

Pregnancy out of wedlock and the church: Pastoral care perspective

By

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DECLARATION

I Motshedisi Makhudu hereby declare that this dissertation on:

“The traumatic experience of rejection and shame among young women who fall pregnant out of wedlock especially within the church,” is my original work and all the sources used have been indicated by means of acknowledgement and references.

The work has never previously in its entirety or in any part been submitted at any other university for a degree.

Motshedisi Makhudu Date

Professor Masango Date

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to pass a word of thanks to the following people for their help and contribution in completion of this research. This degree is especially dedicated to young ladies who fall pregnant out of wedlock and experience rejection and shame, which is being exerted on them by the lay leaders, parents and their lovers, who would have deserted them at a time when they needed them most.

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EXPLANATION OF TERMINOLOGY

Some of the terms used in this research need explanation, because they are used in a different way for different understanding to a particular context in which this research is done.

The most important terms are:

Stigma	:	It is a mark of disgrace
Reject	:	Refuse to accept something or a person
Suspend	:	Deprive a person of a job or position for a time
Lapse	:	A slight mistake or failure
Abortion	:	Loss or removal of a baby from the womb before it has developed enough to survive.
Shame	:	A feeling of unlovable, that one's life has a basic flaw in it.
Sympathy	:	A feeling of pity or tenderness towards someone who is hurt
Manyano	:	An organization within the church supporting in prayers
Reinstate	:	Put a person or thing back into its former position
Forgiveness	:	Cease to feel angry or resentful towards pardon

- Guilt** : **Fact of having committed specified or implied offence**
- Restoration** : **Model or representation of the supposed original form of a thing.**
- Reconciliation** : **Making friendly again after an estrangement**

ABSTRACT

This dissertation concerns itself with the task of creating a pastoral model in order to offer care for the young ladies who experience the trauma of rejection and shame when they have fallen pregnant out of wedlock within the church, resulting from the painful suspension.

It was motivated from the author's personal experience of being suspended while pregnant out of wedlock and her understanding that suspension is not meant to shame or hurt anyone. Through Group Therapy, the author used her understanding of Christian hope, and by creating a positive conversation among these young ladies.

The focus and hope of this dissertation is to research the problem of suspension, in order to help the clergy and lay leaders in their role as pastoral caregivers. However, this dissertation would have been of no use, if it did not attempt to create a model for caring which will empower lay leaders and the clergy to become pastoral caregivers towards young ladies who fall pregnant out of wedlock.

- **Firstly, the author will try to clarify the problem faced by the young ladies.**
- **Secondly, the author will seek to bring an awareness of this problem to the church through its prophetic voice.**

- **Thirdly, the author hopes to create a model of pastoral care that will not only care spiritually for young ladies, but will also meet their emotional needs.**

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH

1. Introduction

Having been brought up in a Christian family, I became an active member within the Methodist church as a Sunday school teacher, a member of the young women's Manyano, preacher on trial and the secretary of the Wesley Guild. At that time, I never expected lapse in my faith journey, through being pregnant and as the man who once promised that he will marry me, at that moment, told me to abort the pregnancy.

As I thought about what the church will say about my pregnancy, I almost agreed to abort the child. But then, the more I thought about it and the more I remembered one of the commandments that God gave to Moses "don't commit murder" (Exodus 20:13).

I, thereafter, became scared to have an abortion. I could not bear the thought that I would have murdered one of God's children, and that would always trouble my soul. The other question that I asked myself was: what would have it to me as a Christian? Within this conviction, I decided to keep the pregnancy.

As a result, the man responsible for my pregnancy told me that the relationship was over and that he was not responsible for the pregnancy. And the journey of problems and challenges began.

The question I started asking myself was: what was I going to do? I was heartbroken because of the abrupt way in which our relationship ended. And that I was now going to face the challenge of raising a child as a single parent. Shame and rejection became part of my daily experience.

I, then, decided to face my nightmare and went to tell the minister who was in charge at that moment. I understood that as one who would have a child out of wedlock, there were actions that should be taken concerning my faith journey. I met with my minister, who surprised me by comforting and assuring me that things would be fine as time goes on; however, he told me that he would have to take some action about my situation.

This meant that he was going to suspend me from active participation in organizations. Suspension is a method that Methodist church uses in order to discipline those who have fallen pregnant out of wedlock.

The minister made it clear to me that being suspended did not mean that I had to stop coming to church to worship or receive Holy Communion. Normally, the suspension within the church means that young ladies are excluded, in other words one is not allowed to receive Holy Communion for the period in which you are suspended.

Looking back at the seven years, I have realized that I had to practice the same painful exercise to others. I am placed in a semi rural context of Tau (not real place) area where I am exercising my ministry. Part of my mandate includes discipline, which reminds me of the pain I underwent when I was suspended.

This process challenges me to seek a new way of caring for others. After some years of my experience as a minister, I was approached by young ladies between the ages 25-30 that have been suspended during the time when they were pregnant, and had felt that there was no need or them to come back to church any more.

The reason given was that they were treated rather harshly during suspension. In other words, they sighted that the meeting is more confrontational, with interrogations that violate them.

The majority of them wanted to be reinstated back into the life of the church, especially their church membership but feared to being traumatized by this humiliating practice.

The church has a good way of dealing with the suspension of its members, but I found that some of my colleagues are rather harsh when dealing with these young ladies. On the same token, they do not practice the same process with young men who are left alone as if they had not violated any practice of the church by impregnating the young ladies. While, they, too, are part of the problem and should be suspended.

This raises lots of questions to my ministry, especially on how I should care for these ladies. The process practiced is not therapeutic or healing or even show that they are sympathizing with them or care for them, pastorally. Restoration has to bring healing to people, just like when Christ healed the man with evil spirit (Mark 5:1-20). Christ's way of caring for Legion brought healing and he restored this man's dignity, identity and self-worth.

As Wimberly points out that **“for us to be fully human conversation with God is necessary, to have the truest sense of our worth and value”** (Wimberly 2003:18)

The main problem arose when other young ladies were treated differently. There is no standard process of suspending these young women. The issue of suspension brings shame, stigma, and rejection and, at times, traumatizes those who are suspended. Figley define trauma in the following way: **“Is an emotional state of discomfort and stress resulting from memories of an extraordinary, catastrophic experience which shattered the survivor’s sense of invulnerability to harm”**. (1988: xviii).

This is what happens to these young ladies as they come across a sudden change in their lives. It comes at the time when they need support; and they never expect to be rejected by the church which is supposed to be caring, pastorally, for them.

The thing that makes it worse is that there is no caring involved. In other words, the young ladies are left on their own without support. This thesis is based on researching the problems faced by black young ladies within the Methodist denomination and the tradition where young women, who are suspended, are treated in a way that causes trauma and stigmatizes them.

The process makes them to feel that they are rejected, which is a contradiction occurs within the body of Christ as they expect the church to be caring; as it follows the Jesus Christ's teachings.

Having experienced the same process, I am in a position to search for a model that will care and bring healing to these young ladies. I know the feeling of being rejected by the person who impregnated you and the stigma that follows. The above issue remains a problem for young women who are pregnant.

It is also a challenge to the church and to my colleagues as they follow tradition at the expense of pastoral care, because these young ladies see themselves as people who are not worthy of anything especially in the presence of other worshippers.

They continue to be stigmatized as people who have committed the worst sin, as the stewards of the church make them to feel that way.

They feel as being outcasts, who are not worthy to be forgiven by Christ who has come to save sinners. This is part of the problem faced young ladies. The reader needs to note that young men never face this kind of humiliation.

The sad part is that the young men are not suspended, but get a different treatment, e.g. they continue receiving Holy Communion; whereas the young women are traumatized by the experience.

The process is not only humiliating to them; their families are also affected as they are also faced with the issue of shame. Therefore, in this research, I will be dealing with the: Traumatic Experience of Rejection and the Stigma Young Pregnant Women Experience during Suspension in the Church. The church needs to change the way it treats young ladies, especially the harsh treatment that goes with suspension.

This problem challenges the caring method of the church. How then can they have life, when they are treated less than human beings? The main problem is that, all this is happening in an institution that is supposed to love them.

1. 2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The trauma of shame, rejection, and humiliation makes these young ladies to doubt their own self-esteem. Shame becomes part of their struggle, as in some way, they feel that they have **“failed to meet the society’s expectation”** (Wimberly 1999:119).

This makes it hard for them to cope with the issue of the shame of being pregnant out of wedlock. One needs to note that this problem occurs only within the black church.

The problem of pregnancy out of wedlock has become a big challenge to pastoral care, as a result of this experience, young ladies are asking deep question: Is it possible for God to forgive them? Is their sin so great that they are treated in a way that the church sees them as worse sinners? How come that a church that knows more about forgiveness is unable to practice what it professes?

The above thoughts and problems that bother young ladies raise several questions such as:

- Why is the church so harsh in dealing with the discipline of the young ladies who are pregnant and continue to traumatize them?
- In what way can the church be a caring and loving institution towards young women who are rejected and stigmatized by their peers, family, community and the church?
- Is their sin so great that they cannot be forgiven by the Church, which is supposed to preach the message of love, kindness and forgiveness?
- Has the church lost its caring or pastoral ministry?

- Why does the church not deal with the issues of young men who impregnate these young ladies, but turns a blind eye on them, while young ladies are stigmatized and suspended, during this difficult time in their lives?

These questions will guide the author as she seeks to create a pastoral model of caring among these traumatized souls.

1.3. RESEACH METHODOLOGY

Edward Wimberly introduces a method of conversation which addresses the issue faced by these women. The Conversational method of Wimberly is a way in which one tries to find God in the midst of the storm that one is facing. For him, conversation is important for pastoral theology because **“conversation is interpersonal communication, thus for Christians, conversation with God is possible”**. (Wimberly 2003: 18)

I chose the conversation model because it will help me enter into the space of these traumatized ladies who are rejected, isolated and used by the church leaders in the process of humiliation. Story-telling is an extremely important part of life among African people. As black people, we most believe in hearing stories that help us to understand things in a better way.

Storytelling “**functions to help shape the view of reality that influences us**”. (Wimberly 1999:15)

Stories also help us to have a conversation with each other. The methodology that the author has chosen to use focuses on the importance of conversation as shared by Edward Wimberly, and has combined it with his method of storytelling, which will help us to enter the space of these young ladies, in order to analyze their brokenness.

The Conversational Method is one of the models that Wimberly suggests and which could be used for pastoral counselling, more especially for those who have not experienced interpersonal conversation with God. He says “**As we internalize and prioritize conversation, some conversation become the standard by which new conversation are measured and evaluated. Through interpersonal process we come to understand our world and our place in it, we also come to understand who we are and our place**” (Wimberly 2003:16).

This process is very important because it helps traumatized people to examine their brokenness. It is important to note that starting a conversation with God will be helpful to these ladies. They will be able, to claim their own dignity and see their own identity as children of God.

They will also be able to deal with all negative conversations that the community has imposed upon them. This method of conversation will help pastoral caregivers to be able to enter into a space of young ladies, who are rejected and traumatized by their boyfriends, parents, the clergy and the community in order to help them deal with the issue of shame and rejection.

Wimberly explains that the Method of Storytelling function helps to shape the view of reality that influences human beings. This is a convergence of pastoral counselling and preaching; which recognizes the reality and the ways of knowing reality in stories.

They change one's view of reality; which requires attending to people's stories. **“Preaching and pastoral counselling are arenas where stories are told that change people's view of reality”** (Wimberly 1999: 16). The process of therapy, when handled well, will help seekers as well the helper to enter into deep conversation about pain and trauma.

1.4. METHODOLOGICAL PROCESS

The research carried out in this study, in terms of approach, will fall within the realm of qualitative approach. There will be a conversation with the group as a method of therapy with young women who have been suspended and have experienced the trauma of shame and rejection.

