

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Divinity

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR MEMBERSHIP RETENTION IN THE
DISTRICT OF MORONOU, COTE D'IVOIRE

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A detailed investigation found that a sizable portion of people who have lapsed or moved away from the Moronou area, Cote d'Ivoire Conference, have either joined Sunday churches, disassociated themselves from all other Christian affiliations, or converted to Islam. It is, therefore, crucial to implement extensive metrics and models created to serve as a guide for the retention of its members as the church sincerely considers effective tactics for growing its membership. This study, therefore, aims to draw data-driven retention strategies using advanced metrics and models to identify membership growth factors and analyze the factors affecting growth for membership stability.

Due to the unique challenge of the Moronou district, the study employed key concepts from various reviewed theories to serve as the basis for the theoretical framework. The study was conducted in the Moronou district in the Cote d'Ivoire Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

The study employed simple random techniques and sampled 217 members. However, 110 were engaged in the data collection process.

Data was gathered using a questionnaire and analyzed using multiple regression and factor analysis. The reliability analysis underscores the robustness of the three constructs in measuring aspects of church engagement and member awareness. The results suggest that the variables—active participation, church involvement, and member awareness—were reliably measured to know appropriate church retention strategies and interventions. The multiple regression analysis found that church involvement and satisfaction, active participation and involvement, and socioeconomic awareness are substantial predictors of religious engagement which formed the basis for framing the retention model. The study informs further research and practical applications in enhancing church engagement strategies and implementation of the membership retention model.

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RETENTION IN THE DISTRICT OF
MORONOU, COTE D'IVOIRE

A project

presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Divinity

by

Yao N'guessan

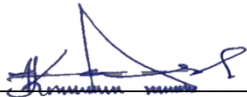
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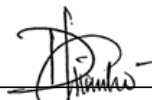
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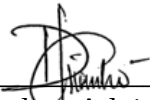
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This work is dedicated to my lovely wife, children, Ashiyie Seventh-day
Adventist Church, and God Almighty.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	VIII
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	IX
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Problem	2
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Specific Objectives	4
Research Questions	4
Justification of the Study	5
Delimitation of the Study	5
Limitations of the Study	6
Methodology and Procedure.....	6
Organization of the Study.....	7
Definition of Terms	7
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION.....	9
Old Testament: Growth of God’s People	9
Growth in the Old Testament	9
God’s People in the Old Testament.....	11
Inferences of Retention: Pre-Flood	11
Inferences of Retention: The Patriarchs	12
Retention: Judah and Israel	13
The Jethro Model	13
The Israelites in General	14
Intertestamental Period and Retention	15
Member-control Model	16
New Testament: Membership	17
Increase and Leadership	17
The New Testament Growth Model.....	20
Theological Foundation.....	21
Brief History: Adventist Growth.....	21
Church Growth Indicators	22
Indicators for a Church Growth Model	24
Ellen White on Church Growth.....	24
Ellen White: Evangelism and Increase.....	24
Church Organization and Growth	25
Summary.....	26

3. LITERATURE REVIEW	27
Theoretical Framework	27
Triangulated Retention Theory.....	29
Conceptual Framework	30
Variables, Concepts, and Relationships	30
Soul-winning and Retention.....	32
Membership Retention Factors.....	33
Spiritual Renewal Programs.....	33
Leadership dynamics.....	33
Pastoral development	34
Small group indicators	35
Cultural factors.....	35
Permanent minister in the district	36
Membership Growth and Moronou District.....	36
Historical Context	37
Best Practices and Models.....	38
Attractive factor	38
Small groups.	39
Cultural factors.....	39
Permanent and adequate ministers.	40
Empirical Studies.....	42
Findings on Retention	42
Indication for a Gap.....	44
Summary.....	44
4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS	46
Research Design	46
Research Setting	46
Sampling Procedure.....	47
Sample Size	47
Selection Criteria	48
Data Collection Methods.....	48
Research Instrument	49
Data Analysis Framework	49
Ethical Consideration	49
Research Findings: Testing Assumptions for Data Analyses.....	50
Exploratory Factor Analysis.....	50
Multiple Regression Analysis	51
Exploratory Factor Analysis.....	53
on Membership Decline	53
Multiple Regression Analysis.....	60
Discussion of Findings	65
5. MODEL DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION.....	69
Inferences from Previous Chapters	69
Inferences from Theories.....	70
Basis for Membership Retention Model: Six Indicators of Membership	
Retention.....	71

Data Analysis Predictive Variables	73
Religious Engagement.....	74
Model Implementation	75
Model Foundation	75
The Membership Retention Model.....	76
Core Components	77
Church Leadership and Indicators.....	77
Church Management: Church Involvement and Satisfaction	78
Membership Management: Active Participation and Engagement.....	78
Membership Well-being: Socio-economic Awareness	79
Strategic Plans	80
Growth plan.....	80
Failure contingency plan.	81
Religious Engagement and Plan Implementation.....	82
Summary.....	83
6. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	84
Summary.....	84
Conclusion.....	84
Recommendations	85
APPENDIXES	87
A. INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	88
B. QUESTIONNAIRES	89
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	100
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	109

LIST OF TABLES

1. Descriptive Statistics of Respondents	52
2. Descriptive Statistics and Factor Groupings of Factors Contributing to the Decline in Membership in Moronou District	54
3. Check for Internal Consistency Variables	56
4. Descriptive Statistics and Factor Groupings of Membership Retention Strategies	57
5. Check for Internal Consistency	59
6. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficients	63
7. Regression Analysis for Model	64

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Retention of church membership has become a concern not only for Adventists but also for other Christian denominations.¹ Some studies have suggested that time and money have given indications of church growth in recent years.² The church's growth has always been significant and directly related to maintaining its membership. Enhancing church operations depends on maintaining a vibrant and dedicated membership. Key to the Adventist motives of nurturing and retention is how the church, amid evangelism activities, could sustain the gains.³

¹ Gary D. Bouma, "Keeping the Faithful: Patterns of Membership Retention in the Christian Reformed Church," abstract, *Sociology of Religion* 41, no. 3 (1980): 259-264, accessed 15 October 2023, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3710402>; Daniel V. A. Olson. "Church Friendships: Boon or Barrier to Church Growth?" Abstract, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 28, no. 4 (1989): 432-447, accessed October 15, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1386575>; Rachel E. Stein et al., "Congregational Cohesion, Retention, and the Consequences of Size Reduction: A Longitudinal Network Analysis of an Old Order Amish Church," *Sociology of Religion* 81, no. 2 (2020): 206, accessed 15 October 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srz036>.

² Laurence R. Iannaccone, Daniel V. A., Rodney Stark, "Religions Resources and Church Growth," *Social Forces* 74, no. 2 (1995), 705, accessed 15 October 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/74.2.705>.

³Javan Kamanutsi Harelimana, "Membership retention in a Growing Church: The Case in the Seventh-day Adventist Church," *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry* 10 (2014): 53-67, accessed 15 October 2023, africansdahistory.org; Conrad St. George Duncan, "A Membership Retention Strategy for the Maranatha Seventh-day Adventist Church" (DMin diss., Andrews University, 2015), 1, accessed October 16, 2018, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/379>; Paul G. Kiage, "A Strategy to Increase the Retention of Members in the Nyaguta District" (DMin diss., Andrews University, 2014), 1, accessed October 16, 2023, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/269>; Fordson Vincent Chimoga, "Improving Member Retention in the Zambia Union of Seventh-day Adventists" (DMin diss., Andrews University, 2000), 50-60, accessed 16 October 2023, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/646>; Jean Baptiste Niyonzima, "A Strategy To Enhance Church Membership Retention In Kabusunzu Seventh-Day Adventist Church, East-Central Rwanda Conference" (Master's Thesis, Adventist University of Africa, 2016), 1, accessed 16 October 2023, AUA Repository.

Regrettably, this difficulty also affects the Moronou district in the Cote d'Ivoire Conference. The conference is confronted with a pressing issue - a significant decline in membership.⁴ This circumstance intensely impacts the general growth of the church within that particular geographic region. There is evidence of a deficit in the return of tithes and offerings. Established ecclesiastical infrastructures, such as educational institutions, medical hospitals, or other authorities, are conspicuously absent. This predominant condition proves ineffective for the Adventist Church. Furthermore, due to the inadequate membership base, the attempt to erect a well-structured church building has proven unsuccessful.⁵

The church has been looking for strategies to build a continuous nurturing process for newly baptized members. The evangelistic activities of the church have resulted in increased statistics on archives that do not correspond to the reality of church attendance in the churches. This is because the members relapse and disengage from church attendance and activities.⁶ Membership growth has been low despite diverse evangelistic endeavors and expertise in re-engagement tactics. The need to create a model for membership retention within the Moronou district of the Cote d'Ivoire Conference is apparent.

Statement of Problem

A detailed investigation found that members who have lapsed or moved away from the Moronou area, Cote d'Ivoire conference, have joined Sunday churches, disassociated themselves from all other religious affiliations, or converted to Islam.

⁴ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, *Annual Statistical Reports* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2019-2021).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

There is an apparent connection between there seems to be a migration of members to different religions and denominations due to lack of nurture. This involves but is not limited to personal connections, insufficient follow-up, inadequate discipleship programs, lack of volunteer opportunities, unclear communication, social barriers, burnouts, and insufficient support systems.

Dr. Elie Weick-Dido, in his doctoral dissertation addressed some of these problems working against the Adventist Church in Cote d'Ivoire. It appears Islam, the Catholic church, and the United Methodist church have stable growth in Cote d'Ivoire compared to the lower growth rate of the Adventist Church.⁷ Evangelistic efforts and increases in conversions, juxtaposed with a decline in membership. Both the Moronou district and the Conference are concerned about the issue of declining membership.⁸

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to understand and suggest a model to support membership considering current global trends. Attention should be directed towards resolving the deterioration of the existing membership within the Moronou District. In essence, this research serves as a tool to raise awareness amongst our congregational members regarding the pressing issue of diminishing membership, and its effects on the Church. It is essential to maintain a consistent membership base.

⁷ Elie Weick-Dido, "A Comparative Study of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the United Methodist Church with a Strategy for Enhanced Adventist Membership Growth in Cote D'Ivoire" (DMin diss., Andrews University, 2007), 620, accessed 23 July 2023. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/620>; Allan Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001), 75-76; Cf. Robert Hill Prater, "Seedtime and Harvest: Christian Mission and Colonial Might in Cote D'Ivoire (1895-1920), with Particular Reference to the Ministry of William Wade Harris" (PhD diss., Friedrich-Alexander-Universitaet Erlangen-Nuernberg, Germany), 296-334, ProQuest; Marie Miran-Guyon, "Islam In and Out: Cosmopolitan Patriotism and Xenophobia Among Muslims in Côte d'Ivoire Africa," *Africa* 86, no. 3 (2016): 447-471, accessed 22 July 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972016000334>. ProQuest.

⁸ There is no established evidence of this decline, though it is a current phenomenon. These are observations from the researcher-based interaction with leadership.

Thus, this research sought to understand the factors contributing to the decline in membership within the Moronou District. It also addressed the specific challenges and consequences of declining membership, to determine the metrics and models that could be effectively developed to guide member retention and develop measures that could ensure the stability of membership records in the face of potential backsliding and other obstacles to growth

Specific Objectives

1. Investigate the causes of the declining membership in the Moronou District, Cote d'Ivoire Conference.
2. Create awareness of the diverse effects of declining membership on the Adventist Church.
3. Develop data-driven retention strategies using advanced metrics and models to identify membership growth factors and analyze the factors affecting growth for membership stability.

Research Questions

1. What are the factors contributing to the decline in membership within the Moronou District, Cote d'Ivoire Conference?
2. What specific challenges and consequences do the declining membership pose to the development of the Adventist Church at Moronou?
3. What metrics and models can be effectively developed to guide member retention, and what factors must be considered to ensure the stability of membership records in the face of potential backsliding and other obstacles to growth?

Justification of the Study

Given the complicated global dynamics, this study is significant to the Moronou district of the Cote d'Ivoire conference. It tries to offer doable solutions for growing and maintaining church membership in this changing global environment. The study's main goal is to present a membership retention model that could support church leaders to ensure consistent membership growth. This strategy will be essential to maintaining a balance between membership expansion, effective nurturing, and efficient record-keeping practices. Such a strategy is necessary to give the church the tools it needs to address current issues, such as the influence of other world faiths like Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism as well as Pentecostalism, Charismatics, and Modernism. This study aims to provide a realistic appraisal of the challenges involved in keeping church members. It does this by putting light on empirical data.

Delimitation of the Study

This study is centered on designing a model for membership retention within the Moronou district of the Adventist Church, Cote d'Ivoire Conference. It is essential to clarify that the scope of this study is not intended to encompass the global church body, nor does it encompass the entirety of the conference. Additionally, the study does not delve into the broader concept of church growth, despite its usage of the word growth. It does not explore the aspect of church planting. The central emphasis of this research is to design a model for the retention of church members specifically within the Moronou district. Furthermore, this paper does not embark upon a historical account of the Adventist Church's presence in the district. It refrains from comparative analyses between the Adventist Church and other religious traditions or belief systems, even though some reference to various religious groups worldwide may be made.

Limitations of the Study

Despite efforts, access to information on the pioneers of the Adventist Church in Moronou proved challenging. There was limited documented evidence of the pioneers and their activities. Oral histories and anecdotes from descendants may serve as alternative sources to glean insights into the early days of the church. Many backsliders are still alive, making the data needed impossible. Those who remain have often left the Moronou district, residing far away and out of easy reach. Cooperation from the remaining backsliders is not constant, hindering information retrieval.

Distance played a significant role in limiting data collection. Some backsliders reside in distant locations, including other countries such as Ghana or overseas destinations. The geographical spread made it challenging to meet with these individuals face-to-face. Also, current Adventist Church members lack comprehensive details about the late pioneers and early faithful members who eventually left the church. The absence of complete information further complicated the research process.

Methodology and Procedure

The research employed the quantitative research approach to study 110 (14 backsliders and 96 active members) to develop a model for membership retention for the Morounou district. However, 106 respondents were collated and analyzed. An experimental research design was employed, and a simple random sampling technique was used. The Krejcie and Morgan criteria of selection were used to determine an estimated sample size of 217.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire designed on a 5-Likert scale. The study employed exploratory factor analysis, multiple regression

analysis, and descriptive statistics for the data analysis. Again, Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) ethical framework was used for the study.

Organization of the Study

The initial chapter deals with the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose, justification, delimitation, limitation, methodology and procedure, and definition of terms of the study. Chapter 2 expounded on the biblical and theological foundation, delving into the foundation of witnessing that resulted in an increase in the New Testament Church and about growth and retention of thoughts. It also presents the thoughts of Ellen G. White related to membership and nurturing. Chapter 3 reviewed the literature, considering the study's conceptual, theoretical, and empirical aspects. These reviews considered broadly concepts and theories that already existed, the gaps identified, and how they inform the current study. Chapter 4 entails methodology procedures, and findings of the study. Chapter 5 discusses the study, model development, and strategies for membership retention. Chapter 6 covers the summary, conclusion, and recommendation.

Definition of Terms

Membership Decline: Probes into the heart of a faith community's capability to hold its members and offer an environment that nurtures spiritual growth and assurance. It also requires a careful examination of why individuals, who were once active members, disengage or choose to leave the church, which could be related to apostasy, death, and missing of members.

Membership Growth: It captures the factors involved in holding on to new members while ensuring their active contribution to the church's life.

It requires a complete viewpoint that considers evangelism, integration, evangelism, and the continual spiritual growth of new and current members.⁹

Membership Retention: includes the capacity to tolerate ongoing obligation and active rendezvous among current religious community members. It's about reassuring a sense of belonging, spiritual growth, and devotion to the church's mission.¹⁰ The study considers retention from the perspective of keeping members and blocking the avenues for losing members.

⁹ Jeffrey M Ochoche and Reuben Iortyer Gweryina, "Evaluating the Impact of Active Members on Church Growth," *Maejo International Journal of Science* 2, no. 11 (2013): 1-8, accessed 17 October 2023, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336132193_Evaluating_the_Impact_of_Active_Members_on_Church_Growth.

