



Motherhood & Mental Health: Part 2 The Issues for the Local Church

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BIO AND PROFILE

Tony Mashao Seaka is a devoted husband and father of three children, passionately committed to family, faith, and community development. He serves as the Pastor of New Hope International Ministries in Soweto, where he leads spiritual growth and community empowerment initiatives. He is the author of 13 inspirational and leadership books and the founder of several impactful organizations, including the Born to Win Foundation, New Hope Stars Sports Academy, New Hope College of Excellence, and the Shepherd-to-Shepherd Network for Pastors and Leaders. Academically, he holds an Honours degree in Psychology and is currently pursuing a Master's degree, focusing on holistic human development and leadership.



Definitions

Motherhood refers to the role, responsibilities, and lived experiences of women who raise and nurture children—biologically, adoptively, or through guardianship.

Mental health is the emotional, psychological, and social state that affects how individuals think, feel, cope with stress, relate to others, and make daily decisions.

The local church is the immediate faith community where believers gather for worship, fellowship, spiritual growth, and social support.

Different Categories of Mothers in the Church

Mothers in the church do not experience motherhood in the same way. Their emotional and social realities differ depending on their circumstances:

1. Teenage Mothers

Teenage mothers often face intense shame, stigma, and judgment because their pregnancies are seen as falling outside church moral expectations. Instead of receiving restoration and support, some experience silent rejection, exclusion from programs, or moral labeling, which increases emotional distress, anxiety, and depression.

2. Single Mothers

Single mothers frequently carry the double burden of parenting alone while also facing social and spiritual judgment. Financial strain, lack of childcare support, and emotional exhaustion can worsen their mental health challenges. When the church offers limited support, these mothers may feel spiritually disconnected and isolated.



Different Categories of Mothers in the Church

3. Married Mothers

Married mothers may receive more acceptance within church structures, yet they also face pressures to appear “perfect,” strong, and stable. Many silently struggle with stress, burnout, and emotional fatigue while trying to balance marriage, parenting, work, and ministry expectations.

Teenage and single mothers often suffer more shame and judgment and may receive minimal structured support, making them more vulnerable to emotional distress.



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◦ Structural Challenges Facing Township Churches

- **limited access to mental health professionals**, with clinics and public hospitals often overstretched. As a result, mothers struggling with anxiety or depression may not receive timely professional assistance.
- **In some cases, mental health conditions are misunderstood** and interpreted primarily through superstitious (non-compliance to ancestral instructions or expectations)or purely spiritual explanations (mafufunyana, demon possession, or bewitchment), leading to stigma instead of compassionate care.
- **Ignorance about mental health remains a significant barrier**. When emotional struggles are labeled only as spiritual weakness, mothers may feel blamed for their condition rather than supported through it.

What Can the Church Do to Better Support Mothers Who Need Mental Health Support?

- **Establish Support and Fellowship Groups** - Small support groups for mothers create safe spaces for prayer, sharing, and mutual encouragement. ***Hebrews 10:24–25 – “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds... encouraging one another.”***
- **Provide Practical Help for Mothers** - Support such as childcare assistance, mentoring, and family support reduces emotional pressure. ***James 2:15–16 – “Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food... but you do nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?”***

What Can the Church Do to Better Support Mothers Who Need Mental Health Support?

- **Offer Pastoral Care and Professional Referrals-** Churches should combine prayer with wise counsel and referrals where professional help is needed. ***Proverbs 11:14 – “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.”***
- **Create a Culture of Compassion, Not Judgment-** The church must reflect Christ’s compassion, creating a safe environment where mothers can speak openly without fear. ***Galatians 6:2 – “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”***
- **Educate Members..Educate Members..Educate Members**