The main purpose of group therapy is to engage young women in having an interpersonal conversation with God, a method used by Wimberly in helping those who have internalized all negative conversations about themselves, and also the negative conversation that the community have exposed to them.

He further explains in his book “Claiming God Reclaiming Dignity” that this book attempts to answer two perennial questions: **“What does it mean to be a person of worth and value in our contemporary African culture? How can a relationship with God give us a renewal sense of worth and value?”**(Wimberly 2003:10).

The above quotation describes clearly what happens to us when we internalize all negative conversations, and never listen to the positive conversations that we are supposed to have; especially with God.

In using conversational method in group therapy, I will be trying to help these young ladies to enter into a conversation with God, so that they may be able to recover their value and worth. This will be a way of reconstructing their self-esteem and value, because they are people who are created in the image of God.

Secondly, therapy will continue in helping them by using the approach of story-telling in their group discussion, which Wimberly applies in his book “Moving from Shame to Self-Worth.” This would be done in the form of conducting interviews with a selected group of members.

The purpose behind the interviews would be to engage the participants in retelling their own stories and connecting them with Bible stories in a way that would bring healing and wholeness to those who are traumatized.

Then in retelling their stories on their experiences during the process of suspension because of being pregnant out of wedlock and how they have internalized all negative conversations; hopefully this process will change the way that they have viewed themselves as failures.

Wimberly points out that the **“storytelling’s function in a way of helping shape the view of reality that influences us”** (2003:15). I agree fully with him, because by introducing the method to retelling stories, I am hoping that this will change the view of how the church and people see them in life.

Those who have internalized negative thoughts through sermons; this will bring healing and help them to deal with issue of shame, stigma and rejection which Christ also experienced during his time on earth.

Both the conversational and storytelling approaches will be applied in this research. The most important approach that will be used in this research will be the conversational method. The reason for doing so is that I believe that most of the people do not realize that they have lost the way of being in a conversation with God, as a result of all the negative conversation. Instead, they have, therefore, internalized a negative conversation, which prevents them from being able to have a positive conversation about themselves.

1.5. AIMS AND OBJECTIVE

The main aim of this study is to help some of my colleagues and the church to be a caring community in a Christian way. I strongly believe that the issue of suspending young ladies who have fallen pregnant out of wedlock is a problem to the church. Some of my colleagues, still strongly feel that suspension is still the way of disciplining them.

Granted, this may be a way of disciplining people, but why only ladies, and men are left alone, as if they had no part in the whole issue of these young ladies being pregnant? The church has to honour people as well as discipline them, but it should respect them in doing so. In this way, I will be helping by suggesting a better way in dealing with those who are suspended within the Church.

This study will, hopefully, create a method that will help the clergy to pastorally care for these young ladies.

1.6. RELEVENCE OF THE RESEARCH

Some authors have shown that globally people are experiencing lots of traumatic experiences and as a result, they need a way of being helped therapeutically. Therefore, the relevance of this research is to help the church in becoming a caring and restoring place for these young women who are stigmatized during suspension. The author will formulate a method of restoration that will:

- Be a guideline for those who are stigmatized.
- Formulate a guideline for restoration process during suspension.
- Empower the church in dealing with the issue of suspension for young ladies. By also attending to young man who impregnated these ladies.

1.7. RESEARCH GAP

I am fully aware that, in the past, one student attempted the research on the issue of pregnancy out of wedlock among teenagers. I have read the dissertation of Vicentia Kgabe, who dealt mostly with teenage pregnancy within the church. In this particular research, the author will be dealing with the trauma of shame and rejection that young ladies experience during suspension.

In her dissertation, Vicentia Kgabe does not deal with the issues of rejection and shame for those who are pregnant out of wedlock. I will also develop a therapeutic method of dealing with shame and rejection, especially with those who feel worthless; thus building their low self-esteem. This process will help them reclaim their dignity.

What the author will attempt to do is to contribute in helping the church to be a caring community when dealing with the suspension of young ladies. This does not mean that members should not be disciplined, but it should be done in a caring and supportive way. In short, they should conduct the issue of suspension with decency and order.

1.8. CONCLUSION

The research emphasizes on the stigma, shame and rejection that young ladies experience during suspension in the church. The main aim is to help the church to be caring and to empower young ladies. The process will finally help them reclaim their own dignity and self worth. In the next chapter, the author will concentrate on the Methodology that will guide this research.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This research tries to examine the question of rejection and shame experienced by young ladies who fall pregnant out of wedlock within the church. The contention of this study is to ensure those young pregnant ladies, regardless of which denominational tradition they ascribe to, the same social status as viewed by the population.

The study locates itself in the semi rural black context within the denomination of the Methodist church of Southern Africa.

In other words, the study is focused on semi rural black communities and on young pregnant women in the area of Tau (not the real place). These young ladies experience shame and rejection by the family, friends, community and the church.

2.2. QUALITATIVE METHOD

As the study of this research is based on participants being interviewed with a view to investigate the phenomenon that is already there, and have a way of correcting it; by providing guidance, e.g. providing a way of a caring methodology for the church, so that it will be able to deal with the suspension of those who fall pregnant out of wedlock.

The author is, convinced that this approach needs to be considered and applied in this study. The study of this research, therefore, would be based on the trauma of shame, humiliation, and rejection which young pregnant women experience during suspension.

This chapter, therefore, will be focusing on the methodology that would help them, and empowers the church to be able to be more caring towards them. The author will use the method of Wimberly; which is conversational and storytelling.

Wimberly, when using this method, tries to show us that we can be able to have positive impressions about ourselves; more specially those who have seen themselves as unworthy, because of being negatively pictured by the community.

Another approach that this research will use is qualitative. The Qualitative method, according to Merriam, **“helps those who embark on it, to explore different dimensions of a phenomenon and not tracing one single variable, as is often the case in quantitative research”** (Merriam 1988). The objectives of qualitative research are to understand the meaning of the experience of being observed.

Therefore, as Alasuutari states, **“observations in qualitative research, are used in explaining the phenomenon or problematizing it.”** (Alasuutari 1995: 2). Mouton gives a summary of the principles that guide the qualitative methodology, which indicates the relevance and purpose. There are several important issues about qualitative analysis:

The main purpose of qualitative analysis is to understand the social action and events in a particular context. In this study, the focus is to examine the understanding of shame and rejection which is experienced by young pregnant ladies who fell pregnant out of wedlock within the Methodist church.

1. Qualitative analysis tries to be true to the setting of the participant and the concept they use to understand and describe who they are and their context. This is where the understanding of suspension will be analyzed, especially at how the leaders, clergy and society have viewed young pregnant ladies who fall pregnant out of wedlock.

2. Qualitative method wants to reconstruct people's stories, lives and events that will help to retain internal meaning of the social phenomenon. In reference to the experience of these young ladies being suspended, in a manner that hurt them.

Interviews will be conducted about the manner of suspension as a way of discipline towards these young pregnant ladies and the information would be gathered. Such concepts will be explicated in ways that would contribute to the understanding of people's stories and accounts on who they are.

2.3. Interpersonal Conversation Methodology- (Wimberly 2003)

In 'Claiming God and Reclaiming dignity: Moving from shame to Self-Worth' Wimberly applies the qualitative approach method, and his point of departure is informed by most of the negative conversations that people have internalized, and he would ask **"how can pastoral counselling help people learn to privilege God conversation"** (2003:23).

For those who felt not worthy in the eyes of their maker and the community that they live in, I believe that Wimberly's methodology would be of great help. It allows a conversation to develop between the help-seeker and helper; thus restoring their self worth.

Wimberly further points out that **“we grow, develop and interpret life through internalizing conversations that take place across generations and within a variety of context, home, school, work and church”** (2003: 26). This gives us a clear picture of where we get all the negative conversation from which, at times, we hold to and believe that they are right for us.

Analyzing the findings of the research with these young ladies, the author came to understand that within the community and church there are origins of conversations that are negative.

Once more as he tries to help caregivers understand their role, Wimberly points out one of the most important facts of counselling; that **“the point of counselling is to make sure that we increase our agency or our ability to privilege. Privileging is a process of articulating our current stories and the conversation that go into making up our stories, and deciding to re-author or re-edit the story conversation”**. (2003: 26).

The author agrees fully with what Wimberly suggest as part of counselling for those who have lived their lives by internalizing all the negative conversations. Therefore, there must be a space for examining the negative conversations that we have internalized.

Therefore, as pastoral caregivers, we need to create a sacred space for those who have internalized all the negative conversations, so that they would be able to start a positive conversation with God.

2.4. Story-Telling Methodology- (Wimberly 1999)

Storytelling, according to Wimberly, has a quality of reshaping the sacred identity and to **“constructing stories that speak to people emotional, spiritual, interpersonal, marital and family needs”** (1999:16).

Even though he wrote from an African American perspective, what he is addressing is quite relevant to the situation of the young ladies who have internalized all the negative conversations of rejection and shame that have been exposed to them by the leaders, clergy and community.

As a result, they turn to live out these negative experiences. As Wimberly has stated, **“we internalize and prioritize conversations, some become the standard by which new conversations are measured and evaluated.”** (2003: 16)

The point of using story-telling would be to do what Wimberly suggests that, **“storytelling’s function is to help shape the view of reality that influences us”** (2003: 15). The reality is that we often internalize the stories that we hear, and we end up believing them and make them our reality of what life is.

Another important fact that Wimberly points out is that, **“what we believe about ourselves shapes our behaviour towards ourselves, others and God”** (2003: 16). With this point, the author agrees with what Wimberly points out, because when analyzing the stories of the young ladies, the author found that the stories of these young ladies had been shaped by what they have internalized.

They even got to a stage of believing that the stories that they hear were certainly the reality of what life is all about. That being pregnant out of wedlock is a sin. Wimberly further say’s, **“what we believe about ourselves forms either positive or negative images, which we then act out on in our lives. These images either nourish our growth and development or they contribute to our demise when negatively affect our feelings about ourselves”**. (2003: 17)

The quoted phrase above is true, because the world that we live in is “**controlled by cohesive worldview, and there are many competing worldviews that we must choose from in order to bring meaning to our lives**” (2003: 17).

Too often, this makes us to be in a state of not seeing things positively, because of what we have internalized. Being in group therapy with these ladies has shown me how important the method of conversation for pastoral theology is.

2.5. Conclusion

The stories of these ladies made the author to realize that as pastoral caregivers we need to be sensitive, and caring to people we are placed in the care of. We need to be good shepherds. Because of what they have internalized, it is hard for them to be able to have any conversation with God or any healthy relationship with God because of the picture that has been given to them by the clergy and lay leaders.

In this process, they experience rejection from their boyfriends, parents, the church and the community at large. This has left them with a wound of feeling that they do not belong.

Wimberly comes up with this methodology which is quite helpful for pastoral care. In helping those who have internalized negative conversations to be able to have positive conversation with God, we need to understand that this has been developed through their situation where they find God in the midst of the storm that they are in.

To most of them, it seemed that the boat in which they were travelling with Christ was nowhere to be found; therefore it was easy for them to believe that all the society was true in giving them negativity. In this chapter, the author has come to understand more fully how important it is for one to develop a methodology that could help in pastoral-care for those who are vulnerable.

As this research is more focused on the trauma of shame and rejection that young ladies experience within the church and community at large, it is important to work with them in such a graceful way. In the next chapter, the author will focus on understanding the pain of shame and rejection that is being exposed to them.

CHAPTER 3

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of the study of this research is about the trauma of shame and rejection that young ladies experience during their suspension in church because they have fallen pregnant out of wedlock.

In this chapter, my focus will be on the issue of shame and rejection that they experienced at that particular period in their lives within the church. In other words, the church, which must be caring and therapeutically working with them, need not reject; shame and humiliate them. With the above in mind, let me now analyze how shame and rejection humiliate them.