¹⁰ Duncan, "A Membership Retention Strategy for the Maranatha Seventh-day Adventist Church," 9-12.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

This section of the study deals with the Biblical and theological foundations. This chapter serves as a biblical framework to guide the model to be suggested by this study. It considers the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT) Perspectives of the growth of God's people and the church. It also suggests a basis for examples of biblical strategies used to ensure stability and growth among God's children. The study also considered the understanding of growth from varied perspectives and Ellen G. White's understanding. It finally suggests common principles that underline scriptural growth.

Old Testament: Growth of God's People

Growth in the Old Testament

The entire Holy Bible's message is to redeem humankind after the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Reading the scriptures shows that God desires to save all humanity. John 3:16 suggests that "God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life".¹ On that basic statement, we are right to affirm that the biblical message related to evangelism and soul-winning is to prepare many people for God's salvation.

¹ Except otherwise stated, all scriptural references are taken from the New King James Version.

God cannot plan to drop out or backslide from His side since He desires eternal life for all humanity. Ultimately, he plans to save all who choose to accept salvation.²

In congruent with this God has at various stages of human history formed relations with certain groups in the OT and NT to form a special identity to fulfill the divine mission to save the world. The establishment of God's people into an organized body with people from varied families and backgrounds gains recognition in the NT than the OT.³ Thus, the identity of God's people as a church gains much clarity in the NT. Conversely, the Identity of God's people in the OT forms a foundational basis for what Jesus and the apostles established in the NT. Thus, a continuity of God's plan from the OT. This is rooted in creation, the call of Noah, Abraham, the patriarchs, Israel, Judah, and the mission of Jesus.

Growth in this context was not necessarily based on the number of God's children over the other nations, but on how faithful and obedient they were in the covenant relationship. God through these elected persons laid the foundation for salvation. In this context, the NT church becomes the spiritual Israel that should remain faithful in cooperating with God to conclude the salvation processes. Salvation then becomes the center of cohesion, not the elected. This indicates that God elected because of the fulfillment of salvation. The NT church in this case served as the continuity of God's plan in the salvific process.⁴

² Ivan T. Blazen, "Salvation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 271; cf. Hans K. LaRondelle, "The Remnant and the Three Angels' Messages," in Dederen, 857.

³ Raoul Dederen, ed. "The Church," 539.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 543-544.

God's People in the Old Testament

The idea of God's people in the Old Testament (OT) spans from creation. A dynamic relationship that is deeply rooted in God's love and plan for salvation.⁵ God's unfailing love propels Him to restore humanity from a sinful state. Hence, the Scripture contains records of God's dealing with humanity from creation until the end. God created a people who would worship Him in faith and obedience.⁶

Sin separated man from God. This study associate's retention and fallouts with the phenomena of sin and God's plan to restore the relationship.⁷ God's people in the OT started with the call of Abraham and ended with the captives in Babylon. This relationship culminated in the demonstration of faithfulness and apostasy by God's people.⁸ This study considers this relationship together with the concept of church in the story of God's people. Also, to understand the elements of retention and decline among God's people.

Inferences of Retention: Pre-Flood

The creation story suggests the initial reference to God's people and inferences of decline. The Bible indicates that God created a perfect world and placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen 1-2).⁹ Adam and Eve failed the test of loyalty when they yielded to the temptation (Gen 2:15-17). Satan served as the declining agent (Gen 3:1).

⁵ LaRondelle, "The Remnant and the Three Angels' Messages," 857.

⁶ Dederen, "The Church," 539.

⁷ John M. Fowler, "Sin," in Dederen, 236.

⁸ LaRondelle, "The Remnant and the Three Angels' Messages," 861.

⁹ William H. Shea, "Creation," in Dederen, 418-428.

Effects of sin and distortion were heightened when Cain killed his brother Abel (Gen 4:8). This caused a member of the family to perish. Sin caused a decline in the Endemic home. Leading to the loss of their fast home and family relationship (Gen 3:23).

Sin continued to abound to the point that God warned that His spirit would live with humanity no longer (Gen 6:3).

This led to the flood during the time of Noah. Though not a church, the Fall could serve to represent what happens to God's family (the church). The interest of Satan is to cause members to leave the church. The Bible warns that Christians need to be vigilant because the devil, like a wounded lion, is seeking avenues to destroy believers (1 Pet 5:8). To achieve this effectively Satan uses frustration as a means to cause members to leave God's flock.¹⁰

Inferences of Retention: The Patriarchs

The call of Abraham formed a foundation of God selecting a group to prepare the way for Christ's first advent. Abraham and his generation formed a family system that God prepared to serve as an example for the world. Abraham and his children were not perfect in this call. Some fell out because of the selection process: This is represented in the generations that lie directly opposite to the chosen people, Israel. A few people who seemed left out included, Ishmael (Gen 16), Esau (Gen 27-28), and Jacob's family (Gen 30-38).

The intention of this point is not to dwell on God's choice and mission, it does appear that God's family faced several setbacks.

¹⁰ Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Patience in the Midst of Trials and Afflictions* (Berrien Springs, MI: Berean Books, 2003), 13-103.

A typical example is the division among Jacob's children that culminated in the division of the United Kingdom after the death of Solomon (1Chr 10:111; Cf. 1-11). Joseph's suffering and enthronement as second in command in Egypt serve to represent challenges that occur in families (Gen 37:12-36; 39; 41:37-57). God's children sometimes face jealousy and rivalry in the discharge of duties. The story of the patriarchs presents a phenomenon among Christians where varied opinions and leadership could be a factor in breakaways or falls. It is important to note that "Christ does not choose to direct His members independent of the corporate earthly body."¹¹

Retention: Judah and Israel

The Jethro Model. In Exodus 18:17-23, the biblical account gives a sound model or strategy of how to gain members and minister to them. It also deals with how to better manage a large membership. In verse 25, it is written that "And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens." This provision suggests a process in large membership could be retained or nurtured. The Hebrew economy and governance suggested completeness and simplicity. God was the center of authority, Moses their visible leader, elders or council of seventy, the priest over the sanctuary, chiefs over the tribes, captains over thousands, captains over hundreds, captains over fifties, and officers over special duties.¹²

This study refers to this as Jethro's model because it was suggested by Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses.

¹¹ A. Leroy Moore, *The Power of Humility: What to Do When You Are "Right"* (Weimar, CA: Weimar College Press, 2011), 35.

¹² Seventh-day Adventist Church, *Church Manual*, 20th ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2022), 25.

Under this circumstance, Moses appears to be experiencing leadership burnout, which could suggest incompetence and inefficiency. However, Jethro's counsel appears beneficial because he sustains God's people throughout their journey until they get to the promised land. It suggests nine levels of hierarchical structure and reporting system. With this system, each lower structure is based on the next high structure. Through this system, every member of the family is catered for, and all grievances are sorted efficiently. The system proposed by Jethro gives indications for the relevance of leadership in any growth situation. In essence, effective leadership becomes the basis for retention and growth.

The Israelites in General. This section captures the story of the children of Israel as God's people and the inferences that could be suggested from their storyline. Israelites represent the historical remnant, who later returned from captivity in Babylon.¹³ The second aspect of the Israelites' representation is the initial stages during the exodus from Egypt. Israel as a unit: northern and southern kingdoms were often united by their service and loyalty to God. It became apparent that breaking away from the worship of God beginning from Jeroboam was the basis of the breakaway (1 Kgs 14). The worship of God was central to their unity. It was not astonishing that David and Solomon were able to unite the two kingdoms (Cf. 2 Sam 6-7; 1 Kgs 5-6).¹⁴

¹³ LaRondelle, "The Remnant and the Three Angels' Messages," 860-861.

¹⁴ Isaac Kalimi, "The Land of Moriah, Mount Moriah, and the Site of Solomon's Temple in Biblical Historiography," *Harvard Theological Review* 83, no. 4 (2011): 345-352, accessed 21 April 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s001781600002383X>; cf. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1890), 748-754.

The Davidic Covenant formed a culminating basis for the first advent of the Messiah, and the reason why the nation Judah survived regardless of apostasy.¹⁵ God's chosen generation appeared to have failed in their calling. This is evident in the centuries of God's patience with the children of Israel. Temple worship kept them together as one people, but their loyalty to God was a problem. It appears that God remained focused on His plan: restoration. This is true for the church today. Growth, decline, apostasy, loyalty, and retention of the church (Remnant church) would not prevent God from fulfilling His plan of restoration.¹⁶

Intertestamental Period and Retention

Jewish bases from after the expatriate show how the people enthusiastically anticipated the coming of the promised Davidic descendent, the Messiah or Christ as a model king, He would rule on the seat of David and loyally coach the people in the Law of God. "The Old Testament promise with regards to the ideal king of the Davidic lineage was fulfilled in the person of Jesus."¹⁷ The intertestamental period, also known as the second temple era spans from the reconstruction of the Jewish Temple in the late sixth Century BC to its obliteration in AD 70.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist University Press, 2002), 173; Blazen, "Salvation," 271-312; John Murray, *The Covenant Grace* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1953), 1-5.

¹⁶ Blazen, "Salvation," 275.

¹⁷ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 173; cf. Acts 2:29-36; 13:22-38; Hebrews 1:2-13.

¹⁸ Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospel: An Introduction and Survey*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 8.

Out of distress, the people formed political and religious groupings to physically fight the nations that oppressed them: the Maccabees, Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, and Herodians.¹⁹

Prayer and excellent work became auxiliary to animal sacrifice. An obligation that demanded clemency to curb the absence of temple worship and consistent journeys to Jerusalem when they were in dispersion. This adaptation aided the Jews when the temple was demolished in AD 70. Thus, worship during this period was restricted to weekly Sabbath synagogue services, daily recitals, fixed prayers and confessions, and family devotions.²⁰ The church was in crisis during this era. It was not surprising they rejected and killed Jesus.

Member-control Model

The member-control model is a suggestion that is based on the activities of a membership in controlling a group. Moses set out as the leader, and Aaron as assistant of the delivered slaves from Egypt (Exod 3). At this point, the Israelite system of leadership, rooted in each family head was gradually disintegrated due to continual labor tasks from the Egyptians. At this point, all they lived for was survival. At Sinai, God was having a meeting with Moses on the mountain. Threatened that their leader had abandoned them initiated the grounds for rebellion (Exod 30-32). This example indicates that where the member group is not sure of efficient and sustained leadership, then the family is weakened. Leading to apathy and decrease as was seen in the case of the Israelites.²¹

¹⁹ Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 17-19, 42-55; cf. Harry R. Boer, *A Short History of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 5-6.

²⁰ Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 46.

²¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 1:57-79.

Jonas Arrais wrote about the important role a good pastor engaged in to nurture the flock.²² The leader is to instruct and lead the group to grow in all aspects. Especially, to achieve the mission set. When Israel was perceived not to have a figure leader like Joseph or Jacob, they lost sight of their mission and settled for being slaves. But for the mission God, gave them direction again. God expects a collaborative effort between leaders and the members of the group to yield growth.

New Testament: Membership Increase and Leadership

“The New Testament church developed its understanding of pastoral leadership in the crucible of experience. As local congregations multiplied there was a growing awareness of the need for pastoral leadership.”²³ Across the book of Acts of Apostles, there is evidence of how the Apostles strategized to run the church leading to constant progress. This is a solid reason to stand for a theological foundation of membership retention over the years. A large membership makes a church strong and leads it to stand firm against challenges. We read in Acts 4:4 that about five thousand of those who heard the Good News believed. Acts 4:32 states that “the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.” This portion of verse 32 shows that there were many members. They were very well interrelated in terms of daily activities. Earlier than Acts 4:32, we read in Acts 2:38 to 46 that three thousand people responded to the altar call or appeal of Apostle Peter one day. They were all baptized and continued daily with one accord in the temple.

²² Jonas Arrais, *Wanted: A Good Pastor* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 2011), 13-20; cf. Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martinez, *Churches, Culture, and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 210-231.

²³ John W. Fowler, *Adventist Pastoral Ministry* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1990), 17-27.

As a climax of the picture, verse 47 states that the Lord added to the church daily. This picture shows a linear increasing membership. Indeed, we have not noticed apostatizing so far.

When we read Acts 5: 14, 16, and 42 we realize that the membership kept increasing daily through the disciples' faced challenges and trials. The disciples continually taught the new converts in the temple as well as at home. They conducted a praying and fasting program to strengthen new members all around. In 6:1 and 7, the progress of the membership leads to the establishment of the department of deacons. Throughout 8:10-14, it is written that even the great magician Simon was converted in Samaria then many people got converted. Later on, Stephen got to the region of Azot where he spread and shared the gospel all over all the cities and villages up to Caesarea.

In Acts chapter 9 verse 31, the Bible account states that the church was in progress in all of Judea, Samaria, and Galilea. We noticed an increase in members after Peter's visit to that area. Verse 35 narrates that "all the inhabitants of Lydia and Sharon were converted. Verse 42 says that in Joppa, many people believed in the Lord, after the resurrection of Tabitha. In Acts 10:24 to 27 and 45 to 48 the biblical account describes the motivation of Cornelius's family members as well as many pagans. They were all waiting for Apostle Peter to lecture them on the word of God. Even after the death of the martyr of Stephen, the membership kept increasing. In Acts 11, based on the evangelism efforts of scattered disciples, we read through verse 21 that a "great number believed, and turned unto the Lord." In the same perspective, the second part of verse 24 states that "and many people was added unto the Lord. In verse 25, it is written "And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled

themselves with the church and taught many people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”

In Antioch, disciples were called Christians. Acts 13:43 and 44 points out that many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Apostle Paul and Barnabas.

Even the Gentiles were glad and glorified the word of the Lord and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed, as stated in verses 48 and 49. When we move to Iconium, Acts 14:1, 4, 7, and 21 it is written that a great multitude of both the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. They preached the gospel to the city of Derbe and taught many of the people.

Through the epistles of Apostle Paul, we notice items that go to the line of strengthening members and keeping them in the church. 1 Corinthians 7: 1-24 deals with Christian marriage, and how it should be done, or conducted in the church to enhance family life. From verse 25 to 40 Paul gives guidance to secure the life of church virgin women. Membership nurturing is therefore in progress. I Corinthians 11:1-16, and 1 Timothy 2: 9-15 Paul moves forward and gives a pastoral counseling session. He explains the duties of women and how they should behave in church. This point parallels Ephesians 5:22-23 and Colossians 3:18-25 bring out the characteristics of the Christian family. When the devices are strictly followed the church is spiritually healthy and keeps increasing in terms of members. Paul did not fail to tackle the phenomenon of a spiritual gift. In 1 Corinthians 14: 1-37 he lectures us on the importance of spiritual gifts and how it helps to move forward in terms of membership. When it is very well used, the church, body is solid, and every member makes evangelism efforts to get newly converted people. It also helps to flee away false doctrines as stated in 1 Timothy 3: 20. Members, in that case, do not educate people with the so-called “evangelism of Grace.”

The New Testament Growth Model

The NT Growth Model is based on an increased mission. As the Lord added to the church, there became a constant need for organization and leadership. Thus, growth in member statistics had a corresponding effect on leadership.

The increase and challenges associated with the increase resulted in the choosing of the deacons in Acts 6. This system was built to help nurture the flock, and at the same time fulfill the primary mission of the church (propagating the gospel). Growth in the NT was also connected to persecution and Missionary work. This was evident after the persecution of Stephen in Acts 7-8. Growth was also associated with forming relevant structures for deliberations on matters of confusion. In Acts 15, the Council was available to solve doctrinal issues.

The NT membership growth and leadership model is structured as Jesus being the spiritual head, and apostles, deacons, elders, missionaries, and missionaries in training. The early church focus was not on the highest or lowest position, but that the mission would be accomplished. This ensured a high sense of unity, and the Holy Spirit was able to use them to advance the Kingdom. The OT and the NT reveal a God of order and organization; One who endows gifts and nurtures leaders. God did not require the same structure as in the case of theocracy (civil and ceremonial laws). The NT structure was carefully structured and patterned based on the priestly ministry of Jesus.²⁴

²⁴ Moore, *The Power of Humility*, 105-117.

