration of scientific knowledge and the advancement of scientific research. The database will be developed using modern technologies and will be accessible to a wide range of users. It will be a comprehensive and dynamic resource for the scientific community. The database will be a tool for the promotion of scientific progress and the advancement of human knowledge.
Examples. Some church members do not have respect for the pastor. There are many members in the church who need long-term counseling. It is very difficult to communicate with those who are mentally ill or psychologically imbalanced.

2. Religious problems (RP) - 23; 34.3%. Problems related to religious beliefs, feelings, experiences and behavior.

Examples. The lay people do not believe in God's promises. Secularization has a big impact on peoples' faith. There is an absence of heavenly power and God's guidance in counseling.

3. Foundational problems (FP) - 20; 29.9%. Problems related to emotional support, training and professional experience.

Examples. I feel that I do not have enough experience to work as counselor. We do not have strong traditions in the field of pastoral counseling. I have a lack of knowledge when working with people having specific problems like grief, with dying people, or with those facing family crises.

4. Economic problems (EP) - 16; 23.9%. Problems caused by economic circumstances.

Examples. I do not have proper rooms for counseling at my church. I am serving as a pastor in two churches located 50 kilometers from each other. I do not have either a car or telephone and therefore the church members cannot reach me even if they need to. In the countryside the elderly people have problems with getting transportation to come to the church.

5. Problems of overworking (PO) - 15; 22.4%. Problems related to lack of time and burnout.

Examples. I am so overwhelmed with different responsibilities that I do not have time to do the counseling. In order to feed my children I must have a full-time secular job. I am spending most of my time working as a building superintendendant at my church.
Our conclusion was that the list of problems pastors have as counselors mainly concern communication, religious problems, foundational problems, economic problems, and problems of overworking. The importance of these problems was compared by z criterion. The communication problems were found to be the only ones that were statistically differentiated from the rest ($z>1.96; p<0.05$). Other differences between the importance of problems were statistically insignificant.

2. Please rank, according to their importance, three main problems the people are sharing with you in pastoral counseling sessions (question IV). It is possible to divide these responses into five categories as well.

1. Religious problems (RP) - 36 responses; 53.7% from the total number of respondents. Problems related to religious beliefs, feelings, experiences and behavior. Examples. Sorrow because of unchurched and unconverted relatives who do not care about God. The people have personal religious problems and want to pray with the pastor. Tensions and conflicts caused by different new religious movements.

2. Family problems (FP) - 33; 49.3%. Problems related to communication and family relationships. Examples. Adultery. Religious conflicts and misunderstandings in a family. Intergenerational conflict within the family.

3. Physical problems (PP) - 21; 31.3%. Problems related to the physical environment and sickness. Examples. Alcoholism and drug abuse. For years, I visited a paralyzed church member; I do not have anything to say to him any more. There are too many people living in our apartment; we cannot tolerate each other any more.

4. Communicational problems (CP) - 18; 26.9%. Problems related to getting along, cooperation and information exchange.
Examples. Getting along with colleagues and neighbors. Tolerating the people who are different in some way.

5. Intrapsychic problems (IP) - 14; 20.9%. Problems related to feelings, thoughts, attitudes, understanding and statements.

Examples. People come to me often to share their feelings of guilt. Working with people in grief is an important part of my job. There are many stressed people who cannot manage their lives.

According to the categories, the list of problems people share with their pastors is as follows: religious problems, family problems, physical problems, communication problems, and intrapsychic problems. To determine the importance of the problems mentioned, the categories were compared by z criterion. The religious problems and family problems were the only ones found to be statistically differentiated from the rest (z>1.96; p<0.05). Other differences between the importance of problems were statistically insignificant.

3. Please rank, in order of their importance, possible means of preparing yourself to be a pastoral counselor (question V). The responses (consisting of the number of respondents who ranked a particular category in first place and the percentage of total respondents) were as follows: 1) Congregational practice (25; 37.3%). 2) Independent reading of professional literature (20; 29.9%). 3) Theological studies (12; 17.9%). 4) Participating in short-term courses (10; 14.9%).
4. How would you evaluate your own training as a pastoral counselor? (question IV).

Table 1
Numerical responses to the question of evaluating one's personal training as a pastoral counselor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage from the total number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficient</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely deficient</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As evidenced by the responses (two answers were missing) most find that their training is merely satisfactory or is deficient. There were only two men who thought that their training was superior. Six others were pessimistic, believing that their training was completely deficient.

5. Is it possible to learn to be a pastoral counselor? (question IX).

Table 2
Numerical responses to the question about the possibility of learning to be a pastoral counselor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of agreement</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage from the total number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree strongly</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree strongly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure Types</th>
<th>Proposed for 6 Structures</th>
<th>Proposed for 4 Structures</th>
<th>Proposed for 2 Structures</th>
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<tr>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>8, 3, 8</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>6 Structures</th>
<th>4 Structures</th>
<th>2 Structures</th>
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<tr>
<td>6, 2, 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10, 15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10, 16</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10, 16, 18</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10, 16, 18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The table is a representation of the proposed procedure types for different structures.
According to the data presented, the main group of pastors agree that it is possible to learn how to be a pastoral counselor. The next largest group strongly agree that this is a possibility. The two smaller groups mildly or strongly disagree with the possibility of learning to be a pastoral counselor.