3.2. SHAME

Definition

According to Lewis: **“Shame is the feeling we have when we evaluate our actions, feelings or behaviour and conclude that we have done wrong”** (Lewis 1992:2).

On the other side, Wimberly defines shame as **“feeling unlovable, that one’s life has a basic flaw in it”** (Wimberly 1999:11).

My understanding of shame is that it is a painful emotional experience caused by the sense of feeling unworthy, unloved and not cared for by people who live with you. The two definitions of shame by the above-mentioned authors, share the depth of pain that continue to affect people who are rejected and shamed by others.

3.2. 1. FORMS OF SHAME

Shame comes to us in various forms. At some point one is the cause of a situation which results in shame, however, at other times, one is being shamed by other people. The study of this research has shown that shame is a reality to these young women who are being ashamed by their loved ones.

Looking at shame from a phenomenological point of view of the situation of these young ladies, it is **“intense pain, discomfort, anger, feeling that one is no good, inadequate and unworthy”** (Lewis 1992:35). Therefore, the issue of shame comes to play as a result of having a child out of wedlock. This causes them not to participate fully in the life of the church and community.

What Lewis says is true when he states that those who are ashamed, are always put in the position whereby they are made to experience all kinds of emotions of shame, and at times, they feel as though they have done wrong to their loved ones. Too often they become objects and subjects of shame.

At some point one gets into a situation of not being able to differentiate between shame and guilt, which at times might be the case which results as one thinks of the guilt which is being imposed on them.

In the same way, **“shame becomes a heightened consciousness of the self which is an unusual and distinct form of self protection, in this way the self is seen as small, helpless, frozen emotionally hurt”** (Lewis 1992:33)

Since one is being shamed by the family and even by church members where they worship, in that process the self is lost. As Wimberly has stated the problem with shame is that it has **“to do with failure to meet society’s expectation”** (1999: 119). This was a common feeling among young ladies as they see themselves as failures because they have not met all the expectations of their families and the community.

In other words, culture and society has expectations which are not clearly spelt out, e.g. expecting them to, firstly, be married before having a child. However, at some point, the father is not there to help the mother to raise the child.

As these young ladies undergo this process, parents often do not understand their situation, but see them as an embarrassment to the family. That kind of expectation that is being imposed to them affects them in some way; they start rejecting themselves.

3.2.2. Shame as a problem

The issue of shame in this study has shown that it is a problem that affects these young ladies. Firstly, the issue of shame is a problem in the sense that those who experience it see themselves as unworthy.

In the case of this study, shame has proven to be a problem for young ladies and the method of disciplining them is rather destroying in various ways of their lives. The church classifies them as those who have committed a sinful act, and, even, prevents them from receiving Holy Communion; which is God's grace given for all.

As Wimberly point it out that, **“it is God's grace at work in our lives restoring our spiritual, emotional and relation health”** (2003:11).

In other words, the ladies are excluded from communion at the time when they need it the most and to feel that they, too, belong. Why is shame a problem? It's because of the treatment that is imposed on them by the church and the society at large. This, in some way, affects them emotionally, spiritually and physically, and the results of this are not pleasing.

The young ladies end up resenting themselves as they feel that they have failed by being pregnant out of wedlock. Some experience the humiliation of caring a child without a father; they end up resenting the church, their families and the community because of stigma.

3.2.3. EFFECTS OF SHAME

The result of the above shatters their lives. It is “like an atomic particle, we often know where it is only by the trace it leaves and by the effects it causes” (Lewis 1992:119). In most cases, the effects that shame has on people, results in low self-esteem; which **“refers to the worth or dignity that ascribes to oneself”** (Jacoby 1999:24).

People then fail to see themselves as people of worth and value. Jacoby says that “**one feels ones personal self-worth has been lessened**” (Jacoby 1999:25). This could be caused by others within the family and the society, and reduces the way you see yourself.

The survey of this research has shown that the issue of shame affects the young ladies in various ways, for example, some of the ladies have left the church, others have resorted to drinking alcohol and others, in some way, are neglecting their children.

In short, the effects lead to destruction. Some try to cope with it, whereas, others end up resorting to the kind of living that they are not proud of ,e.g. by trying to run away from what had happened by having multiple relationships, or drinking alcohol in a high rate or even rejecting their own child. The issue of shame results in rejection, which continues the journey of destroying their self worth and dignity.

3.3. REJECTION

Definition

Rejection undermines breaks or prevents normal and harmonious relationships. It happens unexpectedly, and some of its victims may have had a good life until something that changed their life happened.

3.3.1. FORMS OF REJECTION

Gibson has stated that **“rejection may begin in the imagination; most of the time have been seemingly ignored by someone we know well”** (1992:45). These young ladies had experienced rejection from all sorts of angles.

Firstly, they were rejected by the men who impregnated them, who had denied the pregnancy, and left them to face the consequences, thereof, by themselves. At times, these men even deny that they had relationships with them, which I believe to be one of the factors that can destroy a person’s self worth.

In our black culture, when you have fallen pregnant out of wedlock, the parents have to go to the house of the man who impregnated you in order to say that their child had broken their “daughter’s leg” (impregnated her) and there must be an amount of money they will be required to pay for the damage.

One can imagine what it does to the young lady if the man rejects her at that particular time in their lives. It is even worse if the young lady was made to believe that the man was single, only to discover that he is married.

So, you are rejected by him, the parents, the society and the church; especially at the time when you need to be helped. In short, you have no one or system to support you.

Let me further explain that the pain of rejection, which is imposed on them by their parents, is hurting, and the author believes that it is in line with what Evoy says about parental rejection that, **“in his experience it seems to have been felt in some damaging way”** (1983:24). This process continues to damage their image and self worth.

3.3.2. PARENTAL REJECTION

For them, the rejection by their parents “had characteristically taken either an active or passive expression towards them”.

The rejection “**felt by their parents had tended to express their rejection by the things they did and said**” (Evoy 1983: 17). In the case of this research, for these young women being rejected by their parents is interpreted as a way in which they have failed to follow specific roles that era expected by their parents; such as being married first before one could have a child.

Because their parents “**had focused on the failure, inadequacies and disappointment they found**” (Evoy 1983:44). They reject them because they have brought shame to the whole family.

Even though they might be older now and matured, the rejection that they experienced through their parents during pregnancy has unconsciously shown some kind of rejection towards their children. By resenting and neglecting their children as mothers and, at times, they found themselves blaming their children for the situation they are faced with. In other words, they project their anger towards a child who is born out of wedlock.

The rejection of this sort of behaviour could be that it happened during their pregnancy and may have **“commence at the time between the womb and tomb, a child can suffer rejection while still in the womb”** (Gibson 1992:24). By the time these children are born, shame had become part of their relationship between mother and child.

3.3.3. COMMUNIAL REJECTION

Rejection is also being expressed by the community within which one worships. They refuse to accept them but continue to make them feel that they do not belong.

Being refused the grace of God, I take that to be more painful to the pain inflicted by those who are rejecting them within the church, and they even get a wrong picture that God is also rejecting them. When they hear the preaching that does not bring good news, that they have committed a sin and are not worthy to receive the grace of God, which Christ has shown to all.

This is a heart-breaking experience; to be rejected and this results in shamed souls which seek the mercy of God and comfort among other believers.

This in some way could be the same as Christ's journey whom during his earthly life, tasted the smell of rejection when his own community refused to accept him and the message he brought to them.

Wimberly uses the verse in Mark 6:3 to form the basis that the **“tradition of Jesus’ rejection by his own Community; this represent the resistance of Jesus from his community based on the community internalized shame grounded in their social status.”** (1999:37-38)

The community within which one lives also expresses its rejection in some form, such as saying hurting words towards the young ladies. During the research, the author found that in the urban areas, the community is less concerned about this matter, whereas in rural areas, this is a big deal to the community. Ladies who are pregnant before marriage are, in a way, rejected and stigmatized.

In other situations, the parents would refuse their male child to marry a girl who has had a child out of wedlock. They will make it a point that their child does not get involved with the lady.

For them that lady “*ke mo itshwara lhepi*” (she does not have good manners), therefore, they cannot have her as their daughter-in-law, with a child whose father they do not know.

Single mothers find it difficult to cope with this kind of rejection, whereas the men who impregnated them go freely. He is able to continue with his life as if nothing has happened, and even get to a point where he could marry a lady who does not have a child.

He would say that he wants to start a family; forgetting easily that he has left someone with a child; and that the poor lady is being rejected within her own community with no man who can take her in marriage.

As time goes on, the same community will start to call her “*lefetwa*” (one who could not marry); forgetting that they have let the man who impregnated her choose to marry another woman, while the one he impregnated could not be married by another man. This is the process that humiliates; abuses and violates these young ladies.

Most of the people experience rejection in some way, and there is no formula that one follows, no schedule to adhere to; rejection happens in a unique way.

Just as the causes of rejection vary, so are the effects it produces. Although the fallout is so widespread and diverse, three special groupings are clearly discernible; firstly, how the sufferer outwardly responds to the impact and significance of having received rejection.

3.3.4. EMOTIONAL REJECTION

Lastly, the emotional shockwaves on the inner **“personality, thirdly the self-defensive measures normally taken to offset and prevent any repetition of rejection damage”** (Gibson 1992:33) Rejection has symptoms similar to those who have suffered it. In the study of this research, I have found that the ladies who have experienced it have shown some of the symptoms which N&P Gibson has stated above.

This damage affects the young ladies to such an extent that they indoctrinate their children with their negative lifestyle. In other words, the cycle of negativity is passed on to the next generation. This process leads to hatred which creates aggressive behaviour.

1. **Aggressive reaction**

- **Refusing comfort**

Those who are rejected, in most cases, refuse to allow anyone to touch or comfort them. Often, they want to be alone and they are found to be more aggressive.

Others feel that they just want to be away from their community or they even get to a state of trying to commit suicide. These are some of the symptoms of rejection.

As N&P Gibson stated that rejected people **“need space and time to vent their feelings, usually they want everyone to leave them to be all alone”**. (1992:34). That could be one of the way of helping them, by giving them space, they could come to a place where they will be able to be open and share what they have went through.

- **Scepticism, doubt and unbelief**

Rejection leads them not to trust people, a cycle of life style starts. For example, a **“rejected person, trust in the family, friends and people in general, usually goes to a reverse gear, because the one experiencing rejection loses faith in peoples motives and becomes suspicious of every one”** (Gibson 1992: 3).

This is quite true with those who experience rejection. Their way of living starts to change in a dramatic way. The next step leads to self rejection and feeling of being unworthy.

3.3.5. SELF-REJECTION SYMPTOMS

Just as much as all wounds indicate physical injury, the same applies to behavioural symptoms which reveal the presence of rejection which are:

- **Low self-image**

Rejection results in a crushed personality, and often the reasoning for this is that **“if so and so whom I thought loved me, or whom I respected did or said that to me, then they obviously don’t think as much of me as I thought they did. Then I must be of no real value, the more that attitude remains the deeper the self-rejection becomes”** (Gibson 1992: 36). Perception becomes part of their lives which, finally, is understood as a reality.

- **Sadness, grief and sorrow**

These are outward signs of a wounded or rejected spirit. The reaction for this will be determined through being hurt and also the way of self-pity which the individual displays. At this time, the person becomes self centered. They focus on themselves, and isolate and reject others.

- **Self-accusation and self-condemnation**

Even though it might sound to be unreal but, too often people blame themselves of causing their own rejection. With that they always put themselves down and will **“reject personal commendation, no matter how genuine it is”** (Gibson 1992: 37). And they get to a point where they blame and punish themselves for being in that situation. The above experience was shared by some of the young ladies during the interviews. They blamed themselves to the extent of excluding the man who participated in the process which led to where they are.