Theological Foundation

Brief History: Adventist Growth

From 1887-1900, the mission activities of the Adventist Church began to advance. This advancement was evident in the growth in institutions, literature evangelism, evangelism, missionary work, and Bible work.²⁵

However, because of the reduction in membership in 1901, it warranted reorganization.²⁶ Amid the crisis, the pioneers were determined to bring changes to suggest growth. There was the need to relocate the headquarters to Washington amid discussions at the 1903 General Conference Session.²⁷ Membership kept fluctuating, which also called for the development of professional ministry.²⁸

The church kept growing in a variety of ways amidst challenges. Developing the finances, dealing with the issues and the secular world, rectifying the dynamics of dealing with other Christians, health movement, dealing with unity and diversity issues, and adjusting to international adversities.²⁹ The history of the evolution of the world church shows that growth is a general term that encompasses several components to ensure growth. In dealing with these issues the world church was also concerned about the statistics indicating growth.

For example, the 1950 annual divisions' membership statistics show the following percentages of growth: North America – 250.1; Southern European – 78.2; Inter-American – 76.6; South African – 75.0; South American – 56.6; Far Eastern –

²⁵ Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), 207-240.

²⁶ Ibid., 241, 251-257.

²⁷ Ibid, 260.

²⁸ Ibid., 345, 388.

²⁹ Ibid., 403-538.

51.8; Central European – 44.2; Australasian – 28.7; Northern European 22.3; China – 21.8; USSR (estimate) – 21.6; Unattached Unions – 17.9; Southern Asia 11.0. This gave a total membership of 756, 712. Again, the 1997 General Conference annual statistical report suggests that the church has a total membership of 9,702,834. These figures propose that the church was consistently growing.³⁰

In a comparative membership growth report between North America and the remaining world divisions from 1975-1997, it was observed that the North American membership grew from 520,842 to 875,811. But its proportion of membership shrank from approximately twenty percent to nine percent. “The non-North American membership increased from 2,145,642 to 8,437,763, and total membership grew from 2,666,484 to 9,702,834.”³¹

Church Growth Indicators

Understanding church growth suggests that one needs to consider its scope. This study is particular about church growth and does so by considering the evidence of numerical ascension or decrease. The dimensions of church growth have been explored differently based on the circumstances. Based upon Luke 2:52, Garry E. Milley suggests four scopes of church growth: intellectual (deals with feeding the flock), numerical, spiritual (relationship to God), and relational growth.³² Rick Warren considered the scope of church growth by connecting that to the five purposes of the church. These include fellowship, discipleship, worship, ministry, and

³⁰ Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 549-550.

³¹ Ibid., 558.

³² Garry E. Milley, “Four Dimensions of Church Growth,” *Garry E. Milley* (blog), n.d., accessed 23 October 2023, https://garryemilley.com/#blog_-finding-a-pathway-in-the-desert-of-suffering_single_.

evangelism.³³ There seems to be no scale for determining the scope for membership growth. Rather it appears subjective to individual researchers. It seems that growth fits in the context of evangelism, increase, and nurturing. A major determinant of growth is assessing the number of the membership.

Based on this background, scholars have suggested determining indicators for increase through conversion. John Hayward for example, proposed a dynamic model for church growth and its application to contemporary revivals. He expounded on several thoughts of church growth analysis: systems thinking, model construction, model stimulation, and s-shaped growth. Hayward concluded on the factors of growth associated with the activity's enthusiasts, who are active in the conversion of others. They later relapse from being active. This he considers as drama and has effects of revival and growth.³⁴ "Membership growth is one of the marks of a living dynamic organization, such as religious organizations. Weak membership retention culture could lead to inaccurate membership records and wrong communication to members."

³⁵ The *Discipleship Handbook* of the Adventist Church indicates that "after we are baptized, we must continue to grow into active and mature disciples of Christ."³⁶

³³ Rick Warren, "A Healthy Church Balances the Five Purposes," accessed 23 October 2023, <https://journeyonline.org/healthy-church-balances-five-purposes/>.

³⁴ John Hayward, "A Dynamic Model of Church Growth and Its Application to Contemporary Revivals," *Review of Religious Research* 43, no. 3 (2002): 218-241, accessed 23 October 2023, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3512330>.

³⁵ Angela E. Nwaomah and Sampson M. Nwaomah, "An Appraisal of Membership Records Management and Retention Strategy in the Adventist Church in Africa," in *Culture, Adventist Theology, and Mission in Africa*, ed. Sampson M. Nwaomah, Eriks Galenieks, and Davidson Razafiarivony (Nairobi: Theological Seminary of Adventist University of Africa, 2016), 237, 243.

³⁶ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Discipleship Handbook: A Resource for Seventh-day Adventist Church Members* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2018), ix.

Indicators for a Church Growth Model

- 1) Increment in church membership could be necessitated through conversion
- 2) An increase in church membership could find a purpose in the fulfillment of evangelizing
- 3) Increment in church membership could be the basis for organization and re-organization
- 4) Membership numbers are not the only dimension of church growth.
- 5) Numbers in membership could suggest evidence of church growth and decline.
- 6) Context could suggest a basis for church growth.
- 7) Culture could suggest a basis for church growth.
- 8) A given situation could suggest a basis for church growth.
- 9) Societal dynamism could suggest a basis for church growth.

Ellen White on Church Growth

Ellen White: Evangelism and Increase

Ellen G. White has been an instrument in communicating God's messages for the foundation of the Adventist Church. As a prophetess, she was committed to a constant connection with God and to help shape God's people to be ready to preach the three angels' messages. She considers evangelism from a wider perspective, health,³⁷ and colporteur³⁸

Her writings highlight the reality of the Mission is being fulfilled. Her concept of membership increase is the best match for scattering to expand the work.

³⁷ Ellen G. White, *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene* (Battle Creek, MI: Good Health Publishing, 1890), 7.

³⁸ Ellen G. White, *The Colporteur Evangelist* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1920), 79.

Believers are not to be clustered but be ambassadors for Christ. Failure to follow this principle is equated to not growing in grace and knowledge of God.

In essence, such believers are not mature in the faith. Spirituality and growth should not necessarily be based on securing a member's name in the record system but on consciously staying connected with God. She emphasizes that names being recorded on church registers do not guarantee salvation.³⁹ From this perspective, it could be indicated that when assessing church membership growth numbers should be considered as well as other factors. "The saving of human souls is an interest infinitely above any other line of work in our world."⁴⁰ The gospel command is the inordinate proselytizer charter of Christ's name.⁴¹

Church Organization and Growth

Ellen White considers growth in numbers as it corresponds to "organization" and increasing the margin for growth to reach dying souls. As the numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization, there would be great confusion.⁴² Growth in this sense is not for nurturing and comfort, but an opportunity to enlist workers to send the message.⁴³ "Many souls will be turned from darkness to light, and many churches will be established. Men will be converted, not to the human instrument, but to Christ."⁴⁴

³⁹ Ellen G. White, *Counsels for the Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1991), 9, 64-67.

⁴⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2010), 293.

⁴¹ White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 28.

⁴² Ellen G. White, *Christian Leadership* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1985), 1.

⁴³ White, *Counsels for the Church*, 69.

⁴⁴ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 44.

In those days when the “numbers of the disciples were multiplied, there arose a murmuring.” This led to the choosing of seven deacons.

The organization of the church at Jerusalem served as a model for the organization of churches in places where the message had been preached and converts received into the faith. According to her, this was to ensure order and harmony.⁴⁵ She gives much counsel on how to advance the work in her book, *Christian Service*. According to her writings, God expects the church to be an expansion movement not clustered in one place. Great news should not be carried to foreign countries alone, but to those who are close.⁴⁶

Summary

This chapter discussed the biblical and theological foundation of the study by considering growth patterns in the New and Old Testaments. Whereas the church was not mentioned in the OT, the mission and progress of God’s people formed a continuity in the NT. The NT marks the point where numerical indicators suggest growth. The theological foundation considered an overview of the Adventist history and growth and suggested a theological basis from what researchers have said about membership growth. The section then concluded with Ellen White’s writings and perspective on membership growth.

⁴⁵ Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press , 1911), 89, 91.

⁴⁶ Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1925), 178.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the study focused on reviewing related literature on the subject under study. It discusses the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical frameworks; considering the relevance and gaps that could be detected in relationship to the growth and development of this research. This literature review would provide a basis for a model for membership retention in the Moronou district. Key variables that would be considered include membership retention, growth, decrease, and increase.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis for the study explores existing theories relevant to the study. Some theories have been suggested for membership retention. Geah Pressgrove and colleagues used the public relations theory to develop a communication and relationship approach to dealing with donors, members, and volunteers.¹ Social identity theory has been used to gain insight into how members' features relate to failing behaviors.² Engagement theory has also been used by some researchers to understand employment, retention, roles, tasks, and resources in organizations;

¹ Geah Pressgrove et al., "Investigating Membership Retention: Employing Public Retention Theory to Better Understand Relationship Management," *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing* 34, no. 2 (2022): 1, accessed 6 May 2024, www.tandfonline.com.

² C. B. Bhattacharya, "When Customers Are Members: Customer Retention in Paid Membership Context," abstract, *Review of Educational Research* 26, no. 1 (1998): 499, accessed 6 May 2024, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654320933544>.

membership engagement in this context becomes adaptive.³ The cultural risk theory is also discussed in connection with persuasive engagements and the risk associated with how the cultural perception of individuals could be determined in decision-making (related to gun usage) based on hierarchical, egalitarian, and individualist worldviews. Other studies have used the balance theory in the context of quality services to foster customer retention goals and growth.⁴

Church membership retention has gained maximum attention since growth is of concern to such organizations. Some scholars have conducted research exploring related theories of membership retention. The church-sect theory, developed from sect development theory, has been proposed by Ronald Lawson. Lawson's study considers the dynamics associated with how the Adventist Church grew from being a sect to becoming a denomination.⁵ Other research related to church growth and membership retention includes social support theory, which discovers how the church's communal expressive, contributory, and informational provision to members, could underwrite retention and well-being.⁶ The attachment theory scrutinizes how members' relationship with God, spiritual leaders, and congregation impacts their sense of

³ Kenneth A. Doyie, "The Evolving Environment for Membership and Engagement," in *Membership Essentials: Recruitment, Retention. Roles, Responsibilities, and Resources* ed. Sheri Jacobs (New Jersey: Wiley. The American Society of Association Executives, 2016), 1-12.

⁴ Paula Phillips Carson et. al., "Balance Theory Applied to Service Quality: A Focus on the Organization, Provider, and Consumer Triad," *Journal of Business and Psychology* 12, no. 2 (1997): 99-120, accessed 7 May 2024, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25092583>.

⁵ Ronald Lawson, "Broadening the Boundaries of Church-sect Theory: Insights from the Evolution of the Nonschismatic Mission Churches of Seventh-day Adventism," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37, no. 4 (1998): 652-653, accessed 7 May 2024, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1388147>.

⁶ E. S. Anderson, R. A. Winett, and J. R. Wojcik, "Self-regulation, Self-efficacy, Outcome Expectations, and Social Support: Social Cognitive Theory and Nutrition Behavior," *Annual. Behavior Medical* 34 (2007): 304-312, accessed 7 May 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02874555>; cf. Joanne van Dijk, "The Role of Ethnicity and Religion in the Social Support System of Older Dutch Canadians," *Canadian Journal on Aging* 23, no. 1 (2004): 21-34, accessed 7 May 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0714980800016792>.

construction, obligation, and maintenance within the church.⁷ The community theory reconnoiters how the church as a community fosters a sense of belonging, purpose, and uniqueness for its members.⁸

The Organizational behavior theory (an example is Lewin's change theory) encompasses features such as headship, communication, incentive, and culture.⁹ The relational theory considers the reputation of interactive associations in influential individuals' actions and insolences.¹⁰

Triangulated Retention Theory

After reviewing an array of literature regarding retention theories, this study generally assumes that a multifaceted approach to developing theories for membership retention programs is the best option for application. By mixing these concepts, the triangulated theory of church membership retention offers an inclusive background for the multi-layered influences that underwrite member retention within congregations. This encompasses the relevance of communal uniqueness, interpersonal subtleties, social support, accessories, community consistency, and structural conduct in endorsing member rendezvous, fulfillment, and preservation.

⁷ Roger L. Dudley and H. Phillip Muthersbaugh, "Social Attachment to the Seventh-day Adventist Church among Young Adults," *Review of Religious Research* 38, no. 1 (1996): 38-50, accessed 7 May 2024, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3512539>.

⁸ Donovan Antonio Lauther, "Factors Affecting Retention of the Members of the Linden of Seventh-day Adventists Church in New York" (PhD thesis, Montemorelos University, 2020), 47-48, accessed 9 May 2024, ProQuest.

⁹ Christopher Dent, "Effects of Organizational Leadership Styles to Improve Church Membership and Attendance: A Multiple Case Study" (PhD diss., Northcentral University, 2016), 64-66, accessed 9 May 2024, ProQuest.

¹⁰ Richard Daniel Burkhalter, "Pastoral Use of Social Media Technology to Recruit, Assimilate, and Retain Church Members: A Qualitative Descriptive Study" (PhD diss., Grand Canyon University, 2020), 30-34 accessed 9 May 2024, ProQuest.

The situation in the Moronou district does not have a single approach and perspective in solving the membership decline.

To adopt best practices for efficiency and growth, the leadership of the conference and churches need to be intentional in involving every facet of the church in addition to biblical and cultural dynamics to ensure balance and growth. Several elements have been combined in the triangulated retention theory which may not be found in any research. This underscores the relevance of this study in adapting a comprehensive theory to drawing a model for church growth and retention.

Conceptual Framework

Variables, Concepts, and Relationships

The variables and related concepts on the research topic include membership retention, growth, and decrease. Membership growth considers the issues interacting in keeping fresh members and at the same time safeguarding their vigorous input to the church's life. Membership decrease encompasses understanding the cause of why active members disengage or leave the church.¹¹ Much research exists on the topic of membership retention. It has a broad perspective that could be applied to people in an array of organizations based on their focus and mission. For example, some studies have addressed customer retention in the paid membership context;¹² in context, a church member could be identified as a customer.¹³ Retention could be associated

¹¹ Ochoche and Gweryina, "Evaluating the Impact of Active Members on Church Growth," 1-8.

¹² C. B. Bhattacharya, "When Customers Are Members: Customer Retention in Paid Membership Context," 499; cf. Retention Models Based on Colleges: Lonnie Morrison and Loretta Silverman, "Retention, Theories, Models, and Concepts," in *College Student Retention: Formula for Student Success*, ed. Alan Seidman (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 63-68, accessed 14 April 2024, book.google.com.

¹³ William Joseph Jean-Charles, "Factors Affecting Church Members Retention in the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists" (PhD diss., Montemorelos University, 2020), 1, accessed 16 April 2024, ProQuest.

with the desire of an individual to belong, which has an apparent connection to societal dynamics: The traditional concept of membership retention: where affiliation and loyalty were enough to sustain a group. The influx of societal dynamics makes things different. Membership dynamics could be deeply appreciated in the context of generations over ages and events.¹⁴ For example, the United States presents about five generations (Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and New Generation) However, one constant phenomenon over time is the desire for people to be part of a community.¹⁵

The church as an organization is composed of members and is built together based on a system of doctrines and a common identity.¹⁶ The reality of making disciples, nurturing, and spiritual formation becomes apparent.¹⁷ The primary function of the church is both missional and nurturing in nature. This becomes the means to attain new members and retain members;¹⁸ drawing the element of adding members and retaining converts to ensure growth.¹⁹

¹⁴ Greg Fines, "Introduction," in *Membership Essentials: Recruitment, Retention. Roles, Responsibilities, and Resources*, ed. Sheri Jacobs (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2016), ix-x.

¹⁵ Doyie, "The Evolving Environment for Membership and Engagement," 3-5; cf. Ruth N. Bolton et al., "Implications of Loyalty Program Membership and Service Experience for Customer Retention and Values," abstract, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 28, no. 1 (2000): 95-108, accessed April 13, 2024, journal.sagepub.com; cf. Duncan, "A Membership Retention Strategy for the Maranatha Seventh-day Adventist Church," 34-36.

¹⁶ Medi Ann Volpe, *Rethinking Identity: Doctrine, and Discipleship*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology Series (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 12-26; cf. Charles Van Engen, *God's Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 152.

¹⁷ Philip G. Samaan, *Christ's Way of Making Disciples* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999), 35, 67.

