

**THE UNHEARD STORIES ABOUT
PASTORAL CARE OF
CHRISTIAN WOMEN
INFECTED AND AFFECTED BY HIV/AIDS**

By

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SUMMARY.

This research covers the story of four persons from different backgrounds brought together by their faith in God, fellowship in the same church, residing in the same community and sharing the experience of living with HIV and AIDS: either as infected and/or affected individually. I am one of these persons due to the fact that I lost my sister to HIV and AIDS, thus I am affected. Though I only appear in the story as the researcher, it is my own loss that made it possible for me to empathise with my co-researchers.

While one co-researcher was affected due to the fact that her husband was infected, became ill and died of HIV and AIDS-related sicknesses, the other two women were both infected by their husbands and at the same time were affected because they had to nurse the same husband who infected them. This was one of the cruelest moments in their lives but they forgave their husbands and cared for them to the end.

In order for my research to reach the holistic insight into these women's stories, I used the postfoundationalist practical theology approach. The reason for this is that this approach is contextual and relevant to people's everyday life. One does not have to import knowledge to try to solve problems emanating from a particular context, but one needs to engage the locals and from that engagement, people start to reflect positively on their problems.

Other lessons learnt is that one needs more than just a religious experience to play a role in solving the problem of HIV and AIDS; one needs more of the other disciplines to work together. In places like Mozambique, HIV and AIDS is not regarded as one of the health problems, but is classified as an interdepartmental or multi-sectoral problem. This means that HIV and AIDS do not affect only the Health Department, but all the departments. As such, each department is expected to have its own HIV and AIDS budget. It is here that I propose the Multi Disciplinary Team (MDT) composed of professionals from different disciplines working together to help solve the problem at hand.

HIV and AIDS also help us to revisit our own understanding of God. While some people see the pandemic as the punishment from God for promiscuity, the truth is that we are all created in His image and this loving God does not destroy His own creation through HIV and AIDS. In His loving care, He reaches out to the unreached and cares for all His people: whether they are infected with HIV and AIDS, cancer or just are as healthy as they could be.

The process of this research has empowered and enabled me to contribute to those who are infected and affected to be resilient and to stand, having hope in the goodness of God, working with others to bring a lasting solution to those infected and affected. Being resilient helps one to reclaim the marred Image of God in oneself and to reflect that image to impact onto our communities.

KEY TERMS

- Postfoundationalism
- Social-constructionism
- Multidisciplinary team (MDT)
- Resilience
- Ubuntu
- *Imago Dei*
- Infected
- Affected
- HIV and AIDS
- *Kaposi sarcoma*

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