3.4. CONCLUSION

Shame and rejection have left so many people with scars of broken images and crushed by their experiences; thus they have been left feeling worthless, and hopeless. As a result of the above, they face life with a negative attitude, only because they have internalized all the negative conversations that the community and their loved ones have imposed on them.

There is a need for pastoral care to those who have been ashamed, rejected, and stigmatized so that they may know their worth, dignity and identity, which could be restored before they could be crushed forever.

In this research, the young ladies have revealed that for them the issue has been so hurting and some feel that for them, there is no one who could take away the pain and treatment that they had experienced. Once they think about this, they feel angry and do not want to associate with those who have hurt them. In the case of church members who treated them harshly, they do not want to see them.

This is a challenge to the clergy and pastoral theology, in caring for the flocks of God by being a good shepherd to the broken souls which seek God's mercy, comfort and grace. In the next chapter, the author will tackle the issue of these ladies' stories of pain through interviews and therapy.

CHAPTER 4

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will present stories of the ladies which were shared in group sessions. These stories will be presented in the form of case studies and the ultimate aim will be to develop a method of caring which will empower the church to care for such ladies rather than to focus on suspension as a method of discipline.

4.2. Case Studies

The author is also one of those who went through the discipline by the church for being pregnant out of wedlock. The author has now become a minister, facing the same issue now as a pastor. The author came across young ladies who had fallen pregnant out of wedlock. They were dedicated and committed members of the church.

In order to work therapeutically with these ladies, the author created a group therapy session so that they might learn and get healing from each other's experience. The group composed of 10 ladies in total, but for this study, I will only present four case studies.

Through their stories, I have come to understand what happened in their situations. They shared painful memories of their lives experiences and the frustrating part for me was hearing how some of my colleagues in the ministry continue to use harsh ways of suspension as a way of discipline to such ladies.

Suspension only makes them vulnerable to feel hopeless, useless, helpless, worthless, sinful and unworthy of God's forgiveness.

It is as if my colleagues in the ministry have completely forgotten about the Methodist Rule of life. This rule has three points of emphasis namely:

- Do no harm
- Do good
- Attend upon the ordinances of God (MCSA 2007: 26)

According to this rule, doing no harm entails avoiding evil of any kind. Doing good entails means being merciful after one's own power, doing good of every possible kind to the bodies of people as well as their souls, and, as fair as possible to all. The above rule creates a pastoral atmosphere that will create beauty in the lives of broken people.

Attending upon the ordinances of God entails observance of public worship, partaking in the Lord's Supper, maintenance of Christian community, private prayer, reading of Scripture and habits of self-discipline, are other avenues that create a space of caring for the broken souls. Suspension as a way of discipline for young women, who have fallen pregnant, stands against these values that the Methodist people hold dear.

It does more harm to their spiritual, mental and psychological well-being. It does no good to them, their families or even their unborn children. It excludes them from the ordinances of God or means of grace. These ladies, who are co-researchers in this study, range from the ages of 24-30 years and they live in a semi rural context.

They are struggling with the issue of who they are in the body that rejects them, the family that ignores them, and men who have impregnated them and are the cause of this problem, which led them to hating them in turn. Let us now analyze the first story.

4.3.1. Case study 1

Story of Martha (Not her Real name)*

Martha was raised within a Christian family; she was an active member in the church and was involved in the Wesley Guild (youth movement), a movement of young people within the Methodist Church, and also in all church activities. She had a good upbringing through the loving and dedicated actions of her widowed mother.

Martha's father passed away while she was 12 years. She grew up in a loving, kind family with her two siblings. Their mother worked hard in order to ensure that they got a good and quality education. At the age of 25, Martha got a job out of their area at Tau. She was in a loving relationship with a young man by the name of Katlego, who was a member of the same church and they worshipped together.

Katlego was a local preacher and a close friend to the minister. After two years being in relationship with him, which everybody knew about, they started a journey towards marriage preparation. They were lovers and in their minds, their journey was quite promising. They thought that they would be able to live together as husband and wife. What Martha did not know was that this was not to be true.

Things started to change dramatically when Martha told Katlego that she was pregnant. He did not respond in the manner that she expected. At first, she thought that it was just the reaction of a shock from him because they both had not planned to have a child by that time. But she soon discovered that this was not the case at all. Her lover started to distance himself from her.

He never cared or related to her in the same manner as he did before. As time went by, the pregnancy started to show. Her mother advised her to write a letter to her class leader explaining her situation. It is generally the practice within the Methodist church (a practice that is not supported, or even advocated for, in the Laws and Discipline of the church) that those who have fallen pregnant out of wedlock should write a letter to their leader; who will then tell the minister and the letter will also be read during the leaders meeting.

This process is a painful journey that only ladies walk while men are left alone. It has a negative reaction.

It reminds the author of the passage in John 8:1-11, of the woman who was caught in the act of adultery and was brought to Christ alone, where was the man? One would ask. This process stipulates that if one member has fallen pregnant there must be a disciplinary action taken towards such a member.

Unfortunately, this process of discipline is aimed at ladies alone. It is a discriminating practice that implies that only women have sinned and not the men. As advised, Martha wrote the letter. To her surprise, the leader informed her that he has already removed her name from the class book because he had already heard that she was pregnant.

He informed her further that she would have to remain at home from that time on until after the time she gave birth. After several months, she went to the minister and told him about her situation. She informed him that the man who impregnated her was still continuing to worship in the church. He was still involved in the youth activities.

In other words, there was nothing done to him while she suffered alone. His life continued as usual; whereas she had been suspended. She had hoped that she would find help from her minister because she knew that he was a friend to Katlego. However, the response from the minister further traumatized her.

Things did not go the way she had hoped. The minister told her that there was nothing he could do for her. She was told to wait until her time of suspension had passed, after which she could then come back to church and resume as a member again.

As if that was not enough, he told her that Katlego was one of his best preachers, and could not afford to suspend him. He was scared of what people would think if he was suspended. Hurt, broken and traumatized, because of all this, she left the church and told herself that she will never worship there again.

From this time onwards, pain; rejection; isolation; hurt and disappointment, became part of her journey through life. Initialization of negative attitudes began, especially towards men.

4.3.2. Reflection on case study

Martha's sense of dignity and self-esteem had been crashed by the way that lay leaders within the church handled her situation. They showed her through words and deeds that the man who impregnated her out of wedlock did not need to be disciplined as they saw him as one promising preacher and member of the church.

They communicated to her that it would be embarrassing for them and the church to suspend him. In other words, they were blaming her for the pregnancy. While they did not say it in so many words, through their actions of discrimination, they communicated that it was her fault alone that she was pregnant. She should have prevented the pregnancy.

One is reminded of Wimberly, who says that they stop conversation with God and other people.

Her story challenges the church deeply. It challenges class leaders, the ministers in society and all concerned. The church is supposed to be a place where healing should take place. Yet, because the leaders have favourites, they fail to provide a caring environment for these ladies. The ladies suffer rejection alone. This research is a response to this traumatic and discriminatory treatment that the young women are faced with.

It seeks to come up with a model that will help the leaders, the clergy and the church as a whole, in order to care for these ladies in a meaningful manner. Not only that, it also seeks to bring to the awareness of the church, the need for the men who impregnate these women to be also subjected to suspension. Why should a church discriminate against women? Fiorenza suggests that **“women have been subjected to oppression by patriarchal”** (2002: 12)

That is true, and that continues to go on even though the world is trying to rectify that, but in some way, it seems that it is going to take more efforts in achieving that.

Martha's story again highlights the fact that the disciplining of pregnant un-wed ladies is not confined to particular denominations. It happens across denominations. The concern is on the caring model that is not effective. She went through the difficult process of discipline without care. In the case study, Martha is not only suspended but rather rejected by the church that does not journey with her.

In all this, her lover is untouched and the question that comes in mind is what happened to all being equal in the eyes of God; all being created in God's likeness? Paul in his letter to the Galatians say's "**there is no different between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Chris**" (Gal 3:28). The author is of the opinion that the image of God was destroyed in Martha by the lay leaders of the church.

4.3.3. Case study 2. *The story involves a young lady who had an affair with the minister Nthabiseng* (means Happiness)*

As Nthabiseng stood along with the group of those who came to baptize their infants, tears started to roll down her face when she gave her child to the minister who was going to baptize him. This emotion arose as a result of the recollection of her memories. It was on Sunday the 16th March 2008, that an invitation announcement of the wedding of their minister was made by the society steward.

She was shocked and hurt and in her disbelief, left the service crying bitterly. He was the man of God and she never expected him to be so cruel and heartless. He betrayed her by marrying another woman, after such promises that he made to her during their love affair.

Nthabiseng and her minister met six months after he arrived in their society. At that time, he was single. They fell in love. According to Nthabiseng, their relationship was good. He even took her to his home in order to introduce her to his parents. Some members of the church were happy while others were angry. Their love affair, in some way, brought tension in the church because of the division it had created.

They ignored this tension because of their love for each other. After three years being in the relationship, they planned to settle down and get married. They spoke of marriage.

While plans were in progress, Nthabiseng got a job in Johannesburg. She had to leave her place of birth. For a while, the relationship continued well. She would visit home bi-weekly to be with her lover. After some few months, Nthabiseng realized that she had missed her monthly period. She went to the doctor who confirmed that she was pregnant. In her excitement, she went home to inform her lover.

She did not get the kind of response that she had expected. Her lover turned out to be a monster that she had never imagined him to be. After telling him about the pregnancy, he just instructed her to get rid of it.

He informed her, “I cannot stand to be suspended by the church now; you know very well that in few months time I will be ordained. Therefore, there is no way that the church can find out about this.”

She tried to reason with him, reminding him about the plans they had of getting married, but he would not listen. By then, it seemed as if she was talking to a stranger.

He asked, “What if I am not the one who impregnated you?” This question shocked her beyond description. To hear the man, whom she loved, cared for and adored saying those words was indescribable. It crushed her “perfect world” which she had imagined for the two of them.

She knew that she had been faithful to him throughout their relationship. Humiliation, violation and abuse began. How could he even suggest that? It was unbelievable! Seeing that she was not getting anywhere with him, she thought of telling her parents. This worsened the whole situation. They told her that they had warned her of this relationship.

They did not approve of it from the beginning. In their minds, it was impossible that the minister had made her pregnant because he was getting married in three weeks time. Members of the congregation had already been invited to the minister’s wedding. Rejection, humiliation, isolation and emotional abuse became part of her life.

She thought what if the marriage was not true. She only believed it when she heard it herself on that Sunday morning. She sat frozen on the pew as she heard the invitation being read out. Another kind of rejection and trauma was set in her mind and heart. It became part of her journey from that day onwards.

She left the church in tears. She was shocked at what was happening. Her lover got married and she was left with a child who did not have a father. He was useless because he did nothing about this matter. He just suspended her from her membership. Her former lover also participated in deciding her suspension during the leader's meeting.

After the suspension, her parents forced her to baptize the child. The minister who rejected, humiliated and traumatized her was the one to baptize her son. Just the thought of him baptizing her son devastated her. He would baptize his own child that he wanted nothing to do with.

The same person, who brought her shame in the community, would hold his son and welcome him into the community of faith under false pretext. How could he hold this precious child in his arms and pretend that he never had a relationship with its mother?

Her own parents did not care about the trauma that was caused by this man. All they needed was the baptism. As these thoughts ran through her mind, she hated the church with passion.

She could not imagine someone who had been called by God to nurture and care for God's people hurting the very same people that he was supposed to care for. That is why she presented her child with tears running down her face. The question to ask is, why this kind of treatment?

4.3.4. Reflection on case study

How do those in leadership manage to get away with murder? Why they are never suspended? Nthabiseng had thought that being in a relationship with a minister will be a different experience. She had believed that he would be different from other men as he was a man of the cloth; she never thought that he could destroy one member in the flock.