¹⁸ Brian R. Biedenbach, "Making Disciples in Current Missionary Practice in Malawi: An Empirical-theological Study of Religious Workers" (PhD thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2015), 1, accessed 24 April 2024, <https://scholar.sun.ac.za/items/6efd3db5-78db-4a18-b9c0-2fd08f5db7d1>.

¹⁹ Leslie J. Francis et al., "What Helps Christians Grow? An Exploratory Study Distinguishing among Four Distinctive Pathways," *Pastoral Psychology* 68 (2019): 379, accessed 24 April 2024, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11089-019-00866-5>.

This study seeks to understand how to create and retain members to ensure a stable increment, understand the cause of the losses, and develop strategies for growth. At this point, the relationship between membership retention increases, and decrease becomes apparent.

Soul-winning and Retention

The mandate of the church as suggested by the great commission is to carry the Good News to all the world and to make disciples (Matt 28:19-20). The Adventist Church is convinced that it is the group of God's people who have been mandated through the understanding of prophecies to preach Earth's final message to prepare the world for Jesus' soon return.²⁰ The reality of fulfilling the Gospel Commission comes with three divergent dynamics: the role of soul-winning in connection with care for the souls won, concerning doctrines. This study portrays the dual nature of the command to make disciples.

At conversion, the church is required to enlist or make disciples into God's kingdom through baptism, and after baptism make disciples through care for the converts/members (retention).²¹ The focus of this study encompasses a four-fold dimension checking the rate at which new converts get into the church, retention of the converts, exit points, and the strategies to retain balance in membership. Maintaining balance is when the church can encourage systems that retain members leading to ascensions.

²⁰ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Discipleship Handbook*, 53.

²¹ Francis et al., "What Helps Christians Grow?" 379.

Membership Retention Factors

Spiritual Renewal Programs

These include programs that foster the spirituality of members. Camp meetings are an example of spiritual renewal programs. It refreshes spirituality and fosters strong fellowship amongst church members.²² The members need to be well-educated and need to be well committed as far as the doctrines are concerned. Good understanding and sincere commitment to church doctrines influence a high rate of membership retention.²³

Leadership dynamics. Strong church leadership also sustains membership retention and leads to church growth. Transformational management, church ministry drivers, and culture are forecasters of church members' retention. Some sources have indicated that Leaders should manage the church as if it were a business that bears or produces benefits. They should appreciate and encourage members all around and treat them with Christ-like character. The administration of the church should make sure that we have clear and clean facilities that attract members as well as outsiders. Not only church structures but also new and updated equipment and amenities such as a public address system, projector, and other gadgets to improve church services. The church needs to focus on the quality of friendship and helpfulness among church members. It leads to the socialization parameter that reminds us that we are social beings. We should highlight it within the church.²⁴

²² White, *Christian Service*, 194-198. Cf. White, *Counsels for the Church*, 292.

²³ John Andrew Breon, "Christian Doctrine as a Means of Christian Spiritual Formation" (DMin diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2008), 1-3, accessed 2 May 2024, https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-94-009-2007-1_3.pdf.

²⁴ Peter Wielhouwer, "The Impact of Church Activities and Socialization on African-American Religious Commitment," *Social Science Quarterly* 85, no. 3 (2004):767-792. Cf. James W. Holsinger, Jr., "Christian Leadership in the Local Church: Mentoring New Christian Disciples" (DMin diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2009), 45-51.

The socio-historical and ethnographic study has recognized that African American religious establishments and practices have been crucial in the auxiliary development of black groups regarding social well-being, educational, public, and pecuniary goals and quests. One of the main factors in retaining members is being flexible and quick to listen and care for members. In church, leaders manage various people with different worldviews according to their backgrounds. Members have different levels of education and scholarly knowledge, as such we should manage church affairs with great care to avoid conflict. The best practice of retention is through small group planting all over. When it is realized that members have reached a certain number, it becomes relevant to relocate some of the members to a new site. Evangelism should become a means to expand such fields.²⁵

Pastoral development. There is a need for an appropriate follow-up plan, nurturing members for a lasting relationship with Jesus, our Savior, and His church as well. The church should have a permanent minister to care for, visit, counsel, and support members. Currently, ministers, leaders, evangelists, and elders need to renovate their input. Pastoral care should be updated by newly available gadgets such as mobile phones, Fax, email, WhatsApp, and Facebook.²⁶

While dealing with the modeling factor, we can say that the caretaker pastor has double work. He should nurture newly converted members to be spiritually strong and at the same time he ought to maintain old members and lead all of them altogether to be disciple-makers. It requires high spiritual responsibility and endeavors. New

²⁵ Wielhouwer, "The Impact of Church Activities and Socialization on African-American Religious Commitment," 767-792.

²⁶ Daniel L. Tebo Jr., "A Grounded Theory Study of Digital Discipleship Methods for Effectiveness in the Phygital Church" (PhD diss., Liberty University, 2023), 15, 47. ProQuest.

members look at old ones and consider them as role models in their day in day out life. For that reason.²⁷

Small group indicators. Small group activities could be a factor in dealing with a model for membership retention. Worshiping with several small groups has great benefits in terms of maintaining members and running the group as members of a small family. It is easier for members of small groups to interact, visit each other, and show compassion and genuine love. Small group is the perfect place to bring new people, and it is an effective means to retain old and new members, especially through biblical interest initiatives. Small group fosters improved relationships amongst the team since it has been observed that people leave for relational issues rather than for doctrinal issues. This is an effective tool for building relational ties among the members. This factor is an effective tool to manage membership in cities and helps in building friendship and community in the church. Thus, making members disciple makers.²⁸

Cultural factors. The clash between culture and doctrines among the members is another factor to consider for church growth and membership retention. This appears to be a concern for most African believers, especially as it pertains the taboos, norms, mores, folk laws, diet, dress, and others. As Seventh-day Adventist members sometimes conflict between our beliefs and culture arises. Some members cannot stand firm, and they leave the church, it should not be the way. We need to

²⁷ Wenson Lyson Masoka, “A Biblical Based Strategy for Disciple-making in the Seventh-day Adventist Churches of Malawi” (DMin diss., Andrews University, 2006), 146, accessed 4 June 2023, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1653&context=dmin>.

²⁸ Schadrack Nsengimana, “Using a Small Group Approach to Increase Church Growth in the Gikondo Seventh-day Adventist Church” (DMin diss., Andrews University, 2014), 40, accessed 4 October 2023, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1252&context=dmin>. Cf. John A. Montgomery, “Exploring the Concept of Influence in Christian Disciple-making: Towards the Development of a Theory of Disciple-making Leadership” (PhD diss, Dallas Baptist University, 2018), 3. ProQuest.

have a strong stand and let the secular world realize that Christian culture does not compromise.²⁹

Permanent minister in the district. Ministers are also called shepherds, as such, members are also compared to the sheep. Larger districts and distance are primary concerns when discussing effective membership maintenance. The member-pastor ratio should be considered by the church as effective means of membership retention are being explored. Enlisting a volunteer religious labor force and increasing labor could be effective in sustaining the gains.³⁰ When these conditions are not met it becomes difficult to nurture and retain members. This happens to be the reality at the Cote d'Ivoire conferences.

Membership Growth and Moronou District

Membership retention encompasses the approaches to keep membership vigorous. A critical model includes acts that prevent members from withdrawing their subscriptions and patronizing the services being offered. In other words, membership retention is the capacity the church has to keep high members' records. It is therefore optimistic running, preserving, and equipping members to make new disciples. The opposite of membership retention is losses and attrition: a decrease in membership. There is a connection between membership retention and organization.³¹

²⁹ Sampson M. Nwaomah, "Paul's Cultural Adaptation in Acts 17 as a Paradigm for Adventist Mission in Africa," in Nwaomah, Galenieks, and Razafiarivony, 90-103; Stark and Iannaccone, "Why the Jehovah's Witnesses Grow," 133; Kwabena Donkor, "Culture, Emerging Issues, and Adventist Theology," in Nwaomah, Galenieks, and Razafiarivony, 45; K. O. Onongha, *Pentecostalism in Nigeria: Phenomenon, Prospects, and Problems to Mainline Churches* (Ilishan-Remo, Nigeria: Babcock Consulting, 2011), 50; Branson and Martinez, *Churches, Culture, and Leadership*, 220.

³⁰ Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1995), 263-265.

³¹ *Mighty Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Member Retention," accessed 23 October 2023, <https://www.mightynetworks.com/encyclopedia/membership-retention>.

The ongoing research of church growth under the angle of human resources concerns how it helps build a strong relationship relevant in the district of Moronou. The first district that accommodated the Adventist message. Unfortunately, over the years, the membership rate has decreased, especially among older members. Few new members are the population of churches across the Moronou's district. Since the death of the pioneers' church records declined drastically. Though evangelism efforts, pastoral visitation, and other endeavors are rampant membership loss appears to be a reality.³²

The district will profit from this research since old members as well as new ones are all aware that something is wrong as far as membership is concerned. The church needs remedial factors to stop the decrease in membership. Pastors and Elders are the managers in the administrative sector, who need to shift the church administration strategies from relying on finance and marketing to developing membership retention models. Making a model for membership retention is very relevant in the district of Moronou due to the ongoing decrease in members.

Historical Context

Early in the late century, two young men named John Blay, and his friend John Essien brought the Seventh-day Adventist message to Moronou, East-Central regions in Cote d'Ivoire. The church does not have an official history book. Historical facts about the church are gathered by oral tradition. In the beginning, membership emphasis was important, making the church strong and popular in that region for a couple of decades. The message went all over the country right from the district of Moronou. Unfortunately, soon after the death of the pioneer, there was a shift in the

³² Observational Report by the Researcher.

growth of membership downwards due to low church attendance. It appears the establishment of institutions supported retention programs since it was observed that 62% of those who received Adventist education were enthusiasts and had a low propensity to maintain their membership.³³

Regular camp meetings organized by the pioneers appear to be another phenomenon that propels growth in numbers. They even built a primary school to help the growth of the church in the district and later in the country. Pioneers were strongly rooted in the faith of the teachings of the church. Those factors helped the early church in the district to stand solid against the decrease. As the attention of the population shifted to public schools it affected church membership, leading to the collapse of church schools. This also affected camp meeting venues, since school buildings were used for camp meetings.

Camp meetings were a means of solidifying the biblical faith of members. Ellen White wrote that camp meetings were to endorse spiritual life among our people.³⁴

Best Practices and Models

Attractive factor. Pastors should have an attractive lifestyle and method of work. They should be innovative and attract members and nonmembers as well. Pastors play role models as Jesus- Christ did and a crowd of people followed Him wherever He found himself. Currently, there are many ways to attract people. Having

³³ Roger L. Dudley and Randall L. Wisbey, “The Relationship of Parenting Styles to Commitment to the Church among Young Adults,” *Religious Education* 95, no. 1 (2000): 38-50.

³⁴ White, *Christian Service*, 194-198.

updated church structures, schools, medical centers, and centers of influence.³⁵

Pastors also should update their style of worship and messages. Church members, the laity as well as the clergy should avoid a certain number of negative behaviors such as gossiping, conflicts and unresolved ones, selfishness, pride, and poor leadership, from elders and pastors.”³⁶

Small groups. Members from small groups are more interrelated than large church members. Visitation between members will easily flow. Ministers and elders, deacons will find it easier to visit and care for members. In a small group, leaders identify very quickly the needs of members and solve them. In a small group, everyone is ready to contribute to everything or every activity running in the church. People feel very free to talk, to invite a friend or relative. Small groups play an important role as far as membership retention is concerned. It fits all ages of people—ladies and gentlemen as well as grown-up people. Everybody feels at home and activities are relevant to all. Small groups could benefit the Moronou district.

Cultural factors. Church leadership could train members in such a way that each of them may avoid behaviors that clash with or are in conflict with the culture of the people. Members should be trained to appreciate culture without compromise. This could be done through appropriate contextualization and exposure. Sabbath

³⁵ Seventh-day Adventist Church, North American Division, *Core Qualities of an Effective Pastor upon Completion of Master of Divinity*, PDF file, n.d., <https://www.andrews.edu/sem/ihtm-spa/tutoriaministerial/core-qualities.pdf>; cf. Bruce J. Biddle, Barbara J. Bank, and Ricky L. Slavings, “Norms, Preferences, Identities and Retention Decisions,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (1987): 322-337, accessed 7 May 2024, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2786817>.

³⁶ Richard Sithole, "Assessing Retention Patterns and Implementing Strategies for Membership Retention in the Zimbabwe Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists" (DMin diss., Andrews University, 2010), 548, accessed 3 October 2023, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/548>.

appears to be one of the keys focuses for the Moronou district as far as contextualization and cultural adjustment are concerned.³⁷

Contextualization and effective discipleship go together. Understanding cultural perspectives also means that the worldview of the members is explored. It appears that the concept of worldview is difficult to understand since scholars in philosophy, history, anthropology, and Christianity share an array of subjective opinions on it. For example, originally, Kant suggested that worldview is a person's "point of view of the world."

However, the 19th-century scholars also came with different attempts to understand worldviews considering the numerous and dynamic cultures.³⁸

Permanent and adequate ministers. Continuous shepherding is a valuable phenomenon for effective membership retention. The lack of a pastor for more than a quarter should be guarded against and if it should happen at all, it should last for more than one year.

Not meeting this requirement is a serious occasion for members to backslide and then withdraw themselves completely from the church. There is a need to deal with membership retention throughout the church's life. According to Michael Griffith, just acknowledging the nominal number of church members while disregarding their upkeep in the church is useless. Also, the neglect to care for members who are inexperienced and mostly new converts ends up in a relapsing story.³⁹

³⁷ Onongha, *Pentecostalism in Nigeria*, 15.

³⁸ P. G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldview: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

³⁹ Kabwit Mbal Stanislas, "Strategies to Maintain New Converts in The SDA Church: A Case of Lwalaba Station in the East Congo Union Mission" (MA thesis, Adventist University of Africa, 2014), 14.

The model or strategy to maintain members should not be ignored. To avoid the continual loss of members there is a need to understand the actual reasons or causes since the same causes produce the same effects or results.

Rene Sand states that the appropriate method to treat a problem is to recognize its causes. If the actual causes of membership diminution could be acknowledged, then church leaders and members could know how to apply precautionary actions.⁴⁰ God does not want a single soul to perish but that we all should be saved (Luke 15). It is the duty of everybody in the church, leaders, pastors, and members as well to ensure membership retention. The implementation of a model for member retention is necessary for every church member, though pastors and elders should lead out in such church activities.

The membership retention model would be effective in balancing the ratio of pastor-member. One of the paramount or key factors in solving that issue is to engage many pastors, literature evangelists, and canvassers in the district of Moronou. Despite the willingness of pastors to do the work of God, one pastor cannot train and educate all the members in the district, and at the same time do the follow-up of nourishing the members very well for them to stand firm in the faith to avoid drastic losses. Ellen G. White said that “when new converts join the church, they have a superficial knowledge of Christian life. Therefore, they need to be nourished.”⁴¹ Members need to develop Christ-like character and apply it in all dimensions of the Christian life. For example, caring for each other, socialization, reciprocal forgiveness, and supporting members and nonmembers as well are very good

⁴⁰ Ibid., 12; cf. Rene Sand, *How to Prevent Apostasy* (n.p.: Department of Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Southern Asia-Pacific Division, 1996), 7.

⁴¹ Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1941).

Christian practices. There is therefore the need to develop models that help support membership.

Empirical Studies

Findings on Retention

Much literature exists on how retaining membership in a church is done. The ways to achieve it could apply to an array of organizations, especially those with mission focuses.⁴² Among them are Adventist scholars who have researched the concept of membership retention in specific churches. Some of these studies have suggested that the dynamics in society have a severe impact on membership retention. The youth and new converts are susceptible to membership decline. Others have researched specifically on male entry and retention.⁴³ Other studies have discussed membership retention in the context of pastor transition.⁴⁴

Over the years the church has regularly put in place adequate measures to maintain the quality and integrity of membership records. The progress and quality

⁴² Bhattacharya, "When Customers Are Members," 499; cf. Morrison and Silverman, "Retention, Theories, Models, and Concepts," 63-68.