**Discussion**

Discussion of the results raises the question of the reliability of the gathered data. There is no reason to suspect that some of the respondents deliberately gave false information. However, it is probable that some of the responses have a socially requested bias. Therefore the results might be more or less determined by the anticipations the pastors have ascribed to the public. The solution would be to apply combined methods and/or to question lay people or others about the same issues. At the current stage of the research other studies are not available. Therefore the gathered data are considered to be the best available ones.

In analyzing the problems which pastors have as counselors and trying to determine what is important for them, the statistical differences are not so crucial as the appearance of the categories described above. Even though we might not be able to prove statistically that economic problems are more important than problems of overworking, we have been able to determine that economic and overworking issues are very significant for pastors.

Additionally, it is remarkable that the economic problems are in fourth place rather than first. This means that social and religious issues have the tendency to be more important in our churches than the economic ones. It was expected that economic difficulties would rank higher due to the secularization of society and the economic troubles our churches have faced in the last four years.

In the category of religious problems, secularization and misunderstandings caused by new religious movements and sects were often mentioned. This is understandable because in the last couple of years, in a country with 1.5 million inhabitants, around thirty new religious movements and sects have begun (or been imported).
Introduction

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the potential of alternative technologies to reduce the reliance on fossil fuels and mitigate climate change. Alternative technologies such as renewable energy sources like solar and wind power, and energy storage systems, offer significant benefits in terms of environmental sustainability and economic efficiency.

The study examines various aspects of alternative technologies, including their technological advancements, economic viability, and social acceptance. It also considers regulatory frameworks and policy implications that can facilitate the transition to a more sustainable energy system.

The findings suggest that a comprehensive approach encompassing technological innovation, policy development, and public engagement is essential for the successful implementation of alternative technologies. This approach requires collaboration between governments, industries, and communities to address the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities presented by these technologies.
It is remarkable that communication problems are seen as more important than religious ones. Why this is so requires further investigation, but one possibility is that pastors do not have special education in the field of human relationships and social psychology. Knowledge in counseling is primarily gained from experience and to a lesser degree from specific education and training.

The foundational problems mentioned bear witness to the essential difficulties in the field of pastoral counseling. There are still many possibilities for development in areas of theoretical and practical preparation. The answers show that there is a need for workshops, seminars and professional meetings about pastoral counseling.

The problems of overworking, mentioned by different pastors, are very similar: too many jobs to do, overloaded schedules, lack of possibilities for concentrating on something. The general title for this might be: “Too many responsibilities for one man”. The question why Estonian pastors have too many responsibilities will not have one single answer. Possible responses might be: 1) the rapid growth in potential areas of religious work; 2) the lack of pastors; and 3) church members who also have too many jobs and, therefore, are unable to cooperate and be of assistance.

The problems described above are statistical generalizations. Every single pastor in Estonia has his own specific problems. Even in every day practice it is difficult to say what is the most or least important problem. However, some of the common problem areas in pastoral counseling are expressed through these pastors' answers.

The answers to the questions concerning problems that people share with pastors shows that religious problems are the most important. It differs from the problems described by Howard Clinebell (1984; 46-49) as to why Americans go to clergy for counseling. The reasons mentioned include interpersonal problems involving a defect in a relationship, a problem involving a defect in another person, a problem because of a defect in themselves, and crises such as illness or the death of a loved one. Obviously there will be differences between countries because peoples' problems are different.

The fact that in Estonia people go to see a pastor primarily for religious problems has many possible interpretations. First, in this culture, the pastor's role is mainly understood as spiritual and, because of this, he is sought out for religious help. The second
The important point is that the community is not just a passive recipient of information, but an active participant in the process of decision-making. Effective communication is essential in ensuring that information is shared and understood by all stakeholders. The key to successful communication is active listening and active participation. It is important to engage with individuals and groups to ensure that their perspectives are heard and considered. This requires a willingness to listen and a commitment to understanding the needs and concerns of others. By fostering a culture of open dialogue and active engagement, communities can work together to address challenges and opportunities. The success of any initiative depends on the ability of all members to contribute and work towards a common goal.
possibility is that maybe only religious people with religious problems are going to see a pastor. If this is the case, the results would not apply to people who are not religious.

Family problems ranked surprisingly high in importance. From the answers, however, it was impossible to determine what particular kinds of problems the people have. Mainly, the pastors simply mentioned family problems. In Estonia the divorce rate is more than 50%. It is urgent that our churches and counselors respond to this problem in a professional way.

The types of physical, social and intrapsychic problems varied greatly. Many different things, fitting into the categories described above, were mentioned. Included among those mentioned were: 1) reported sickness; 2) overcrowding; 3) getting along with neighbors, family members and colleagues; 4) depression; 5) grief; and 6) an inability to cope.