The leaders who were fully aware of the relationship between Nthabiseng and the minister, on the other hand, failed to stand up for this young lady or the anointed servant of God. It is heartbreaking to see and hear how those who are meant to care for the flock destroy and traumatize same the flock. The leaders failed to stand up for this young lady.

They did not discipline the minister for the act he had committed. Even those who were supporting their relationship turned their backs on her at a time when she needed them the most. She started internalizing the hatred that leads to an aggressive lifestyle.

The author strongly feels that disciplinary actions should be taken against such ministers. In some instances, ministers have been suspended from their ministry for a certain period of time.

This comes about because many ladies do not know how the process of discipline within the church works. Part of caring requires that we go to the basics of the Methodists' rule which require that we do no harm, do good and attend upon the ordinances of God, as mentioned in 6 paragraph 3.5.1 of the Methodist Laws and Discipline above.

The church leadership played a biased role, because they were only concerned with her pregnancy and not the one who got her pregnant. She had to be suspended from church and to add to that, her class leader, who was meant to be a shepherd to her, was used to convey the message.

There was no caring process in the manner in which the matter was handled and no care shown to her. The clergy, in this case, did not exercise his pastoral ministry.

The traumatic thing is when her lover forgets about all the promises which he once made and starts a new family that excludes Nthabiseng and her child. The cycle repeats itself where trust is betrayed.

The correction of this process, when handled well, will bring healing to the young ladies, challenge the young man and make him responsible. Once again, we see the injustice of how the church exercises the discipline among young ladies who fell pregnant out of wedlock.

The role played in here by the minister in this case is that of a coward, who is only looking after his own interests. He did not want the church to know about what he did as it could prevent him from being ordained as a full minister.

With this kind of treatment towards the lady, the author agrees with what Fortune say's that **“the church does not adequately reflects the needs and interest of the society, certainly of women in the society; and that it does perpetuate biases and unjust structure, particular with regard to women. The structural power of the church is still dominated by men, while the grassroots population is mostly women”** (Fortune 1989: 123).

This statement is true in all regards, because the man who impregnated Nthabiseng was a minister in the church, which means that he participated in making the decisions that are biased towards women.

As Nthabiseng is being disciplined, who then disciplines the minister, especially when leaders protect him? These are critical questions that need to be looked at. There are no simple answers.

4.3.5. Case study 3

Katlego Story (Not real name)*

Katlego is a young and bright lady, full of life and committed to the Lord. She comes from a Christian family. Both her mother and father are devoted members of the church. They are leaders in various organizations. Katlego, 26 years old, is presently working in the nearby hospital as a nurse. Her sad story happened while she was at university.

In her case, nobody wanted to know what happened to her; especially her journey pertaining to her pregnancy. It seemed that everybody just made their own conclusions as they saw her pregnant.

They assumed that this was an outcome of an affair she may have had at the university. As a result, they concluded that she was immoral. Nobody bothered about asking her.

Her class leader just removed her name from the class book. The chairperson of the Wesley Guild told her that she is suspended until she was restored to her membership after the pregnancy.

The minister did not bother to question her. Her mother tried to explain her situation during the leaders meeting, but they did not want to hear anything. All they thought was that she wanted special treatment because she (*her mother*) was a class leader too. This is how her trauma developed, which also affected members of the family. This became extremely painful for Katlego.

Trauma became part of her life. She lived in guilt and shame. What the leaders of her church did not know was that she did not willingly conceive her child.

Twice at the university, she was subjected to traumatic violation of her dignity and sexuality. In her first year, someone tried to rape her. She went to the police, opened a case of attempted rape and the man was arrested and sentenced.

Just as she thought that ordeal was behind her, two years later she was actually raped by someone else. Her rapist threatened to kill her if she said a word to anyone.

He threatened her and told her that he was watching every move she made. Fearful and traumatized, she kept quiet because of these threats. While this encounter haunted her over and over again, she suppressed her fears and tried to cope. The memories of what happened that night kept coming to her.

Alone and deeply hurt, she did not have anyone to confide in. To make matters worse, she was rejected by the church leaders and the youth organization to which she belonged. She experienced no comfort, care and support from the body of Christ. Worse, she was carrying a child of rape and a person who continued to threaten her.

After some few months, she began to see changes in her body. She confided in one of her friends who advised her to go for an abortion. After all, that was her only option. She could not keep a product of violation and dehumanization. Friends advised her not to raise the child she would hate.

Sensible as that sounded to her at the time, the thought of aborting devastated her even further. She was a practicing Christian and she believed strongly that it would be against God's will to commit murder. Trauma continued and she was oppressed by fear and threats.

As months passed by, she did not go home at term break. She was trying to avoid her parents, especially her father. This is because he was not only too strict, but also a leader in the community. She was scared that she would bring shame and dishonour to her family.

Her secret came out when someone from her village saw her and went to inform her mother of her pregnancy. When her mother heard this, she was devastated at first, but later supported her fully. She assured her that she was not alone and that she did not blame her for what happened to her.

But the church, where they worshipped, made her to feel like a prostitute because that is how the community regards students who are at the university. They believe that students sell their bodies when they get to university in order to get money to educate themselves.

The reasoning made sense on her situation because everybody knew how poor her family was. This led to, the experience of shame, guilt, fear and rejection; which became her daily bread.

4.3.6. Reflection on case study

Once again, Katlego was the subject of ridicule and shame in this case, while the male figure (the person who raped her) remained out of the picture. The church suspended her, labelled her, rejected her and disciplined her harshly. It is the view of the author that this selective process of discipline and application of justice has been employed by the church, in various contexts within our Congregation for a number of years.

Such an approach is not something new to our present context. It happened even during Biblical times. In the Gospels, there is a story of Jesus Christ where He was challenged by the leaders of the day in order to discipline a woman who was caught in the act of adultery. Interestingly enough was the fact that the male counterpart in this incidence was not brought forward for the disciplinary action. Only the woman was regarded as a sinner.

The author has noted with deep concern that the leaders in the different societies of our church do not know how to deal with the issue of pregnancy when it happens out of wedlock.

At best, they administer selectivity in justice. At worst, they hurt, reject and shame the very people that they are called to support, care for and nurture. In this case, it is the young women who suffer the most, while the men are let loose to do as they please. Suspension is given only to the women.

In this process women are traumatized even further, instead of being healed and transformed by the body which confesses Christ as Lord and Saviour of all human beings.

In Katlego's case, no one was there from the church to hear her story. Had they taken a moment to listen to her, they would have found out that she was carrying a child, not out of her own will, but as a result of traumatic violation on her body.

At that time, she needed care, love, support and affirmation and not any further trauma. She became crucified for things they thought she had done, when in actual fact, she was innocent in all of this.

Due to this approach, the church missed a golden opportunity of ministering to a hurting young woman. As a result, they could not administer healing to her.

4.3.7. Case study 4

Story of Precious (Not real name)*

Precious was once a committed member of the church. Even though she was no longer living in this area of Tau, she had made it a point that she contributed to all things that were needed in the church. She believed that her membership was in the society where she grew up. Things started to change dramatically when she became pregnant.

Instead, her class leader who was supposed to be caring removed her name from the class book. This practice is illegitimate, as it does not appear anywhere on the Laws and Discipline of the Methodist church of Southern Africa.

She had been working in Cape Town where she met the lover of her life, who was planning to marry her. When she came home to explore the possibility of baptizing her lovely baby girl and be reinstated to her membership, she was told that she was no longer a member in that church.

The class leader informed her that she should go back to Cape Town and see if the minister in that congregation might baptize the child. There was no way of caring for her, let alone her family. She then asked if she could see the minister in order to get some clarity on the matter, but was refused as well.

The response traumatized her. She asked herself many unanswered questions. Why were things so bad for her? What had she done to deserve such a treatment? She felt that the church had turned its back on her.

This treatment communicated to her that she was an outcast who did not deserve to be part of the church. The worst thing was that it seemed like the church was punishing the innocent child as well. This was the painful journey of rejection by the church that she loved so much. Because of the pain and hurt she felt, she decided that she did not want anything to do with the church.

Later, as she narrated her story to her elders, she discovered that the kind of treatment she received from the leader was not sanctioned by the church. The class leader had made up the rules.

That is why he did not allow her to see the minister. The minister was not even aware of such things happening within the church. This is partly how some male leaders behave within the body of Christ.

4.3.8. Reflection on the case study

Precious she was a committed member of the church; she was faithful and honest in participating in the church activities. Her story is of rejection, pain and suffering that many women are subjected to in their congregations. Precious started to hate the church when she was refused an opportunity to baptize her child.

She was refused reinstatement into church as well by the person whom she trusted and held in high regard. Once again, this is proof of how certain leaders within the church have invented their own rules and enforced them as the law of the church.

The church is aware of such unhelpful practices and therefore, encourages those that they like. This is an indication that there is a great need to minister and to teach about transformation, restoration and healing.

In Precious' case, it shows that leaders will only give better treatment to those that they like. It almost looks as if one is from a certain kind of a family, they will make it difficult for one to receive caring, support and nurturing. This is an unfair discrimination practice which is not in line with the teachings of Christianity. In short, if one comes from a home of lower class, one is treated badly.

4.4. APPLICATION OF METHODOLOGY

In chapter two, the author was made aware that the methodology pursued in this study is composed of two theories namely; Interpersonal Conversation and Story-telling.

In Wimberly's theory, we discover a helpful analysis of how one can get to a place of healing and restoration in the face of deep hurt, pain and rejection. He uses the phrase that: "The interpersonal Conversation method", where one is given the privilege to have an interpersonal conversation with God. As one engages in this conversation, one is able to reclaim their worth, value and dignity.

This theory of Wimberly will help the ladies to enter into a space of understanding their worth and value in life as single mothers. It is clear that these ladies felt like outsiders who were rejected by the community of worship where they usually prayed, especially by the lay leaders and the clergy who were suppose to take care of them.

They experience found rejection by church, only because they fell pregnant out of wedlock. These ladies felt they had nowhere to be valued and held in esteem and where they could be told that God still cares for them. These young ladies' process of internalizing negative conversations made them to be away from the church and that affected them from conversing with God.

Wimberly's theory is helpful in addressing the issue of shame, rejection and guilt. That is why interpersonal conversation becomes a tool where they are able to deal with their hurt. What Wimberly wrote about, is the importance of interpersonal conversation with God that brings insight into one's story of pain and hurt.

Even though written from the Western African American perspective, his approach will be adapted in the African perspective. My understanding is that African Christian people have a unique knowledge of a conversation with God.

But when it comes to having conversation with God, for them, this becomes another ball game. African people converse with God in prayer, especially in prayers of petition, forgiveness and thanksgiving. In some instances, they fail to enter into interpersonal conversation with God.

Interpersonal Conversation between God and humankind is very important, just like being in conversational relationship with parents, relatives and members of the church and, need to communicate with other people.

When this process is handled well, it can bring the healing that will lead to spiritual growth. With regard to the case studies that were presented, those ladies were, in a way, denied a right to enter into conversation. Throughout their challenges, they have been blocked by males who do not negotiate or listen.

This blockage occurs at many levels namely:

- The minister who was supposed to be caring for lost souls.
- The class leader who is meant to care after the Spiritual, temporal social welfare of the congregation and members assigned to his/her care.
- The congregation that denied them a place where they could express their hurt, pain, rejection and shame. The exclusion from the unconditional love and acceptance of God as expressed and received at the Lord's Supper.

These and many more blockages communicated, with great emphasis, a process of rejection, exclusion and shame to these young women instead of love, acceptance and empathy. When it comes to the Lord's Supper, these women are denied a special opportunity of repentance through confessing their sins, receiving absolution and the cleansing by the blood of Jesus; which is symbolized by wine.