⁴³ Duncan, "A Membership Retention Strategy for the Maranatha Seventh-day Adventist Church," 35-43; cf. Nilson S. Ferreira, "Proposed Solutions to the Problem of Membership Retention for the South Sao Paulo Conference" (DMin diss., Andrews University, 2011), 1, accessed 14 April 2024, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/46>; Yoseph Nyambega Otieno, "New Member Retention Strategy for the Makoko Church" (DMin diss., Andrews University, 2024), 1, accessed 12 April 2024, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/255/>; Isaac Adjei Mensah, "Effective Program of Church Membership Retention in the Seventh-day Adventist, Ahodwo District, Ashanti South Ghana Conference" (MA thesis, Adventist University of Africa, 2021), 1, accessed 6 April 2024, School Repository 162.241183.158; Ivar Heuch, Bjarne K. Jacobsen, and Gary E. Fraser, "A Cohort Study Found that Earlier and Longer Seventh-day Adventist Church Membership Was Associated with Reduced Male Mortality," abstract, *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology* 58, no. 1 (2005): 83-91, accessed 1 May 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclinepi.2004.04.014>.

⁴⁴ Lisa Tillman Sistrunk, "Senior Pastor Transition and Member Retention: An Exploratory, Single Case Study" (PhD diss., Grand Canyon University, 2019), 1, accessed 16 April 2024, ProQuest.

assurance of membership records vis-à-vis human resources outcomes is desirable compared to the growth of the church's schools, medical centers, and factories.⁴⁵

Emphasis on membership retention by organizations is relevant to the value members associate with their records, specifically reviewing appropriate outcomes for future scaling.⁴⁶

Member drives are multifaceted and can be observed in three broad perspectives: altruism, self-interest, and social facets.

Various research has been done on membership retention; this study analyzed other points of view regarding the ongoing research across the district of Moronou.

Membership growth should correspond with appropriate strategies and models to retain the growth.⁴⁷ No specific study has been conducted in Moronou District regarding membership retention, though reported figures to the higher organization within the Adventist Church suggest inadequacy in membership records. The world church records show that in 1965 the church had a membership of 40,421,554. It has been observed that there has been a decline of about 16 million with a net loss rate of over 40 percent. Thus, over 55 years, the church had a membership of about 40.4

⁴⁵ Heuch, Jacobsen, and Fraser, "A Cohort Study Found that Earlier and Longer Seventh-day Adventist Church Membership Was Associated with Reduced Male Mortality," 83-91; cf. AdventistArchives.org, "Quick Statistics on the Seventh-day Adventist Church," accessed 15 April 2024, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/quick-statistics-on-seventh-day-adventist-church>; Duncan, "A Membership Retention Strategy for the Maranatha Seventh-day Adventist Church," 1; Kiage, "A Strategy to Increase the Retention of Members in the Nyaguta District," 1; Chimoga, "Improving Member Retention in the Zambia Union of Seventh-day Adventists," 1; Harelimana, "Membership Retention in a Growing Church," 53.

⁴⁶ Laurie Cooper Stoll and Larry R. Petersen, "Church Growth and Decline: A Test of the Market-based Approach," *Review of Religious Research* 49, no. 3 (2008): 251-68, accessed 7 May 202, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20447497>.

⁴⁷ Juvenal Balisasa, "Identity Style, Mediated by Commitment and Syncretism, as Predictors of Undergraduate Students' Attitudes toward Selected Discipleship Practice at Valley View University in Ghana in 2015: Implications for Religious Education" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2016), accessed 1 May 2024, <http://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dissertation/1614>.

million church members and a membership loss of 16.24 million.⁴⁸ Moronou churches fell within this spectrum of membership analysis.

Indication for a Gap

The focus of retention and discipleship research has been on the dynamics between winning, growth, and decline. As demonstrated in the literature review, some Adventist scholars have all been engaged in understanding and solving membership-related issues. Most empirical studies have considered strategies to salvage membership decline. After a comprehensive web search, there seems to be no empirical study on reviving collapsed churches or creating models that check when existing models fail. Whereas growth is the expectation for membership retention strategies, much is to be looked into what to do when the existing models have failed. This study intends to suggest a model for membership retention and consider adaptive and changeable strategies for continual sustenance to avoid collapse.

Summary

This section of the study discussed literature review. It explored various studies considering the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical basis. The review discovered that several theories have been adapted and used to understand membership retention outcomes, however, to adequately draw a model that broadly supports membership retention outcomes suggests that there should be a multifaceted adaptation of theories that could be significant. The conceptual framework broadly evaluated several concepts on membership retention. From this background, the

⁴⁸ David Trim, "Attrition, Losses, and Growth Rates in the Seventh-day Adventist Church," *Adventist Review*, October 13, 2020, <https://adventistreview.org/news/attrition-losses-and-growth-rates-in-the-seventh-day-adventist-church/>.

study's conceptual model seems to indicate that membership retention models should address declining and increased outcomes and, more importantly, create models to detect and solve failing outcomes; especially for the Moronou District. Many empirical studies have been conducted on the topic of membership retention. However, much is to be looked into what to do when the existing models have failed to avoid the collapse of churches.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

This chapter involved the study setting, research design, study population, and the sampling procedure used. The chapter also discussed the research instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis, and ethical considerations of the study.

Research Design

The study employed the quantitative research approach to suggest a model for membership retention. This research approach is the process of collecting and analyzing numerical data, and it is used to summarize, predict data, test relationships among variables, and generalize findings to a wider population.¹ The study used the experimental research design to examine the cause-and-effect relationship of variables impeding membership retention in the Moronou district and served as a basis to develop the retention model for the district.

Research Setting

The study was directed in the Moronou district of the Cote d'Ivoire conference. The Moronou district, situated in the eastern part of Côte d'Ivoire, is home to the AKAN ethnic group. It shares its border with the Mid-West region of Ghana.

¹ Pritha Bhandari, "What Is Quantitative Research? | Definition, Uses & Methods," Scribbr, revised June 22, 2023, accessed 27 May 2024, <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/quantitative-research/>.

The predominant language spoken by the population is Agni, which has its roots in the Twi language of the Ashanti region. Most of the members of the SDA Church in the district belong to the Agni community. These church members primarily engaged in farming activities, cultivating crops such as cocoa, coffee, yam, cassava, and plantains. However, there are also a few members from different ethnic backgrounds who migrated to the area for various reasons, including farming, trade, education, and self-employment (such as masonry, tailoring, carpentry, and shoemaking).

Over the years, the church has experienced changes. Many pioneers have passed away, and their descendants are not as active as their late parents. As a result, only a small number of elderly members remain. This research aims to explore the reasons behind this decline in church participation and shed light on the district's evolving dynamics.

Sampling Procedure

The study employed a simple random sampling technique which is favourable in homogenous and uniformly selected populations and allows participants to have an equal chance of being selected for data collection² enhancing unbiasedness and equal probability of the population.

Sample Size

The total population in the Moronou Adventist Church district was about 500. About 110 participants (14 backsliders and 96 active members) responded to the questionnaire due to the language barrier and the inability to reach participants.

² Shagofah Noor, Omid Tajik, and Jawad Golzar, "Simple Random Sampling," *International Journal of Education and Language Studies* 1, no. 2 (2022): 78-82, accessed 23 June 2023, <http://dx.doi.org/10.22034/ijels.2022.162982>.

Selection Criteria

An estimated sample size of 217 participants was determined using Krejcie and Morgan criteria.³

$$= \frac{X^2 \cdot N \cdot P \cdot (1 - P)}{X^2 \cdot P \cdot (1 - P) + (N - 1) \cdot P}$$

Where,

- a. s represents the required sample size
- b. N is the population size, 500
- c. X^2 is the Chi-square value with a degree of freedom of 1 at a 95% confidence level (3.841).
- d. P is the 0.5 assumed population proportion
- e. D is the proportionate degree of accuracy

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected primarily using questionnaires, which were self-administered to intended participants in the Moronou district to ensure a high response rate. 110 questionnaires were distributed, resulting in 106 valid responses. Before the questionnaire administration, the purpose of the research was explained to the respondents. Participants' concerns and misunderstandings were carefully addressed before data collection. Respondents' privileges and rights were explained to them to ensure voluntary participation in the data collection exercise. Also, respondents were given consent forms before answering the questions.

³ Kenya's Project Organization, "Sample Size Determination Using Krejcie and Morgan Table," accessed 27 May 2024, <http://www.kenpro.org/sample-size-determination-using-krejcie-and-morgan-table/>.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire designed on a 5-Likert scale. Section A of the questionnaire comprised the demographic profile of the respondents. Section B detailed the declining membership variables. Section C factored in evangelistic efforts and religious affiliation shifts. Section D was about the diverse effects of declining membership on the Adventist Church; Section E comprised questions regarding retention strategies.

Data Analysis Framework

The study employed exploratory factor analysis, multiple regression analysis, and descriptive statistics for the data analysis. IBM SPSS version 27 was used to analyze data.

Ethical Consideration

Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) ethical framework was used for the study. The framework consists of:

1. Informed Consent: Participants were provided with all pertinent information about the study to enable them to make intelligent decisions. This ensured voluntary participation and allowed participants to know their rights to withdraw or continue with the data collection exercise.
2. Confidentiality: Participants' information, privacy, and identity were respected by using pseudonyms in place of their names and real identities. Also, the questionnaire was designed to conceal the real identities of respondents.

Data collected from respondents were used for only analysis purposes and results of the analysis were not personalized but aggregated to protect the

privacy of participants. Also, data is used only by the researcher and its intended purpose. Data was stored and managed securely to avoid theft or leak of information.

3. Consequences: The data collected was intended to be used to draw a model to improve membership retention in the Moronou Seventh-day Adventist District. Therefore, it was ensured that the data collected would not bring any physical danger, harm, or character defamation to any participant. The study ensured identity protection and privacy security.
4. Role of the Researcher: The researcher ensured that participants were respected by maintaining high moral standards and integrity for the exercise. The researcher empathized and committed to all moral issues and actions to avoid discrimination, bias, and any other behavior that is against moral values.

Research Findings: Testing Assumptions for Data Analyses

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to identify key underlying factors influencing membership decline in the Moronou district. This section presents the analytical approach used to uncover significant patterns and relationships within the collected data. Its assumptions are as follows:

- a. The variables should be scaled
- b. The sample size should be more than 200, or there should be five observations per variable.
- c. The sample should be homogenous

- d. At least 0.30 correlations are required between the variables
- e. There should be no outliers

The hypotheses are as follows:

H_0 : The correlation matrix is an identity matrix where correlations between each pair of variables are approximately 0

H_1 : The correlation matrix is not an identity matrix where correlations between each pair of variables are not approximately 0

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was utilized to examine the relationships between various predictors and religious engagement. This section details the statistical techniques used to determine the most significant factors influencing membership retention. Its assumptions are as follows:

- a. There should be linearity between the dependent variable and the independent variables.
- b. There should be a normal distribution in the population
- c. There should be an absence of outliers in both dependent and independent variables
- d. There should be an absence of multicollinearity between the independent variables

The hypotheses are as follows:

H_0 : There is no relationship between religious engagement and the predictor variables

H_1 : There is a relationship between religious engagement and the predictor variables

Table 1 provides an overview of the demographic distribution of respondents involved in the study. It includes key variables such as gender, age, occupation, education level, and reasons for leaving the church.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

Variable	Value	N	Valid %	Mean	Sd	Skewness
Gender	Male	63	59.4			
	Female	43	40.6			
Age Group	Below 18 years	2	1.9			
	18-24 years	5	4.7			
	25-34 years	21	19.8			
	35-44 years	26	24.5			
	45-54 years	29	27.4			
	55+ years	23	21.7			
Occupation	Student	6	5.7			
	Full-time employed	22	20.8			
	Part-time employed	6	5.7			
	Self-employed	64	60.4			
	Unemployed	4	3.8			
	Retired	4	3.8			
Level of Education	High school or less	77	72.6			
	College or vocational training	7	6.6			
	Bachelor's degree	16	15.1			
	Master's degree	6	5.7			
Reasons for Leaving the Church	Reduced sense of community			3.08	0.76	0.53
	Church programs and activities			3.54	1.49	-0.67
	Church's financial health			4.52	0.89	-1.98
	Church's outreach and mission			4.14	1.29	-1.29
	Church reputation in the community			2.91	1.29	0.04

From Table 1, males constitute 59.4% of the respondents. Most participants fall within the 45-54 years age bracket comprising 27.4% (29), however, only a small fraction of respondents are below 18 years (1.9%, $n = 2$) or between 18-24 years (4.7%, $n = 5$). A significant portion of the membership is self-employed (60.4%, $n = 64$). Also, 72.6% of the vast majority have a high school education or less.

All reasons for leaving the church variables are normally distributed (± 2 skewness). The high mean (4.52) and strong negative skew (-1.98) of the church's financial health indicate that economic and financial health is a significant concern, with most responses clustered at the higher end of the scale (agree or strongly agree, $sd.=0.89$). Responses in church programs and activities have a slight negative skew (-0.67), suggesting some dissatisfaction among respondents, but with a wider variability in responses ($sd.=1.49$).

Furthermore, a reduced sense of community shows a slight positive skew (0.53), indicating a minor inclination towards the higher end of the scale (from neutral to strongly agree, mean = 3.08) with similar perceptions among respondents ($sd.=0.76$). The church reputation in the community is relatively symmetric (0.04), indicating a balanced view and varied opinions on the church's reputation (mean = 2.91, $sd.=1.29$). Church outreach and mission exhibit a high mean, and negative skew (mean = 4.14, skewness=-1.29), pointing to general dissatisfaction with outreach and mission efforts ($sd.=1.29$).

Exploratory Factor Analysis on Membership Decline

Using the Mahalanobis distance test data were assessed for multivariate outliers. Six multivariate outliers were identified from the data and excluded from the dataset at $\alpha = 0.001$ probability, degree of freedom (df) = 20.

Table 2 categorizes the primary factors that contribute to membership decline based on exploratory factor analysis. It highlights the significance of socioeconomic influences, community involvement, and employment opportunities in shaping church participation trends.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Factor Groupings of Factors Contributing to the Decline in Membership in Moronou District

Variables	Mean	Sd	Factor Matrix	Communalities	Eigenvalues	% Var Exp	Value	Sig
Factor 1					70.525	63.688		
Employment opportunities	3.43	1.303	0.911	0.831				
Economic development	3.26	1.382	0.784	0.615				
Income level	3.19	1.094	0.818	0.67				
Socioeconomic factors	3.64	1.297	0.802	0.643				
Community involvement	3.61	1.096	0.652	0.426				
KMO							.817	
Bartlett's Test (χ^2)							311.006	**

* $p \leq 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.001$ *Orthogonal Rotation* $df = 10$ *excluded variables = 16*

<0.4

The variables in Table 2 suggest an underlying factor: socioeconomic influence on church participation (Factor 1, latent variable). This latent variable accurately captures the joint consequence of economic and social factors on the levels of engagement and membership in the Moronou church community. The means (3.43, 3.26, and 3.19) indicate a relatively moderate perception of employment opportunities, economic development, and income level among the respondents, with socioeconomic factors and community involvement slightly higher (3.64 and 3.61). All variables load significantly on socioeconomic influence on church participation,

indicating a strong relationship between employment opportunities, economic development, income level, socioeconomic factors, community involvement, and the latent variable.

All variables lower than the extraction communalities threshold (≤ 0.4) were excluded from the data. About 16 variables that could not contribute to socioeconomic influence on church participation were excluded from the data. High communalities for employment opportunities (0.831) and income level (0.67) suggest these variables are well-explained by socioeconomic influence on church participation, whereas community involvement (0.426) is less so. The Eigenvalue of 70.525 indicates the amount of variance in the data explained by socioeconomic influence on church participation. This accounts for 63.688% of the total variance, suggesting that the model has successfully reduced the data dimensionality while retaining a substantial amount of information on church membership declination.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of $0.817 > 0.7$ indicates meritorious sampling adequacy, suggesting that the data is suitable for the model. Bartlett's test of sphericity showed a Chi-square value (χ^2) of 311.006 with a significance level ($p < 0.001$) confirming that the correlations between socioeconomic influence on church participation variables are sufficiently large for factor analysis.

The internal consistency check in Table 3 assesses the reliability of the survey constructs. It ensures that the variables used for measuring church retention strategies are both valid and dependable for further analysis.