It is often difficult to distinguish between the different categories described. For this study, differentiation was made based on the pastors' responses. In reality it is quite probable that the content of the categories will vary. This means, for instance, that "behind" someone's religious problems there may be family difficulties and their interpersonal problems may be caused by low self-esteem.

According to the responses, congregational practice was ranked as the highest form of preparation for pastoral counselors. This statement lines up with the generally accepted belief that it is only possible to develop counseling skills through actual practice. Lack of experience with or participation in counselor workshops and seminars may have led to short-term courses being given the lowest ranking. I believe that, in spite of this evaluation, short-time training will have a great future in Estonia.

The fourth question asked respondents to evaluate their own training as a pastoral counselor. It seems that the extremes were avoided. Most of the respondents thought that their training was satisfactory or was slightly deficient. The modest evaluation of their own preparation is good soil for future training. Only 3% of the respondents felt that pastoral counseling could not be learned. This is an encouraging statistic for future training programs.
Summary

The research described above is one of the very first in the field of Pastoral Counseling in Estonia. Because of the short type of questionnaire used, the results can only provide a general overview of the situation. It is too early to make any final conclusions based on the material gathered. However, it is still a valuable resource for describing the current situation of counseling from a pastor's point of view.

The information gathered may be valuable for the different people working in the area of religion: scientists, teachers, evangelists and pastors. It is helpful in reflecting on my own situation as a teacher at the University of Tartu, Estonia. Many of the students find the results helpful in understanding the current trends in Estonian Evangelical Churches. Some students strongly disagreed with the results, while others felt that more explanation is needed. Both opinions are good grounds for further investigation.

It is reasonable to pursue further research and there are many possible directions in which to do so. First, it must be said that the results of this investigation only provide a superficial description of the situation. A deeper investigation is needed to find out why the phenomena described are like they are. Second, only the pastor's point of view was explained. It would be very informative to compare it with the lay person's opinion about the same issues. Third, differences and similarities in the opinions of counselors and counselees might be highly useful. Fourth, the material presented is a description of only one particular period. In times of rapid change and development the situation of pastoral care will obviously change rapidly as well. Different results describing the new problems and new directions of development might be obtained even in the same years, when using the same questions and the same respondents. Fifth, it would be interesting to compare this data with similar research in other countries. The comparison might concentrate on a particular issue such as a description of problems for which people seek help from clergy.
The phenomenon described as a wave of the hand is the result of a reflection of the wave. The reflected wave can only be observed in a medium that is capable of transmitting the wave. The nature of this reflection is such that it cannot be observed in a vacuum. The phenomenon of reflection is a result of the interaction between the wave and its medium. The propagation of the wave is dependent on the properties of the medium. If the medium is capable of transmitting the wave, the phenomenon of reflection is observed. If the medium is incapable of transmitting the wave, the phenomenon of reflection is not observed.
References


Appendix

The questionnaire used

Venerable Pastor,

The Faculty of Religion of the University of Tartu is conducting a questionnaire with the objective of determining the counseling problems of Estonian Protestant pastors. The questionnaire is anonymous. Its results will be used in preparing study material and scientific publications on counseling. We would highly appreciate your filling in the questionnaire and sending it in a week’s time at the following address:

<<ANKEET>>
Tartu Ülikooli Usuteaduskond
Ülikooli 18, EE-2400 Tartu

For easy responding, you need to circle the number in front of the appropriate variant or write a short answer.

I Please answer some general questions to enable comparison between different experiences.

1. How many years have you worked as a pastor?
2. Your year of birth
3. What is the membership of your church?
4. What is the average number of people per month who share with you at counseling sessions?
5. Your sex 1 male 2 female
6. Location of your church building 1 rural 2 town 3 village
7. Your religious education 1 none 2 unfinished 3 finished

II The following table lists some possible means of promoting congregational counseling. First please view the list and add the means you deem necessary. Then evaluate the necessity of each (including added) means, circling the corresponding rank number.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Very necessary</th>
<th>Rather necessary</th>
<th>Not much necessary</th>
<th>Not at all necessary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counseling manual</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling courses for pastors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment of a counseling pastor or elder by the congregation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling training for members of congregation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III Please rank, according to their importance, three main problems you have in your work as a pastoral counselor

1.
2.
3.

IV How would you evaluate your own training as a pastoral counselor?

1 Superior 2 Satisfactory 3 Deficient 4 Completely deficient

Why do you think so?
V Please rank, in the order of their importance, possible means of preparing yourself to be a pastoral counselor.

- Theological studies
- Independent reading of professional literature
- Participating in short-term courses
- Congregational practice

VI Please rank, according to their importance, three main problems the people are sharing with you in pastoral counseling sessions.

1. 
2. 
3. 

VII Please rank, according to their importance, the essential things for a pastor in solving the problems listed under the previous item.

1. 
2. 
3. 

VIII Please rank, according to their importance, the indispensable topics to be treated in a good counseling textbook.

1. 
2. 
3. 

IX Is it possible to learn to be a pastoral counselor?
1 agree strongly 2 agree 3 disagree 4 disagree strongly

Why do you think so?

X Finally, please write your own definition of counseling.