This process of excommunication prevents these young women from entering into a meaningful interpersonal conversation with God. The fact that leaders and ministers would entertain this exclusion towards others, questions their own theology and understanding of God's grace and underserved love. It questions their own processes of interpersonal conversation with God.

Through their calling, the clergy have assumed the role of being identified as servants of God, shepherds of the flock, healers of the wounded and caregivers. To the troubled souls, they need to show at all the time and demonstrate by all means their servant hood role towards those who are placed in their care.

Without an understanding of this Interpersonal Conversation with God, it is obvious that one would loose those entrusted to his/her care. This is one of the reasons which make it difficult for one to hear God in the day to day matters.

This proves that the clergy and the lay leaders are too quick to punish and condemn these young women without even trying to show a sense of pastoral care towards them.

Interpersonal Conversation method requires that the clergy must be accountable for those they are in charge of, and not condemn them because they perceive them as sinners.

The clergy has to lead in a way that gives evidence to their call to servant hood and an understanding of God's grace, forgiveness and unconditional love. Caregivers and pastors need to show that they understand Christ's words which are found in John 13:14 "That we should wash one another's feet." Caregivers and pastors need to know that they are God's representatives on earth, serving his people and that in all that they do; they should resemble God who has been revealed to us by Christ.

In the case studies of the story of young ladies, the clergy and the lay leaders were suppose to help the ladies to enter into a place where they could be able to start a conversation with them without the fearing to be of being judged and condemned.

This reminds the author of what Veron says about such issues, that **“whatever we may think about the young person/people in this scenario the situation has occurred and nothing will change the fact. Young people who come to pastoral care givers seeking advice, as they come in a state of high anxiety and confusion. What they don’t want to hear is a care giver condemning them”** (Veron 1997: 72)

The author agrees with the statement that all people, irrespective of their age whether young or old, that when they come to caregivers, they need not be condemned, but they need to be made aware of their faults and that there are consequences to their actions and behaviour.

4.5. CARING METHOD

In his book entitled “An Introduction to Pastoral Care,” Gerkin suggests shepherding as a good model of pastoral care. Pastoral caregivers should assume the role of a shepherd. **“This theory is mostly clearly captured in the imagery of Psalm 23, where God is depicted as the good shepherd who leads the people in the paths of righteousness, restore their soul, and walks with them even among their enemies and the shadow of death”** (Gerkin 1997: 27).

Gerkin wrote about the role of a shepherd from his Western perspective, and the author will approach the shepherding method from her African perspective. African people respect shepherds, as they see a shepherd as someone who cares for the flock; not only leading them to greener pastures, but also by providing security and is willing to die for his flock.

This method would be very helpful in addressing the challenges that the young women who fall pregnant out of wedlock face. Instead of being judgmental and condemning to them, the clergy and the lay leaders need to show the following elements as suggested by Gerkin:

1. **Pastor as shepherd of the flock**

In Gerkin's understanding, he emphasizes this image of a pastor as a shepherd of the flock, **“originated in a time and a place in which the shepherd was a common place figure, and we live in a social situation in which shepherding is scarcely known”** (Gerkin 1997: 80).

Therefore, what he is trying to point out is that we need to align ourselves with this method of caring just as Jesus Christ himself taught it to his disciples. Wimberly, when writing about pastoral care and life's crises all, points to the fact that **“when members of the church community are faced with predictable life transitions they often call clergy and leaders, these transitions which occur through the life cycle are sometimes referred to as developmental crises and crises are usually opportunities and while they may present some difficulties for those who face them, clergy and caring lay leaders can respond with empathy and compassion in ways that help those in crises”** (Wimberly 1991: 49).

This could be of great help when conversing with those in crises. He further says that we should engage in conversations so that we can receive their painful stories.

In today's context, clergy persons need to hold into Christ's teaching, understanding clearly as African people that a shepherd cares for the flock not only by leading them to greener pastures, but that to also provide security and be willing to give up their lives for them in order to see them safe.

Therefore, seeing and trusting the shepherd, the flock is able to respond to the voice of the shepherd and this makes it easy for the shepherd and the flock to be able to communicate. This is the reason it is important that there should be a good relationship between the shepherd and the flock which are been taken care of.

Once more, Gerkin points out that a shepherd is **“also placed alongside that image of the pastor as prophetic leader who cares both for the people and the tradition that gives the community its identity”** (Gerkin 1997:25).

This means that as a pastor, you do not only focus on the flocks, but you also have to care and understand the community in which they come from. To understand how they understand life and how they identify themselves with the community in which they live.

Just like any shepherd, pastors and care givers’ caring method should be the kind that is proposed by Gerkin as follows: **“that care for the people of God involves care that confronts issues of justice and moral integrity in the life of the people”** (Gerkin 1997:25).

Looking at the case studies of these ladies, we saw how lay leaders and the clergy were unjust and how some clergy lacked moral integrity and their actions led to breaking the trust between these ladies, with them and also with God.

The clergy and the lay leaders, as shepherds, need to confront those who are trying to hurt the flock, by trying to find a way that brings healing to the ladies that have been suspended or have a new method of suspension. This image of a shepherd could be applied by both the clergy and the lay leaders, in helping the church to be a place of caring.

The clergy and the lay leaders assuming this role of a shepherd need to be able to communicate in a right way that shows that they care for the spiritual and well being of these ladies, and by not only taking sides and fearing how people will respond if they do things in a justice manner.

A shepherd with a lack of understanding of the role or work that s/he has to do with the flock will surely find it difficult to communicate with the flock and also understanding their needs.

These will surely make the shepherd fail in the duty that s/he is been given in dealing with the day to day matters of the flock that they are taking care of. The manner in which the clergy and the lay leaders have been so quick to punish these young ladies is an evidence of their lack of care and love as shepherds.

The model of shepherding, as a caring method, requires that the lay leaders and the clergy should account for those that they are taking care of and not judge them as “sinners” but they need to tell them about the unconditional love of God; which is for everyone as expressed by God through his son Jesus Christ by redeeming the whole world.

The clergy have the role of being representatives of God and serving God’s people, therefore, the clergy resemble a God who is caring and loving to his flock. The shepherd is the one who cares, leads with love, guides, seeks out the lost, brings back those that are scattered together and protect them from all that could harm them, otherwise.

Gerkin’s model would be helpful to the clergy in their role of caring for the flock of God. If taken seriously, it will show that they care for the spiritual, psychological, social and emotional needs of the members. In so doing, they will be communicating the love of God to His people.

2. Pastor as Mediator and Reconciler

Within this aspect, the pastor needs to help these young ladies to understand that they need to be reconciled to:

- Those that have treated them badly during their pregnancy.
- To their fellow members in the church, by helping them to understand their standing within the church.
- Be reconciled to the community within the church, which has judged them.
- Help them understand that Christ has reconciled them to God long ago.
- Even to those relationships that they had with their boyfriends which had turned sour because of the pregnancy, they have to love with the love of the Lord.

By applying the above, the church will be helping these young ladies to start a journey of moving from a place of hurt to healing. They will show that while they do not condone the behaviour of falling pregnant out of wedlock, they are also not judgmental of the ladies.

They should show their concern as mediators who care about their well being and, that as God loves; they too are committed to revealing God's love to His flock through them.

The most important thing for them is to be the ones who help these ladies to be able to enter into a place of reconciling with those that they have no good relationships with as a result of their pregnancies.

The clergy and the lay leaders, by being good mediators of reconciliation, could also help the church to be able to deal with young ladies who fall pregnant out of wedlock. This will be a way of helping people to understand the place in which young ladies find themselves, as some of them need to be reconciled with their family members and the church.

So, the clergy and the lay leaders playing a role of reconcilers will be of a great impact. The “**method of reconciliation must be in the manner of listening, invitation and clarification of commitment**” (Gerkin 1997:81).

With the understanding that, what the clergy and the lay leaders will be doing, is to encourage those who have broken relationships to be able to start a journey of forgiving and reconciliation, because there will be someone who is caring enough to listen to what has happened to them.

3. **Care and Sacrament: Pastor as ritualistic leader**

Gerkin is looking at what the old leaders used to have, and then suggests that even in today's context there are things that we could use that were used by our ancestors of the middle age. He says there is **“something of the sacramental, liturgical, ritualistic expression of care by the community of Christian believers to be learned from the church of the middle ages”** (Gerkin 1997:82).

In his understanding of caring and bringing healing to the broken souls, Gerkin furthermore says **“singing together can express care and acknowledge our mutual need for care, praying together can search for and celebrate the receiving of the care that only God can provide”** (Gerkin 1997:82)

These elements, if practiced, could bring healing to these ladies for they will know that for what they are facing at that particular moment, there is a community of God that cares for their spirituality and their well being. Gerkin points out that the middle ages have also left the **“legacy of the pastor as the physician of the soul”** (Gekin 1997: 82).

This means that as pastors, we need to care for the souls entrusted on our care. We need to be concerned about whether they are well or if there is anything that troubles their souls and try to find ways that could bring peace within them.

4. **The one who provides liturgical celebration**

In his way, Gerkin understands the pastor in this modern world as the one holding three functions which are:

Mainly mean that in celebrating sacrament, they need to make all the people know that they are welcomed. No matter what condition they might be in at that particular moment and also make them welcomed in the service of God.

- **They are the mouthpiece of God**

All the good news need to come through them, as they are the ones who are representing God. Through the message that they deliver to the people of God, there needs to be healing, and a message that brings about restoration and reconciliation to those who are hurting.

- **They need to help people in their day to day life.**

As a pastor of the flock, the clergy and the lay leaders need to be there in helping people to cope with the challenges that they face in their daily lives. They need to be the ears that listen with care, and not judge what the person is saying.

In caring for these ladies, the clergy and the lay leaders were supposed to listen to what these ladies have experienced during their pregnancies, and to try by all means to be there for them by helping them to cope with the challenges that they faced, some caused by the man who impregnated them.

The day to day matters are challenging and require that the clergy and the lay leaders need to understand the people they are caring for and be concerned about them. Surely, caring for these ladies will be helpful as they will note the wrong about the shame and embarrassment they have experienced and that the church understands their position and is willing to help and support them.

5. **Pastoral care and the moral life of the people**

Gerkin sees a pastor as someone who is meant to “**Care and cure of souls that are heart-broken, as the caretaker of the moral life of people**” (Gerkin 1997:84). Therefore, as caretakers, they need to understand the moral life of these ladies and engage them in the manner that will be helpful to them.

6. **Pastoral care and the life of the spirit**

With the understanding that the pastor is the shepherd of the flock, Gerkin, furthermore, sees pastors as the ones who have to care about the spiritual lives of the flocks which they are taking care of. Such broken people need spiritual guidance.

This makes it easy for the flock to know and understand that their lives are guided by God who has given them spiritual leaders to lead, guide and help them. This could be a good tool in helping the broken young ladies who fall pregnant out of wedlock and for them to know that their lives are guided spiritually and that they do not leave for themselves but God has given them a purpose to leave in this world.

This will also help them appreciate that being pregnant was not the end of the world; but that they still have a life to live and maintain their Christian faith. That will only happen when the clergy and the leaders could take their role as shepherds.

7. **Pastoral listening to the inner life of individuals**

Understanding that **“good pastoral care is not simply talk about the gospel or some general statement of its applicability to people’s lives, rather, good pastoral care embodies the gospel in relationships by speaking to the inner being of individuals”** (Gerkin 1997:88).

He, furthermore, quotes a theologian H. R. Niebuhr, where he says: **“Good pastors seek to relate to people in ways that make possible”** (Gerkin 1997:84), and he calls that **‘moments of revelation.’**

This can help the pastor to be able to communicate with the one who is experiencing hurt in a way that makes the relationship to be connected with the internal history of the person in a new and transforming way.

Wimberly would say that it is an interpersonal conversation that should take place between an individual with God, so that they can enter in a place where they are able to communicate with other people as they are and being able to express their hurt in a way that they could be heard.