Table 3. Check for Internal Consistency

Variables	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Socio-Economic Influence on Church Participation		.889
Employment opportunities	0.843	0.845
Economic development	0.731	0.873
Income level	0.765	0.866
Socioeconomic factors	0.758	0.865
Community involvement	0.615	0.895

N = 99

The corrected item-total correlation values for socioeconomic influence on church participation variables in Table 3 (0.843...0.615) indicate the degree each variable correlates with the sum of the other variables in the scale. These values suggest that all variables are positively correlated with the overall scale. High correlations, for instance, employment opportunities (0.843) and income level (0.765), suggest strong associations with socioeconomic influence on church participation. Community involvement, with a low corrected item-total correlation (0.615), suggests being somewhat less aligned with the overall construct.

The overall Cronbach's alpha (0.889) indicates a high level of internal consistency. The individual variable's Cronbach's alpha suggests the Cronbach's alpha if each item is excluded from the scale. Excluding community involvement would increase the overall alpha to 0.895, suggesting this variable contributes less to the internal consistency. However, excluding employment opportunities would reduce Cronbach's alpha to 0.845, suggesting its substantial contribution to the scale's reliability.

Table 4 presents the core strategies identified for improving membership retention within the Moronou district. It includes key initiatives such as leadership engagement, community integration, and structured follow-up programs.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics and Factor Groupings of Membership Retention Strategies

Variables	Mean	Sd	Rotated Matrix	Communalities	Eigenvalues	% Var Exp	Value	Sig
Factor 1					33.077	30.323		
Survey insights on joining a church	4.7	0.543	0.864	0.753				
Feedback	4.8	0.494	0.825	0.688				
Survey insights on leaving the church	4.73	0.603	0.811	0.666				
Personalized pastoral support	4.79	0.48	0.793	0.63				
Survey on members' experiences	4.64	0.543	0.691	0.603				
Factor 2					26.616	24.282		
Active participation	4.06	1.114	0.943	0.903				
Volunteer work	3.93	1.042	0.88	0.783				
Members' involvement	3.82	1.181	0.784	0.663				
Regular attendance	3.83	1.333	0.68	0.466				
Factor 3					15.125	12.33		
Economic well-being	3.69	0.933	0.861	0.771				
Knowledge of socioeconomic status	3.88	1.062	0.802	0.669				
Understanding members' educational background	4.04	0.989	0.621	0.438				
KMO						0.785		
Bartlett's Test (χ^2)						726.6		**

* $p \leq 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.001$ Orthogonal Rotation $df = 66$

From Table 4, the variables' means (ranging from 3.68 to 4.8) with standard deviations (from 0.48 to 1.333) imply a moderately high level of agreement among respondents and inconsistency in responses. Factor 1 (church involvement and satisfaction) captures the most vital variance proportion (30.323%), suggesting that the characteristics of overall church involvement and satisfaction are the most significant (Eigenvalue = 33.077). High communalities (from 0.603 to 0.753) infer that the variables are well-represented by church involvement and satisfaction. Factor 2 highlights active participation and engagement in the activities of the Moronou district. It displays high-loading communalities (from 0.466 to 0.903), signifying its crucial part in member engagement.

Factor 3 reflects the essence of socioeconomic awareness within the church in the Moronou district. Factor 3 records high communalities (ranging from 0.438 to 0.771). Although it explains the smallest proportion of variance (12.33%), it emphasizes the significance of economic and educational frameworks in the church setting. In addition, the KMO of 0.785 signifies enough sampling for the factor analysis. Also, Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 726.96$, $p < 0.01$) depicts sufficient large correlations fit for the model.

Table 5 provides an additional reliability analysis to verify the consistency of retention strategy variables. Ensuring high internal consistency strengthens the credibility of the proposed retention model.

Table 5. Check for Internal Consistency

Variables	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Church Involvement and Satisfaction		0.898
Survey insights on joining a church	0.815	0.86
Feedback	0.77	0.872
Survey insights on leaving the church	0.77	0.872
Personalized pastoral support	0.725	0.881
Survey on members' experiences	0.674	0.891
Active Participation and Engagement		0.887
Active participation	0.863	0.814
Volunteer work	0.808	0.838
Members' involvement	0.734	0.861
Regular attendance	0.644	0.905
Socioeconomic Awareness		0.807
Economic well-being	0.713	0.683
Knowledge of socioeconomic status	0.711	0.676
Understanding members' educational background	0.556	0.835

N = 99

The high Cronbach's alpha (0.891) in Table 5 shows strong internal consistency for church involvement and satisfaction variables. Each variable's corrected item-total correlation above 0.67 indicates that all variables significantly contribute to the overall scale. The insignificant decline in the variables Cronbach's alpha designates that all items proportionately influence the scale's reliability. Meanwhile, active participation and engagement establish a strong internal consistency of 0.887 Cronbach's alpha. The corrected item-total corrections suggest a strong relationship between the individual variables and the score (ranging from 0.644 to 0.863). General reliability reinforces the cohesiveness of the scale, thus with a slight reduction if a variable is excluded.

Socioeconomic awareness has the lowest Cronbach's alpha (0.807).

Understanding members' educational backgrounds has a low correlation compared to the other variables (0.556). However, it is not detrimental to the general reliability reflected in its Cronbach's alpha (0.835).

Multiple Regression Analysis

The $\log_{10}$ transformation method was used to transform the predictor variable, church involvement, and satisfaction. The variable was highly negatively skewed (-2.308) above the ± 2 criteria, which violated the normality assumption. This method is good for a positively skewed distribution. Therefore, the reflection technique was employed, where one was added to the maximum value of the distribution (25), and each value of the variable under transformation was subtracted from the results (25+1-church involvement and satisfaction). The resulting value was, therefore, 2.308, the opposite of -2.308. Then the $\log_{10}$ transformation was applied to it. Also, the Mahalanobis distance test data were assessed for multivariate outliers. 1 multivariate outlier was excluded from the data at $\alpha = 0.001$ probability, degree of freedom (df) = 4.

Figure 1, the histogram, provides a visual representation of the standardized residuals from the regression analysis. It helps in assessing the normality of residual distribution, which is crucial for validating the regression model.

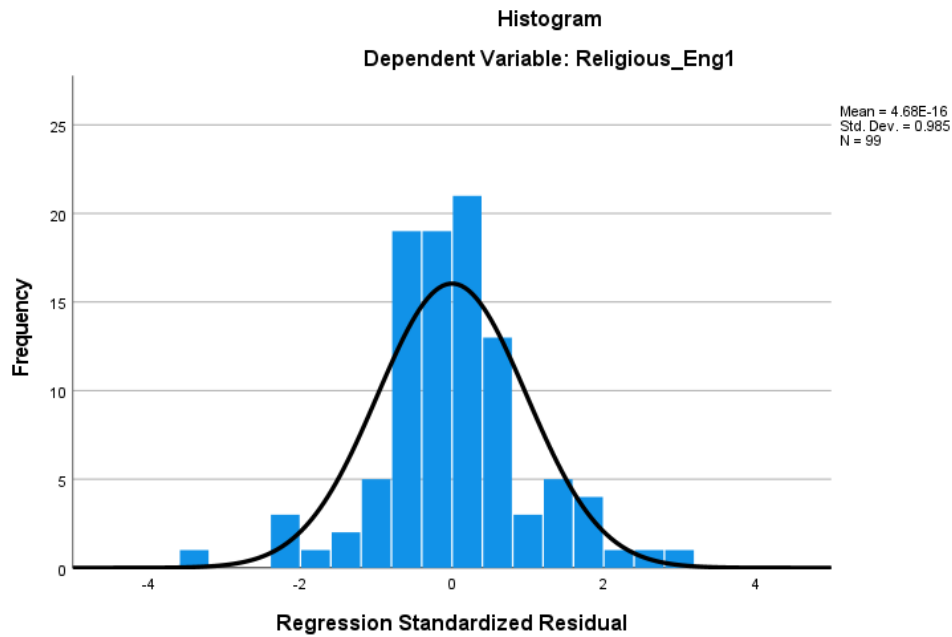


Figure 1. Histogram Showing the Regression Standardized Residual

The histogram in Figure 1 suggests a rough symmetric around the mean (0) depicting no significant skewness in the residual. The peak around zero shows most of the residual closer to zero with fewer at the extreme. The residual is, therefore, normally distributed.

The normal P-P plot in Figure 2 visually illustrates the distribution of standardized residuals against a normal probability distribution. It serves as an essential tool in diagnosing deviations from normality in regression analysis.

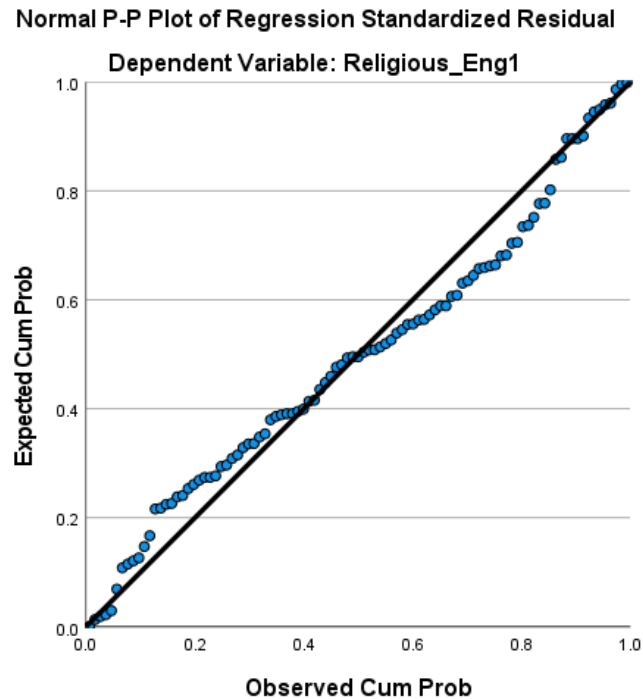


Figure 2. Chart Showing the Normal P-P Plot

According to Figure 2, the P-P plot suggests goodness of fit between the observed residuals and the expected normal distribution. This shows that the distribution is fit for the model. Also, most of the data scores lie very close to the linear (diagonal) line inferring a normal distribution, thus the linearity assumption is met.

Table 6 illustrates the relationship between various church engagement variables and membership retention outcomes. Correlation coefficients highlight the strength and direction of associations between these key factors.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficients

Variable	Mean	Sd.	Correlation		
			2	3	4
1. Religious Engagement	17.111	2.49	0.181*	0.258*	0.235*
2. Church involvement and satisfaction	0.245	0.3		-0.067	-0.264*
3. Active participation and engagement	15.636	4.052			0.218*
4. Socioeconomic awareness	11.606	2.539			

* $p \leq 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.001$ Skewness (Religious Eng. = .546 and Predictors =

1.031, -1.237, and - .703,)

Table 6 implies that all the variables fall within ± 2 skewness. Religious engagement and active participation and engagement record higher average scores (17.111, 15.606) with moderate variability (2.29, 4.052). The outcome variable (religious engagement) correlates moderately positively with statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) with all predictor variables. This proposes that as member surveys are conducted, feedback is gathered, and there is significant personalized pastoral support and counseling, members' religious engagement also increases. In addition, when members attend church frequently and are actively involved in church volunteer work and programs, their religious engagement also increases. When members' socioeconomic status and educational background are frequently considered, and their economic well-being is improved, they will highly engage in religious activities.

Church Involvement and Satisfaction has a non-significant negative relationship with active participation and engagement (-0.067). This means that there is no, or weak relationship. However, Church Involvement and Satisfaction are significantly negatively correlated with Socioeconomic Awareness, signifying that higher church involvement and satisfaction might be associated with lower socioeconomic awareness. There exists a positive and statistical correlation between

active participation and engagement and socioeconomic awareness (0.218, $p < 0.05$).

This implies that higher active participation is related to more awareness of socioeconomic factors.

Regression analysis results in Table 7 provide insights into the predictive power of different church involvement factors. It identifies significant contributors to religious engagement and member retention.

Table 7. Regression Analysis for Model

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Partial</i>	<i>Tolerance</i>	<i>VIF</i>
Constant	11.554	1.381		8.365	**			
Church involvement and satisfaction	2.158	0.797	0.263	2.709	*	0.268	0.93	1.075
Active participation and engagement	0.135	0.059	0.22	2.286	*	0.214	0.952	1.05
Socioeconomic awareness	0.251	0.098	0.256	2.578	*	0.242	0.89	1.124

$R^2 = .164$, $R = 0.406$, $F_{(3,98)} = 6.232$, $**p < 0.001$, $*p \leq 0.05$

From Table 7, the tolerance values for the independent variables are above 0.4, and close to 1, representing that the variables do not highly correlate with each other, hence there is no multicollinearity problem. Also, Variance Inflation Factor values are less than five, indicating each predictor variable does not highly correlate with each other, hence no redundancy in the statistical significance of predictive variables. The model is, therefore, statistically significant in predicting religious engagement.

The independent linear combination of church involvement and satisfaction, active participation and engagement, and socioeconomic awareness, is statistically significant ($F_{(3,98)} = 6.232$, $p < 0.001$) and explains 16.4% of the variance in religious engagement. The multiple correlation coefficient, $R = 0.406$, signifies a moderate

overall correlation between religious engagement and the predictors. This means that the predictor variables in the model are useful for predicting the variation in religious engagement. All the predictor variables are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$, $p < 0.05$). All three predictors appear more essential (0.263, 0.22, and 0.256). However, church involvement and satisfaction seem to be 1.195 and 1.027 more potent in explaining religious engagement than active participation and engagement, and socioeconomic awareness.

The constant ($\alpha = 11.554$) is positive, indicating that the predicted value of the dependent variable (religious engagement) is positive when all independent variables are zero. Also, the partial correlation values (0.268, 0.214, and 0.242) show the unique relationships between religious engagement and each predictor variable when the controlling effects of the variables are taken out.

The least-square regression line: $\hat{Y} = \alpha + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + b_5x_5$

Where $\hat{Y}$ is the predicted value, α (11.554) is the intercept of the actual regression line, (b_{1-3}) is the slope (the rate of change per unit time) of the actual regression line and x_{1-3} is each predictor per unit variable.

Thus, the model is

$$\widehat{Rel. Eng} = 11.554 + 2.158churchinvolvement + 0.135 activeparticipation + 0.251socioeconomicawareness$$

Discussion of Findings

The demographic data reveal a predominantly male, self-employed, and high-school-educated sample, with a significant proportion of middle-aged respondents. The standard deviations below the average means show the data points are tightly clustered around the means. This signifies low variability and high consistency in the dataset.

Members' reasons for leaving the church in the Moronou district show illustrious concern regarding the financial health of the church and evangelistic efforts. The respondents showed more moderate concerns about the reduced sense of community and the church's community reputation. The findings, therefore, suggest areas the Moronou church district can target for church improvement. This will address dissatisfaction among members, especially in financial management and community outreach, leading to departures.

The factor analysis results for membership decline depict effectively reduced socioeconomic variables into a single factor, with over 63% explained variance. The high loadings on socioeconomic influence reveal that the factor might constitute segments of socioeconomic well-being influenced by income levels, employment opportunities, economic development, and overall socioeconomic conditions. Meanwhile, community involvement though significant, seems less strongly associated with socioeconomic influence on church participation in the Moronou church district. The KMO value and Bartlett's test adequate validation infer that interventions aimed at enhancing the socioeconomic variables may be advantageous from a cohesive approach, addressing the interrelated nature of these factors to improve the overall church community welfare. The analysis gives a vigorous basis for clearly viewing the interaction between crucial socioeconomic variables, supporting the creation of inclusive policies for socioeconomic development among the Moronou district church members.

The internal consistency and reliability findings imply that employment opportunities, socioeconomic factors, and income level are the scale's significant factors. Though slightly lower, economic development sustains a strong correlation and positive effect on the scale's reliability. The scale is, therefore, a reliable tool for

evaluating socioeconomic dimensions influencing church participation. It provides a robust foundation for further research and practical applications in understanding these underlying dynamics. Meanwhile, community involvement could be considered for improvement to align with socioeconomic influence on church participation.