8. **Pastoral care as pastoral education**

The other thing that Gerkin suggests as a tool of being a good pastor is using the model of pastoral care as a form of education. As in the history of **“pastoral ministry, priests and pastors were formally or informally teaching the people about what it means to care for the tradition of faith, for the community and for individuals and families”** (Gerkin 1997:94)

Applying this method of Gerkin and that of Wimberly of storytelling, surely, it would be helpful to pastors of the flock to be able to teach their flocks about caring for other individuals and the community in which they live, as a way of bring healing and transformation to those who are hurt.

More especially to these ladies who find themselves at a place where they had never wished to be in; a place of being rejected, humiliated and shamed by those they thought cared for them.

In their teachings, they will be helping even those who have no idea of what it means to care for others as Christ had said that we should be washing each other's feet. That means we should care for other people's well being.

4.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter has been an eye opener to the author. She has discovered that there is a lot to be done in the life of the church, both by the clergy and the lay leaders. They need to be empowered in order to help young women who fall pregnant out of wedlock to discover God's love. This empowerment would entail issues of caring for women and by bringing them to a place of healing, restoration, transformation and reconciliation.

Through these case studies, the author has picked up some common trends that are prevalent both in the lives of the women and within the church community. These women trusted their partners and believed that they had a future with them.

They also believed that the church would stand by them in their time of need. They acknowledge that what they did was wrong in the eyes of the Lord, but the manner in which the church dealt with their issues was heartbreaking. They were made to feel ashamed and guilty because of what has happened to them.

The dignity and self-esteem of these young ladies has been destroyed through the action of the church leaders. What is more devastating is that this happened in a place where they were supposed to receive healing and restoration.

They were denied a unique opportunity to engage in an interpersonal conversation with God through the actions of the leaders. It has been discovered that if the clergy and the lay leaders would play their roles as good caregivers and shepherds of the flock, this would not have happened.

Instead of judging them, they would have listened to their stories, journeyed along with them and given them the support that they needed, without which they would not have got to a place of healing. Suspension within the Methodist church is a harmful practice that is not sanctioned by the bigger body.

It breaks the sense of worth and dignity of these young women who already have been rejected by their lovers who made them pregnant, in the first place.

In the following chapter, the author will focus on the Guilt of Suspension, mostly looking at ways of forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration for these ladies.

CHAPTER 5

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the focus had been on sharing the stories of the ladies gathered during the therapeutic group sessions. As the research continues in this chapter, the author shall give an understanding of:

- a) Suspension from the author's denominational point of view.
- b) Guilt that is being experienced by these ladies.
- c) Forgiveness.
- d) Reconciliation.
- e) Restoration.

These are models that could be applied when assisting these ladies to deal with the trauma of shame and rejection that they experience during their time of suspension. When the above are handled properly, they will lead the young ladies and the leaders to a new place of acceptance, healing and reconciliation, which will ultimately lead to peace.

5.2. SUSPENSION

Definition

Suspension is a way of depriving a person from a job or position for a certain period until the said person is reinstated. The Methodist denomination's perspective is in line with the method that is being used above of suspending young ladies who fall pregnant out of wedlock.

Looking at the Laws and Discipline (which is the constitution that should guide us in disciplining members) of the church through the suspension of pregnant ladies, it is something that we do not have on the records or papers; nothing is documented within the laws and discipline of the church, as a method of discipline that could be applied in this kind of situation.

The author has established that this discipline is only applied mostly in black congregations. It exists as a result of the culture and tradition with the congregation. It is a kind of a by-law. According to the Laws and Discipline of the church, suspension could be applied in the following way:

- **When a member** creates or encourages dissension and strife in their own circuit or any part of the church or who continuously rail against the doctrine and discipline of the connexion, or who lapses into sin, for example being adulterous, immoral etc.
- **Suspension can be used towards a minister** who divorces, does not discipline him/herself with church's monies etc. Or any conduct that brings disrepute to the life and work of the church.
- **A Local Preacher** who divorces and does not preach the doctrine of the church. The church sees the way of disciplining, and it should be done in a **“true spirit which is in harmony with the Grace of Christ, with tenderness, patience and fidelity seeking rather than to win members back to Christ than to discontinue them.”** (Law's and Discipline pg 149)

The author does not suggest that for those ladies who fall pregnant out of wedlock should not be disciplined, but the manner in which it is dealt with is what bothers her.

If the church truly seeks to win members back to Christ, the author strongly believes that suspension of these ladies should be dealt with in a manner which will bring about healing, restoration and bring them back to Christ, rather than shaming them away from his Grace and love by being harsh.

The manner in which suspension has been dealt with in the past, has not healed or made one to understand God's love for them, but instead, it has loaded them with the burden of guilt for what they have done by being pregnant. In other words, it left them wounded. The guilt which they experienced caused them to move away from church life. It has been one sided, favouring boys and men.

5.3. GUILT

The next process is that it leads them to feel guilt and without remorse. The guilt is surrounded by the fact of having done a wrong or committed an offence and a feeling of self-reproach from believing one has done wrong. It, finally, damages them. Wimberly in his book "Moving from Shame to Self-worth" points out an important fact that there is a difference between shame and guilt.

He says that "shame involves global attributes of fault to entire self, while guilt is attributed to specific act" (Wimberly 2003:75). The author agrees with Wimberly because in the case of these ladies, while researching, she found that the guilt that these ladies experienced comes from a specific act.

That act is of being pregnant out of wedlock, and they are suspended, because the understanding is that they have sinned and they feel guilty, and are ashamed and humiliated as such.

Their feeling of guilt arises from acts such as:

- Suspension that in some ways destroys their character of beauty as people created in the image of God; they then become negative. In other words, their dignity is being crushed as they are seen to be different from other people, because of sin.

Their sin causes them to be judged as the worst sinners. And, therefore, their community views them as sinners, because they could not control their sexual desire. In short, they are viewed as being promiscuous.

- Secondly their guilt arose within the family and the community in which they live. They are seen as failures since they have failed to meet their parents' and society's expectations.

Therefore, their feelings of guilt continue to develop as the community starts to give them a new identity, i.e. as women who failed to respect themselves and their bodies. Hence, they are rejected and stigmatized.

That alone makes them to feel guilty, especially that they had a child before marriage or, worse, that the child's father had denied them and the child.

- Lastly, the feeling of guilt arose as they start to blame themselves for having let things get to where they are, i.e. of having a child out of wedlock, therefore, the feeling is that they are sinners and they are not worthy of God's Grace.

They strongly believe in the myths that have been preached by preachers in the past, and even today, that in the Bible there are words that say "sex before marriage is a sin." That concept plays a major role in their feeling guilty.

They understand the wrong they have done, and are willing to rectify their mistakes, but they are not given a chance to repent.

The author sees them inclining with what Stott addresses in the following way: "**Guilt is the logical deduction from premises of sin and responsibility**" (Stott 1986:96). That those who have done wrong should admit the wrong they have done and by showing that they have accepted their mistake; which means that now they are taking responsibility for that. This notion leads to following questions:

- ✓ Is having a child a sinful act?
- ✓ Should a single mother feel guilty for bringing life on earth?

- ✓ Should these young ladies be punished for being pregnant out of wedlock?

This research has opened other views that we need to look at as the church that longs to bring members back to Christ. The main aim is to remind the leaders and the preachers that: **“For God so loved the world, that God gave God’s son, that who believes in him, will have eternal life”** (John 3:16).

We strongly need to look at how we deliver the message of God, and that those who receive it understand it clearly.

This research has shown, clearly, that attribution of guilt has been exposed in a way that fades away the blessing of new life on earth. For example, that child who is born out of wedlock starts life from a negative cycle. Members of the family are not able to celebrate his/ her birth.

This misunderstanding has made these ladies and other people to believe that Christianity is all about sin and not the grace of God. In other words, that for the sin one commits, there will be a divine vengeance.

The guilt within them prevents them to see and experience what God has done through the death of his son on the cross, of which Stott says that it **“expunge their guilt”** (Stott 1986: 45)

The reason behind the guilt being exposed is the fact that leaders strictly adhere to the law, which they use in a manner that condemns others, and that is not God's good gift to humanity.

Because it takes us away from Christ in order to justify them **“the Holy Spirit came to convict the world of guilt, but only in order that it might more effectively bear witness to Christ as Saviour from guilt”** (Stott 1986:87).

Therefore, if Christ is the one who saves from guilt, then why do we as the church continue to make others feel guilty as though Christ did not forgive them? The answer is to point people to the cross of Christ as a way of making them whole and worthy as human beings, so that they should not continue to be sinners, but be saved by his grace. They will stop wasting their energy feeling guilty.

Stott states that a guilty conscience is “a great blessing, but only if it drives us to come home” (Stott 1986: 98). As the church, therefore, it is our responsibility to help those who continue reproaching out of guilt, by helping them to understand God's forgiveness for all creatures. We need to focus on caring for the troubled souls.

5.4. FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is an important part that needs to be emphasized. The study of this research has shown that these ladies need to hear words of forgiveness as sign of hope that in the presence of their Creator, they are truly forgiven. The whole community needs to understand God's judgment and forgiveness which is for all humankind. Paul's words are worthy to mention here that **“All of us have fallen short of the glory of God.”** (Rom 3:23) does not only apply to certain people but to all of us.

With forgiveness in mind, Wimberly says: **“forgiveness is not something within our powers and that forgiveness is a gift of the spirit that comes as God leads us through the forgiving process”** (Wimberly 2003: 11).

The author agrees with Wimberly, in the sense, which we all need to understand that forgiving a person is not something that we could say that we own, but is a gift that God has been given to all humanity.

Wimberly further says that: **“to forgive prematurely could lead us back into relationships that increase our shame and feelings of self-degradation”** (2003:11).

They need to understand that being pregnant out of wedlock does not make them worse sinners; therefore, that they, too, deserve God's forgiveness like any one of us. As the practice has been that they are suspended and have to be reinstated. They need to attend a class called forgiveness, where they will be required to ask for forgiveness and repentance to God.

This process must also include boys and men. The question to ask is: to whom have these ladies done wrong? Because, surely, they have not offended anyone by having a child. But ladies have used this class as a way that they need to feel grace by facing the wrong they have cost to family, community, the church and God.

This surely shows that in most cases, the leaders and the clergy misunderstand God's forgiveness. They have, in some ways, tried to make it their own power to forgive and that there is no other door for other people to get forgiveness.

In the sense that if one needs to be forgiven, then one needs to go through them (class leaders), so that they could tell them their wrong doing, then it is only then that they can be forgiven.

If leaders feel that way, then that person deserves to be forgiven. This class of forgiveness keeps on reminding them of the wrongs that they have done, and in most cases, it helps to make them experience God's forgiveness, so that reconciliation might take place between them and God and the church as a whole.

Forgiveness, in the case of these ladies, plays a vital role in restoring their dignity and worth. This process could be used as a tool to help them understand God's grace and love for them, however, this can only happen if leaders stop being judgmental.

This process can also be used, again, as a powerful tool to restore and heal the broken souls of these ladies. Then, we can therapeutically move them into the area of reconciliation.

5.5. RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation is another important element that leads them to receive grace from God since the study of this research is about helping young ladies who fall pregnant out of wedlock and to come up with a better way in dealing with the trauma, shame and rejection which they experience during their suspension.

One has to introduce the element of reconciliation.

Reconciliation, in the situation of these ladies, is quite important because what they have experienced through shame and rejection, they need to be reconciled with those who have hurt them and also with God, which is something that Christ has already done for us by his death.

As Paul says: “Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being, the old has gone the new has come, for we are now God’s friends and no longer enemies” (Rom 5:10).

The understanding here is that through the death of Christ, we are reconciled to God and that we are no longer seen as sinners but as God’s children. The question then is: how do leaders interpret the above scripture? Or rather, how do those who are suspended understand it?