The factor analysis on retention strategies identified three factors contributing to membership dynamics. These include involvement and satisfaction, active participation, and socioeconomic awareness. The high Eigenvalues and the explained variance underscore the essence of the variables in knowing church membership behaviors and characters. The findings showed strong communities with significant tests. This offered vital insights for church management and pastoral care interventions. The internal consistency underlines the heftiness of the three constructions in measuring dimensions of church engagement and membership awareness. Internal consistency is strong with all variables contributing effectually to their respective constructs. The results suggest that the variables are reliably measured to understand church retention strategies and interventions. These findings can inform further research and practical applications in enhancing church engagement strategies.

The correlation analysis divulges essential associations among key variables, stressing the vital role of religious engagement and the degree of interaction between church involvement, active participation, and socioeconomic awareness. These results offer valued awareness for church leadership and officials to plan strategies that stabilize internal satisfaction with exterior consciousness, eventually nurturing a more robust and knowledgeable church community.

The multiple regression analysis classifies church involvement and satisfaction, active participation and engagement, and socioeconomic awareness as substantial predictors of religious engagement. All the predictors have standardized

coefficients that are positive, suggesting positive relationships with the dependent variable. The model explains 16.4% of the variance in the dependent variable, with all the predictors making unique contributions to the prediction, which is evident from the low VIF values and high t-values for all the predictors. These results convey the significance of these factors contributing to the dependent variable, presumably Religious Engagement and propose directions for targeted interventions in bringing about improvements in the outcomes connected with the dependent variable.

CHAPTER 5

MODEL DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION

This section of the study discussed and suggested an Intentional Systematic Discipleship. This chapter focused on developing a model for membership retention for the district of Moronou of the Adventist Church, in Cote d'Ivoire. The chapter drew inferences from the literature reviewed in chapters two and three, forming a basis for the designing of the model. For the model to reflect a practical significance for implementation, an analysis and evaluation were done based on the questionnaires administered.

Inferences from Previous Chapters

The NT Growth Model is founded on upsurge and mission. The increase in number also formed the basis for organizations and leadership. This suggests the basis for statistics and organizations and reorganizations. Also, the growth associated with challenges and persecution should be a bedrock for this study. Declining situations should not suggest hopelessness, instead, the need to implement strategies to change the challenge into growth.¹ Jethro's approach is a key element for leadership outcomes and nurturing and retaining members in a group (Exod 18:17-23). This suggestion provides a participative leadership approach and shares power to ensure efficiency. It again checks burnout among leaders and followers. Moses became effective in managing the children of Israel.

¹ Milley, "Four Dimensions of Church Growth," *Garry E. Milley* (blog), n.d.

As indicated before, this strategy is very relevant for this study. It suggests two basic assumptions. The first is dynamic leadership, and the second is membership segmentation into smaller units (small groups). This kind of structure ensures efficiency. It also caters to empathy towards members. The leader manages a delegation system that fosters reporting and accountability.² The study also found that Moses' leadership could suggest a member-control system. Power dynamics and membership influence are very relevant for membership growth. Left unchecked is a sure indicator of decline.³ In the context of this study, the leader has relevant roles to play to achieve the mission set. God however is the one who works to guide leaders and members in the group.⁴

Inferences from Theories

Reviewed theories address member communication and relationship behaviors, socioeconomic dynamics, cultural issues, growth patterns, attachments, community engagement, technological outcomes, and organizational dynamics.⁵ It is recognized that these theories should be approached in a multifaceted way to support this project. Thus, a comprehensive system should be developed that addresses the direction the theories have suggested.

² *Church Manual* (2022), 25.

³ Wenham, *Exploring the Old Testament*, 57-79.

⁴ Arrais, *Wanted*, 13-20; cf. Branson and Martinez, *Churches, Culture, and Leadership*, 210-231.

⁵ Bhattacharya, "When Customers Are Members," 499; cf. Doyie, "The Evolving Environment for Membership and Engagement"; Lawson, "Broadening the Boundaries of Church-sect Theory," 652; Anderson, Winett, and Wojcik, "Self-regulation, Self-efficacy, Outcome Expectations, and Social Support," 304-305.

It is vital to focus on communal individuality, relational intricacies, social care, accessories, community steadiness, and organizational behavior in approving member rendezvous, serenity, and protection.

Basis for Membership Retention Model: Six Indicators of Membership Retention

The study's conceptual model suggested six activity stages for church membership declining and increase: the soul winning, increase in discipleship, decline in discipleship, retention model, growth, and collapse stages. The Moronou district per this concept is at the retention model stage since it would need a strategy to solve the existing crisis of membership decline. It is the hope that after implementing the drawn model there should be growth not collapse. Thus, the model should include a cyclical system that ensures checks and balances to avoid failure.

Thus, from this example, this study seeks to draw a model that is relevant for the Moronou district and any system that needs revival of membership outcomes. It considers a check and balance system where the model reviews itself to ensure consistent growth. In this context membership retention should not be considered only when things have got worse; rather, proactive measures need to be kept in place to sustain new members and check for possible losses.

Figure 3 presents six key indicators identified as crucial for maintaining church membership. These indicators serve as the foundation for strategic retention planning within the Moronou district.

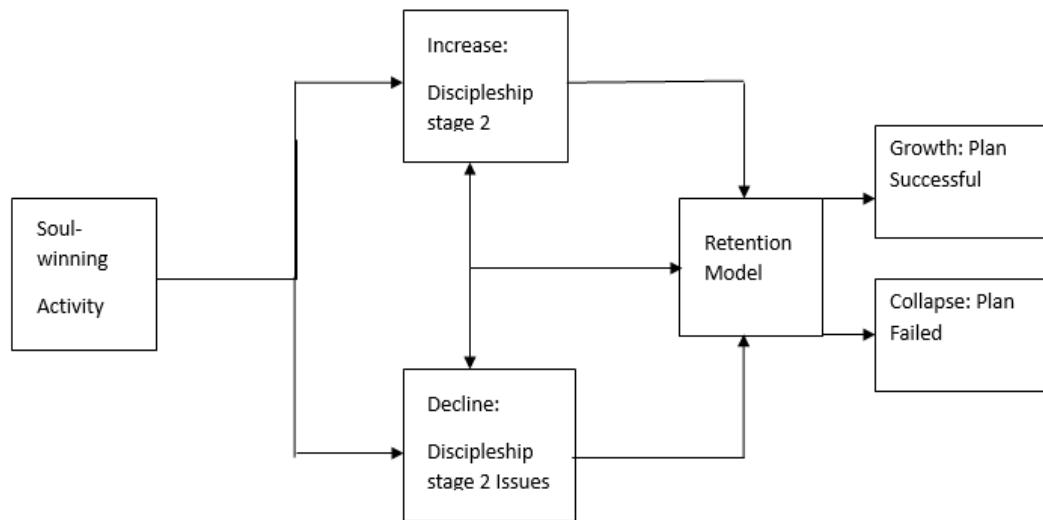


Figure 3. Six Indicators for Membership Retention

According to Figure 3, soul-winning activity represents the church's efforts as Christ has mandated (first stage of discipleship making). Discipleship stage 2 represents an increase, the resultant effect of fulfilling the command, and the declining stage which shows the challenges associated with members' caring process. To sustain the gain and check the problem of decline, a retention model is required to equip leaders to foster the equilibrium of membership. When the plan has not been successfully implemented a continual decrease could lead to the collapse of the church, or the successful implementation of the model should lead to growth. The assumption underlining this concept is to construct a plan that prevents the collapse of churches.

Membership decline stages proposes four stages of membership decline. The membership decline dynamics include:

- a. *Increase-decline*: The fulfillment of the Gospel Commission means members could be added to the church. This is referred to as the increase

moment. It becomes increase-decline when certain factors cause the number of members to reduce. When this reduction becomes obvious, strategies must be adopted to mitigate the process.

- b. *Decline-increase*: This level represents the working model stage. The focus of every model is to ensure a corresponding increase. The strategy resulting in an increase in numbers after decline is the decline-increase stage, a model operative stage.
- c. *Continuous growth-missing*: This level of model development is the kind of progress that goes beyond numbers. Every human institution may have flaws. Practical issues like death and sanctions could affect a few members. It could also include discovering missing members and reclaiming sanctioned members. This would call for an advanced adjustment (positive or negative) model to identify the cause, and actions for solutions. For example, missing values related to death could be solved by health education if the cause is health related. This growth stage needs patience and tact to sustain the growth.
- d. *Continuous-decline-collapse*: Sometimes, after applying the strategies, it appears to fail. The continued decline indicates that the implemented model is failing, or non-functional. This could suggest a need for a model adjustment or comprehensive review.

Data Analysis Predictive Variables

The exploratory factor analysis constructed 12 reliable variables that were used to project religious engagement and served as the fundamental basis for the construction of the retention model.

These variables were categorized under three latent variables: church involvement and satisfaction, active participation and engagement, and socioeconomic awareness.

These were used to predict religious engagement.

Religious Engagement

Religious engagement is the active participation and commitment church members have toward the church's religious activities and practices. This engagement is essential for fostering a vibrant, active faith community and is influenced by several factors:

- a. Church involvement and satisfaction – ensures that members are satisfied with their involvement in church activities and feel a sense of belonging and purpose. The variables in this factor include survey insights on joining the church, survey insights on leaving a church, a survey on members' experiences, feedback, and personalized pastoral support.
- b. Active participation and engagement – encouraging members to take part in various church activities, attend services regularly, and engage in volunteer work and other community-building efforts. The variables include active participation, volunteer work, members' involvement, and regular attendance.
- c. Socioeconomic awareness – recognizes and addresses church members' economic needs and challenges, which can impact their ability to participate fully in church life. Its variables include economic well-being, knowledge of socioeconomic status, and understanding of members' educational backgrounds.

Model Implementation

This involves applying structured, strategic frameworks to engage church operations and enhance member engagement. Effective implementation ensures that church activities are well-organized, goals are clear, and resources are utilized efficiently. Key components include a growth plan (outreach, organization and reorganization, effective communication plan, stewardship and financial management, and church strategic plan) and a failure contingency plan (crisis management plan, model assessment and evaluation, membership follow-up, membership training, leadership training, and organizational).

Model Foundation

The empirical research of the study indicated that it was yet-to-be-determined research that addressed situations where models have failed or when there is a total loss of membership. The focus is to create a system that prevents membership decline and strategic failure. This would call for the intentionality of church leaders using a multifaceted approach to control sustainability. The Moronou district as indicated in this study suffers a decline in membership and church attendance.⁶ The district has engaged in untiringly investigated methods to develop a constant nurturing course for church growth. There should be a balance between evangelism resulting in ascensions and managing the increase. New and old members are to be effectively nurtured. Jesus' second coming behooves the flock to be ready and requires patient strategies to remain focused and active. Therefore, there is a need for interventions that foster and improve church liveliness to prepare the membership for effective ministry.⁷

⁶ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, *Annual Statistical Reports*, 2019-2021.

⁷ Ochoche and Gweryina, "Evaluating the Impact of Active Members on Church Growth," 1-8.

The membership retention model must fit to determine the cause and effect of membership decline. Understanding the situational context is relevant to understanding the nature of the implications associated, and the solutions that should be adopted. From this background, solutions could be applied in a unique, cyclical, and holistic manner to ensure growth.

The Membership Retention Model

The membership retention model in Figure 4 integrates essential components necessary for sustaining and increasing church membership. It outlines the relationship between leadership, church management, and member engagement in the retention process.

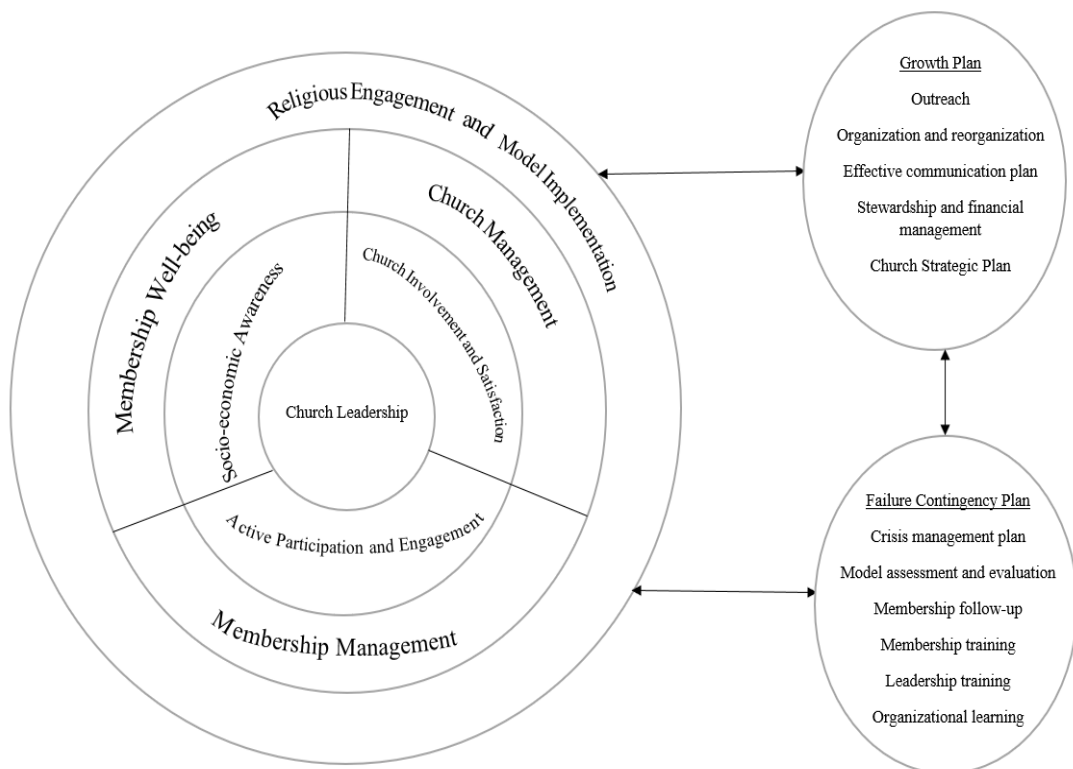


Figure 4. Membership Retention Model for Moronou Adventist Church District

Figure 4 signifies a conceptual basis placed around church leadership and its effect on various aspects of church management and membership well-being. The context pinpoints the interrelationships between different magnitudes of church life and the policies for growth and failure contingency planning. Each dimension and its mechanisms are crucial to the holistic operation of the church organization.

Core Components

Church Leadership and Indicators

Central to the retention framework, church leadership is a powerful force behind managing and engaging church members effectively. Leadership's role incorporates supervision, guidance, and support of the various scopes outlined in the model.

The model would be less effective if leaders failed to implement and monitor the system. Leadership plays a key role in ensuring growth. This includes but is unlimited to the following.

- *Attractive factors:* Ensuring attractive models that keep the church alive. This includes programs and church services that address the specific needs of the members about God.
- *Pastoral presence and development:* The presence and development of pastors are crucial to membership retention. This means that the pastor-member ratio should be adequately checked to ensure efficiency. Again, the professional development of pastors would ensure efficiency and excellent services.

Church Management: Church Involvement and Satisfaction

Church management is often confused with membership management. This kind of management also involves taking care of the members and every aspect of the church to result in growth. This dimension focuses on the experiences and satisfaction levels of church members with their involvement in church activities. It includes:

- a. **Survey Insights:** Feedback from new members regarding their initial impressions and experiences. Understanding reasons behind members leaving the church to address retention issues. Comprehensive surveys to gather data on overall member satisfaction and experiences within the church.
- b. **Feedback:** Continuous feedback from members to assess ongoing satisfaction and areas for improvement.
- c. **Personalized Pastoral Support:** Tailored pastoral care to meet individual members' spiritual and emotional needs.
- d. **Community engagement:** the church does not live in isolation from the community. The church should be able to engage with the community to foster a relationship that encourages mutual benefits without compromise.
- e. **Cultural Engagement:** Culture is very essential for church growth. Cultural dynamics and adaptations are vital for church growth.

Membership Management: Active Participation and Engagement

This is an effective process of managing and accounting for every church member. This dimension measures the level of active involvement of church members in various activities. It includes:

- a. **Engagement Metrics:** This metric includes measuring tools for church attendance, active participation, volunteer commitments, and active service involvement. These metrics should be measured regularly and effective assessments conducted to avoid fallout.
- b. **Active Participation:** The degree to which members are actively engaged in church events and initiatives.
- c. **Members' Involvement:** Overall engagement of members in church life, including participation in committees, groups, and events.
- d. **Volunteer Work:** The involvement of members in voluntary activities that support the church and its community.
- e. **Regular Attendance:** Consistency of members' attendance at church services and activities.
- f. **Membership Audit:** This is an effective way of accounting for members. These review exercises enable leadership to address membership decline issues and resolve them.