Therefore, there is a great need for these ladies to hear these words that they, too, are reconciled to God. Reconciliation for them will prove that they have been put right with God and therefore, that there is no need for them to go on feeling as though they are divorced from their Creator; God.

They need to hear the good news, especially how God went out of the way that **“He gave the world his only son”** (John 3: 10) to die for their salvation and reconciled in the world with Christ.

The only time that they could experience this is through the class of restoration, in an African context. This process must not judge them and make them to feel ashamed for what has happened, but they should be allowed to enter into a journey, where they will be made whole again.

The main reason for this will be so that they will not see their children as a curse or a mistake and for them not to continue to regret having them. So that when they bring them before God for baptism, they will have a clear understanding that they are also God's children.

The past has made them feel unworthy, as those who have committed a worse sin of all by having children before marriage.

Their suspension has made them to feel unworthy, as a result, they did not experience the love of God who forgives and reconciles them into his Kingdom. The need for reconciliation is to lead them into a journey of restoration.

5.6. RESTORATION

Restoration is another element that is very important in the process of healing and caring for those who are broken. As the research is about the trauma of shame and rejection and young ladies who fall pregnant out of wedlock experienced during their suspension, therefore, their experience has in some way made them to lose hope about who they are in front of God, the community they worship with, their parents and the society they live in.

Just like the man who was possessed with demons, they too feel as though their dignity and identity has been destroyed and they cannot see, clearly, who they are.

Because by virtue of being pregnant, they are given new names and labelled as objects and not as human beings created in the image of God. Therefore restoration for them will be:

- **To restore their relationship with God.**

They have internalized all negative conversations that have cost them their relationship with God, which have made them to see God as a judge who does not have mercy to those who wrong him, and, in that, they have failed to have an interpersonal conversation with God; during the time of pain, struggle, hurt, shame and rejection in their journey of life.

So, in restoring their relationship with God, they will be able to have a positive conversation and be able to see who God is, and how much he has been longing to hear their voice of hurt, so that he could be able to wipe tears from their eyes and give them the joy they long for.

- **Restoration within the family.**

The clergy, the body of Christ and the therapist can prepare the ground for them. As some of them have been cut off from their families due to pregnancy, they have found themselves fighting with their parents and in some ways that has cost divisions within the family.

Therefore, on entering a class of restoration, one needs also to involve the parents so that they might find a common ground of having peace and unity within the family.

In order that they might not see the life of this child as a burden, but a blessing, and be able to give him/her a name that is positive.

Because in cases like these, parents end up naming their children according to the circumstances they have experienced and this is not a good thing at all.

Names like *Madimabe* (bad luck), *Otswakae* (where do you come from) are used. This process affects children as they grow up, and it can be corrected by the church.

- **Restoration within the church.**

The lay leaders and the clergy have failed to help them in their journey of pregnancy, where some were denied love by the man who impregnated them. These men have made them to feel that they were rejected in a place where they had hoped to find comfort and care.

Therefore, restoration here will be for the leaders and the clergy to understand their position as shepherds who are taking care of God's flock that need to know that God loves them too.

Mostly here, the restoration that should happen in the relationship that once was there between the leader and the member, that there should be love, peace and unity between them and also in the church as the body of Christ which needs to exercise love, kindness and care. This kind of welcome would lead them to restore their self worth.

d) Restore to Self

In order to help them to move away from the shame, rejection and guilt that they have experienced, there is a need for them to be restored to their own self. For, their hearts were broken by the process of restoration and the class of forgiveness. Their dignity was devalued and their identity was not recognized.

The only possible way of achieving this, is one; these ladies should start to enter into a journey of having an interpersonal conversation with God so that they will understand their worth, value and being as people that God loves, cares for and has forgiven. He has reconciled them to himself and is longing to restore their relationship with him and restore their dignity.

5.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter has opened another issue, which the author found challenging especially for the community of God, the lay leaders and the clergy; namely, how they see and treat people who have done wrong? How do they help them to understand the unconditional love of God and that forgiveness is for all, irrespective of sin.

In this research, the author found that the issue of guilt for these ladies is one common matter they suffered from during the time they had been made to believe that what they had done was an offence to God. And that they therefore, do not belong to God's family because of their immoral acts.

That part of feeling guilty, in some ways, has made them to lose hope in God, and that has destroyed them inside. They felt as though they are living corpses, just living for the sake that they still have breath in them.

In the following chapter, the author will look at what she has learnt from the research, and how to see to it that what she has discovered is implemented for the sake of helping the lay leaders and some clergy in order to take good care of God's flock that are placed in their care.

CHAPTER 6

6.1. What have I set to achieve on this study

The main purpose of the study was to help the lay leaders and the clergy to have a good methodology of caring for young ladies who fell pregnant out of wedlock and get suspended from their church membership. At times, the process is not healing but it breaks the spirit of the ladies.

What the author had set to achieve was to develop a methodology for healing, caring and restoration to the ladies who have experienced the trauma of rejection, guilt and shame during their suspension.

By conducting this research, the author had hoped to achieve what she proposed as the objectives of the research, however, the research has come up with so many issues which she believes that they need to be looked at. For example, the manner in which suspension is being imposed on young ladies while, on the other side, the men are left freely without any discipline.

6.2. Challenges that I have encountered

The challenges that I have encountered while doing this research, were of those lay leaders who strongly believe that what they are doing is right within the law that they have been taught and that no one could come up with any change, because this is what even the Bible says that: “Having sex before marriage is a sin,” and therefore the result to that is being pregnant out of wedlock.

That automatically makes these ladies to be sinners who deserve to be disciplined, and the form of doing this is not to care for such ladies. It is believed that any form of care would lead to them repeating the act again and again.

The other challenge that I encountered was from my colleagues. Some of them are the perpetrators who impregnated these ladies and then denied being the fathers to these children.

Amazingly, some of them still hold on so dearly to this practice of suspension which destroys young ladies instead of helping them to cope with the issue of being pregnant and having to face the rejection from the one who impregnated them, and also helping them to understand their responsibility as single parents.

6.3. What further research can be pursued?

I believe that further research could be pursued within this research which could consider mechanisms on how to deal with the suspension of young men and some of the clergy who impregnate these ladies and go on further by not taking their responsibility as fathers to these children. This could be pursued by any researcher, or I could pursue it on a doctorate level.

6.4. Questionnaire Feedback

As part of the research the author did an interview with the clergy. The ladies who were co-researchers were those who were currently pregnant and are now suspended, some were those who were once pregnant and were suspended and found it hard to be reinstated to membership because of the manner in which they were treated while they were on suspension period.

Within the research interview there were those lay leaders who were not willing to cooperate and also some of the clergy were not willing to participate; they kept on making excuses for the appointment that was supposed to take place.

Later, I found out that the reason for all of this was that some felt that they were going to be exposed with what they were doing, since what they were doing was not part of the law within the discipline of the church.

6.5. Interview Results

Clergy Questionnaire

The result of 10 clergy who participated in the interview

Q1. How many young ladies fall pregnant out of wedlock in your church?

A. 5-9

Q2. Do you suspend them?

5 Yes	3 No	2 No answer
If the answer is yes for how long? In most cases is for six or eight months		

Q3. Who leads the restoration class?

7 Lay leaders	3 Ministers
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Q4. Do you treat the male in the same manner as you do to ladies?

5 No	3 Yes	2 No answer was given
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Q5. Is there any model that is used for the class?

<i>6</i> <i>No</i>	<i>2</i> <i>Yes</i>	<i>2</i> <i>No answer</i>
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Ladies Questionnaire

The result here is for the 8 ladies who were co-researches

Q1. Are you a full member of the church?

A. *Yes*

Q2. Were you suspended?

A. *Yes*

Q3. If yes, by whom and for how long?

<i>5 Lay leader</i>	<i>2 Minister</i>	<i>3 Organization leader</i>
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Q2. How long did your suspension take?

<i>4 A year</i>	<i>2 Six months</i>	<i>2 Not sure, because it was quite a long period</i>
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Q5. Did your minister help you in understanding why you had to be suspended?

6	4
No	Yes

Q6. Did you attend the restoration class?

6	4
Yes	No: because they did not see the reason for that after being hurt.

Q7. If yes, was it helpful for you?

4	6
Yes	No

Q8. Did your partner get suspended?

4	3	3
Yes	No	Not sure, as they were not members of their church.

Q9. If no, what was your feeling?

4	4	2
That justice is being done	Hurt and angry	Confused and guilty

Q10. Do you think that justice was done by your suspension?

5 <i>No</i>	5 <i>Yes</i>
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Q11. In which way do you think that church needs to deal with the suspension of both young women and men who father children out of wedlock?

- In a way that is not judgmental
- Treating both women and men equally
- Help to be good parents even though they are not married.

In conducting the research with the ladies, the author realized that these ladies had experienced a great deal of hurt and pain.

This has brought them a lot of resentment and hatred for the church, because of the shame and rejection that they experienced. Some of them feel that they want nothing to do with the church that does not heal them, while others, because they feel guilty, think they are considered to be sinners and that the community of God has concluded that they do not deserve to be forgiven.

With all this, they still have to raise their children without the fathers who have rejected them and abandoned them at the time that they needed their support to face all this pressure.

6.6. Findings

The author has found out that the tradition and culture has been playing a great deal in the suspension of young ladies who fall pregnant out of wedlock. Most of the clergy are afraid to question the practice that is being used only because they do not want to change anything that will make them unpopular; therefore, they feel that there is no need to disturb the status quo.

The other thing that the author has picked up is that the clergy and the lay leaders do not want to change, even though the church is preaching and talking about transformation; they still hold on dearly to their own traditions and practices, which exclude the male who impregnated the lady.

Then a question arises among the ladies as they now understand their position and want to know: Who will deal with the male? Who will take the initiation of disciplining him?

6.7. Recommendation

The researcher would like to recommend by encouraging those who will have the privilege of reading this research that they should start a journey of engaging their clergy, lay leaders and the church in understanding what this suspension does to these ladies in the manner that it has been practiced to date.

Young ladies who fall pregnant out of wedlock need to engage their leaders in trying to help them understand what they are experiencing; concerning their pregnancy and suspension. These ladies could be cared for pastorally and be loved in a way that will demonstrate that the church cares a lot about their feelings and spirit.

The church, therefore, needs to have a method that will be applied to both males and females who have children out of wedlock, and help the males to father the children in a loving and caring way. Suspension needs to be done to both of the parties as a way of discipline which will bring wholeness and restoration.

6.8. Conclusion

This research has opened areas within the issue of pregnancy out of wedlock and the suspension of young ladies, which most of us never considered to be of importance as we all believed that they needed to be disciplined, because they have done an evil act in God's side; in the eyes of the church and the community that they leave within.

This has proved to be true that the church is not there at the time when they need it the most and when they are faced with challenges of life. They find that they have to deal with the rejection which the lay leaders and the clergy impose on them. The pain, therefore, is too unbearable as they seek comfort and healing in the church.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS FOR CLERGY

Q1. How many young ladies fall pregnant out of wedlock in your church?

Q2. Do you suspend them?

Q3. Who leads the restoration class?

Q4. Do you treat the male in the same manner as you do to ladies?

Q5. Is there any model that is used for the class?

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS FOR LADIES

Q1. Are you a full member of the church?

Q2. Were you suspended?

Q3. If yes, by whom and for how long?

Q4. How long did your suspension take?

Q5. Did your minister help you in understanding why you had to be suspended?

Q6. Did you attend the restoration class?

Q7. If yes, was it helpful for you?

Q8. Did your partner get suspended?

Q9. If no, what was your feeling?

Q10. Do you think that justice was done by your suspension?

Q11. In which way do you think the church needs to deal with the suspension of both young women and men who father children out of wedlock?

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