Membership Well-being: Socio-economic Awareness

This dimension assesses the awareness and understanding of socioeconomic factors among church members. It includes:

- a. **Economic Well-being:** The financial stability and well-being of church members.
- b. **Knowledge of Socioeconomic Status:** Awareness and understanding of the socioeconomic backgrounds and challenges faced by members. Growth also involves understanding the social issues, demographic representation,

economic dynamics, and employment patterns of members. Drawing efficient models to address these components is vital for growth.

- c. **Understanding Members' Educational Background:** Insights into the educational levels of members, which can inform church programs and support services.

Strategic Plans

Growth plan. Ensuring sustainable growth within the Moronou district requires a strategic approach that integrates key membership retention techniques. This section outlines essential components that will serve as a foundation for strengthening member engagement and fostering long-term stability within the church.

- a. **Outreach:** Strategies to attract new members and expand the church's reach within the community. This serves as the primary mission of the church to send the message to the ends of the world. It's also a means to increase the church membership
- b. **Organization and Reorganization:** Structuring and restructuring church activities and resources to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. The church's holistic growth (for example, financially, membership, etc.) calls for organization or re-organization. This is a core fundamental basis for the Adventist Church.
- c. **Effective Communication Plan:** Ensuring clear and effective communication within the church and with the community. It is vital to know the communication needs of the church members. This could enhance effective and adequate communication flow. This should also be communicated with suitable frequency and content, with a proper

communication strategy. The communication plan should also include effective monitoring and evaluation.

- Technology: should also play a key role in ensuring sustainable growth. In the case of the Adventist Church Management System (ACMS) would be an appropriate and effective tool for membership management and sustenance.
- d. Stewardship and Financial Management: Managing church resources responsibly and effectively to support its mission and activities. This characteristic is an obvious indicator of church growth. The church would need financial stability to function effectively. The church should be able to engage in systematic benevolence and proper financial management.
- e. Church Strategic Plan: Long-term planning to guide the church's growth and development.

Failure contingency plan. In the event that membership retention strategies do not yield the expected outcomes, it is crucial to have a well-defined contingency plan. This section highlights alternative measures designed to mitigate losses and reinforce church stability in challenging circumstances.

- a. Crisis Management Plan: Preparing for and responding to potential crises that may affect the church.
- b. Model Assessment and Evaluation: Regularly evaluating the effectiveness of the church's management and engagement models. This is the most effective way of adequately accounting for decline and growth patterns. It is also an effective way to check on the model for membership retention. Detecting declining indicators early calls for church review, membership

growth, and the model to solve the challenges. These reports and reviews could be random, quarterly, and yearly.

- c. Membership Follow-up: Strategies to follow up with members, particularly those who may be at risk of disengagement.
- d. Membership Training: Providing training and development opportunities for members to enhance their involvement and skills.
- e. Leadership Training: Developing the skills and capabilities of church leaders to effectively manage and guide the church.
- f. Follow-up System: Follow-up systems are also an effective way to check growth and accountability. Systems should be created to check membership and church management outcomes.
 - *Visitation* – is a primary and effective tool to check and care for members.
 - *Small group* – is also an effective way to foster membership growth and nurturing. Jethro's model suggests this basis.
- g. Organizational Learning: Promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement within the church organization.

Religious Engagement and Plan Implementation

The essence of church growth is rooted in the members' spirituality. Their relationship with God, each other, family, devotion, church attendance, and contribution to the gospel commission are good indicators for growth assessment. The goal is to understand how members feel about being Christians. The implementation of the church membership retention plan should encompass multi-dimensional and cyclical approaches to ensure sustainable growth.

The “Religious Engagement and Model Implementation” dimension integrates efforts to deepen members' religious involvement with systematic, strategic approaches to church management. Effective leadership is central to this process, ensuring that both the spiritual and administrative aspects of church life are nurtured and developed. Through careful planning, communication, and continuous evaluation, the church can enhance member satisfaction, participation, and overall well-being, fostering a robust and dynamic faith community.

Summary

The conceptual framework illustrated in the image integrates various dimensions of church life, emphasizing the central role of church leadership in managing and enhancing religious engagement, membership well-being, and church management. The framework also outlines strategic plans for growth and failure contingency, highlighting the church’s proactive approach to sustaining and improving its operations and member satisfaction.

This comprehensive approach ensures a holistic and resilient church community capable of adapting to challenges and opportunities.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The research used the quantitative approach to suggest a membership retention model for the Moronou Adventist Church. The study drew extrapolations from the biblical and theological foundations, specifically using Jethro's and member-control models to help in the suggested membership retention model. The literature discussions and analysis were used as inferences to tell the outcomes of the proposed model. The study model is also aimed at telling a proactive system that detects when there are declining outcomes or when the model is failing. This would then warrant proactive outcomes to avoid collapse or continued decline.

Conclusion

The study focused on drawing a membership retention model to assist the Moronou district in resolving a membership decline issue. The study determined that the outcomes should be multifaceted, holistic, continuous, and cyclical to implement successfully, a membership retention model. The study also suggested a system that detects when a decline occurs, or when the model seems not to be working. This was aimed at suggesting proactive outcomes to avoid collapse or continuous decline.

The exploratory factor analysis constructed 12 reliable variables that were used to project religious engagement and served as the fundamental basis for the construction of the retention model.

These variables were categorized under three latent variables: church involvement and satisfaction, active participation and engagement, and socioeconomic awareness, and used to predict religious engagement. Further analysis was done using Multiple Regression analysis. The results found that all three variables are outstanding predictors of religious engagement that foster retention. These served as the basis for the model.

Recommendations

The study has the following recommendations to support membership decline in the Moronou Adventist Church and any other churches that may be faced with the issue of declining membership.

1. The Moronou district adapts the membership retention model designed from continuous, wholistically, cyclical, and proactively principles to militate the membership decline issues.
2. This study outcome should be recommended to the conference in Cote d'Ivoire and the West-Central African Division to adapt support in sustaining the gains from propagating the everlasting gospel.
3. It should also be observed that the model is designed to be adaptive to dynamic realities. Where relevant reviews are detected as an outcome of these study's model, suggestions should be effectively implemented in the context of a continuous phenomenological approach. In this case, the joy of success should be seen as momentous and continuous.
4. To strengthen church leadership, the church must engage in continuous leadership development programs to prepare church leaders with modern management skills, pastoral care techniques, and crisis management

strategies. Also, the church must develop a succession plan to ensure continuity in leadership and minimize disruptions during transitions.

5. To enhance religious engagement and effectively implement the model, the church should engage in outreach activities, promote effective communication, and establish rigorous member feedback systems.
6. Church leadership must learn to foster organizational learning that promotes learning culture and knowledge sharing.
7. The membership retention model proposed by this study was designed considering extrapolations from the biblical foundation and literature review. It also used analysis from the questionnaire to suggest predictive variables that underpin the model outcomes. Another research that fully implements and tests this model would add more value to how this research findings could improve membership retention outcomes

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (Primarily for Survey)

Title: DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR MEMBERSHIP RETENTION IN THE DISTRICT OF MORONOU

My name is N'guessan Yao and I am a Master of Divinity student at Adventist University of Africa (AUA), Valley View University Extended Campus. This study is a project requirement for my master's degree completion. This research serves as a tool to raise awareness amongst our congregational members regarding the pressing issue of diminishing membership, and its effects on the Church.

Study Procedure: If you choose to participate, you will be asked to engage in filling out a questionnaire. The questionnaire will involve closed-ended questions related to the phenomenon under study. The questionnaire will face-to-face.

Confidentiality: All information collected during this study will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your personal identifying information will be kept confidential and will only be accessible to the researcher. To ensure anonymity, all data will be assigned a pseudonym. Your data will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher and the research Professor. Your personal identity will not be disclosed in any publications or presentations resulting from this study.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Your decision to participate or not will not have any impact on you, AUA or any other organization affiliated with this research.

Benefits and Risks: There are no risks involved in taking part in this exercise. You are free to end the survey if you feel any discomfort during the exercise. There is no direct benefit to taking part in this study. Your involvement, however, will help the researcher better understand the phenomenon under study.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact the researcher, N'guessan Yao at nguessanyao42@gmail.com.

Consent: By participating in this study, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided in this consent form. You voluntarily agree to participate in the study and give your consent for the survey and the use of your data for research purposes.

If you wish to have a copy of this informed consent form for your future reference, you may cut the above segment of this form or ask for a copy.

Title: DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR MEMBERSHIP RETENTION IN THE DISTRICT OF MORONOU

_____ Name of Participant	_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ N'guessan Yao	_____ Signature	_____ 05/12/2023
_____ Name of Principal Investigator	_____ Signature	_____ Date

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRES

RESEARCH TOPIC: DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR MEMBERSHIP
RETENTION IN THE DISTRICT OF MORONOU

Dear Participant,

This survey aims to find out your perspective on the causes of church membership declination in Moronou District. Before you begin to fill out the questionnaire, I would like to emphasize your rights and roles as a participant in this study: ((a) you are assured of your confidentiality (b) your participation is completely voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without any consequences, (c) the study will not inflict emotional or physical harm, and (d) there will be no rewards or compensation given to the participant in this study. If you agree with all these terms, kindly continue with the fill out of the form. Thank you for your time. Your participation is highly appreciated.

Section A: Demographic Profile

Kindly select or specify the appropriate response to the following items

1. What is your level of education?

- ☐ High school or less
- ☐ Some college or vocational training
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree

☐ Doctorate or equivalent

2. What is your current occupation?

☐ Student

☐ Employed full-time

☐ Employed part-time

☐ Self-employed

☐ Unemployed

☐ Retired

☐ Other (please specify): _____

3. What is your age group?

☐ Under 18

☐ 18 - 24

☐ 25 – 34

☐ 35 – 44

☐ 45 – 54

☐ 55 or over

4. What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

5. How long have you been associated with the Adventist Church in the Moronou District?

☐ Less than 1 year

☐ 1-5 years

☐ 6-10 years

☐ More than 10 year

Section B: Membership Declining

Instructions: The following questions pertain to the factors contributing to the decline in membership within the Moronou District. Please respond to each question using the following scale where applied: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly agree.

	Questions	Scale				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Spiritual Satisfaction and Community Engagement						
6	The church's ability to meet the spiritual needs of the community is satisfactory.					
7	The church's engagement with the local community is effective.					
8	The church's involvement in the local community is well-received					
9	Church leaders are responsive to the changing needs of the community.					
10	Religious diversity in the area contributes to the decline in Church membership.					
Socioeconomic Factors and Employment						
11	Economic development in the district has had a significant impact on church membership.					
12	Employment opportunities in the district influence church attendance.					
13	Income levels in the district affect church participation.					
14	Socioeconomic factors have a direct impact on church membership.					

15	Community involvement positively influences church attendance.					
Demographic Factors and Employment						
16	The age distribution of the population affects church membership.					
17	Demographic changes, such as population trends, are linked to church membership decline.					
18	Migration patterns have played a role in the decline of church membership.					
19	The church's efforts to adapt to changing demographics are noticeable.					
Data Sources and Outreach Effectiveness						
20	Historical data on church membership trends are valuable for understanding the decline.					
21	The church's outreach programs are effective in retaining members.					
22	Surveys and interviews with church members can provide valuable insights into membership decline.					
23	The church's programs align with the cultural values of the community.					
24	Local government records are a reliable source of demographic information.					
25	Data from academic studies on similar scenarios can provide insights into membership decline.					

Section C: Evangelistic Efforts and Religious Affiliation Shifts

Kindly respond to each question using the specified scale where applied.

Questions		Scale				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Evangelistic Efforts from Other Religious Groups						
26	I have been approached by other religious groups for evangelistic purposes.					
		Not at all	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often
27	If you have, how frequently have you been approached by other religious groups for evangelistic purposes?					

Religious Affiliations

28. What is your current religious affiliation

☐ Adventist Church

☐ Sunday Church

☐ Islam

☐ Other (please specify): _____

29. If you have left the Adventist Church, what was the main reason for leaving?

Select as many as applied

☐ Do not wish to answer

☐ Doctrinal differences

☐ Lack of community involvement

☐ Leadership issues

☐ Worship experience

- ☐ Personal life changes
- ☐ Joined another faith
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

30. If you have joined Sunday church, please specify which ones.

- ☐ N/A
- ☐ Specify: _____

31. If you have converted to Islam or traditional worship, what motivated this conversion?

- ☐ N/A
- ☐ Specify: _____

32. If you have disassociated from any religion, please explain the reasons behind your decision.

- ☐ Do not wish to answer
- ☐ No longer believe in any religion
- ☐ Personal reasons
- ☐ Had a negative experience with religion
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Motivation for Conversion

33. What were the primary motivations behind your decision to change your religious affiliation?

- ☐ Evangelistic efforts
- ☐ Doctrinal differences

☐Personal spiritual journey

☐Influence of friends or family

☐Other (please specify): _____

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
34	In your opinion, increased evangelistic efforts within the Adventist Church play a significant role in your religious affiliation change.					
35	Specific events or experiences within the Adventist Church influenced your decision to change your religious affiliation.					
36	Changes in your religious beliefs were a factor in your decision to change your religious affiliation.					
		Very Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive
37	Describe your overall experience with evangelistic efforts and religious affiliation changes.					

Section D: diverse effect of declining membership on the Adventist Church's development.

Kindly respond to each question using the following scale where applied: 1 =

Strongly disagree, 2 = moderately disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Moderately agree, 5 = Strongly agree.

	Questions	Scale				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Reasons for Joining the Adventist Church					
38	Spiritual beliefs and values					
39	Community involvement					
40	Family influence					
41	Worship experience					
42	Education and knowledge					
	Challenges Faced Within the Adventist Church					
43	I faced a lack of inclusivity.					
44	I faced doctrinal disagree.					
45	I faced a lack of transparency.					
46	I faced issues with communication.					
47	I was not dissatisfied with church programs.					
	Consequences of Declining Membership					
48	Reduced sense of community					
49	Impact on church programs and activities					
50	Impact on the church's financial health					
51	Effect on church's outreach and mission work					
52	Perceptions of the church's reputation in the community					

Section E: Retention Strategies

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Reasons for Leaving the Church						
53	Personal dissatisfaction with church services contributes to members leaving the church.					
54	Conflicts within the church community are driving members away.					
55	Member's life circumstances such as relocation affect their decision to leave the church.					
56	Lack of engagement or participation in church activities influences members to leave the church.					
57	Theological differences lead to members leaving the church.					
Retention Strategies						
58	Regular outreach and communication are effective in retaining church members.					
59	Offering diverse and engaging programs within the church helps in member retention.					
60	Personalized pastoral support and counseling services are important in retaining members over time.					
61	Community-building events and activities influence the success of church retention strategies.					
62	Addressing issues raised by departing members promptly contributes to retention efforts..					
Engagement Metrics						

63	Regular attendance at church services is indicative of a member's strong engagement with the church.					
64	Active participation in church activities is vital in assessing a member's level of engagement.					
65	Volunteer work within the church community reflects a member's commitment to the church.					
66	Member's active involvement in church committees and leadership roles influence their long-term commitment to the church.					
67	Member engagement positively impacts the overall health and vitality of the church community.					
Members Well-being and retention						
68	Knowing the socioeconomic status helps understand the retention challenges faced by church members.					
69	The economic well-being of the local community greatly influences the church retention of church members.					
70	Understanding the educational background of church members is vital in retention strategies.					
71	The affordability of church-related activities and services affects retention.					
72	Access to resources and support services within the community influence members' long-term commitment to the church.					
Members Surveys						

73	Member surveys are effective in collecting valuable information about members' experiences within the church.					
74	Members surveys can go a long way to providing insights into the motivations behind joining the church.					
75	Members surveys can go a long way to providing insights into the motivations behind leaving the church					
76	Members surveys help to create a welcoming and inclusive church environment.					
77	Members surveys help in identifying areas for improvement within the church community.					
78	Feedback gathered through member surveys is influential in shaping church policies and initiatives.					

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey.

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