

Communal Training in Spiritual-Economic Projects and the Growth of the Methodist Church in Kaaga Synod, Kenya

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Abstract

The physical and spiritual aspects of an individual in society are equally important, so the church emphasizes their training. Despite these efforts, most Methodist church members in Kenya live below the poverty line and cannot meet even basic needs, making it difficult for them to attend or afford training fees. The study examined the role of community-based training in spiritual and economic projects and its effect on the growth of the Methodist Church in Kaaga Synod, Kenya. It was based on resource-based theory and used a descriptive survey design, targeting 25 circuits within Kaaga Synod, where the church has historically received strong community support. The study involved 53 project managers and 196 project members, selected through purposive and simple random sampling, respectively. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed with descriptive statistics in SPSS version 24. A pre-test was also conducted in Nairobi Synod. Results showed that 77% of respondents strongly agreed that the church's creative engagement strategies attracted more members and increased attendance. However, 73% disagreed that there was a strategic plan to guide project implementation. The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.404$, $p < 0.000$) indicated a significant positive link between communal training and church growth. The study found that financial management courses were often left unfinished because members lacked financial literacy or expected compensation. Leadership resistance also hampered the training, with concerns about timing and priorities. The study recommended that church leaders strengthen sensitization programs to emphasize the importance of financial literacy. These programs should provide members with basic financial knowledge to prepare them before enrolling in courses, ultimately promoting both spiritual and economic growth within the church community.

Keywords: *Communal training, Spiritual-economic projects, Growth, Methodist Church in Kaaga Synod, Kenya*

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1.0 Introduction

A holistic society that values both the sacred and divine providence for the society's posterity is paramount, as stated in Genesis 1:26-31. God was specific that people should be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth, and subdue it. This would enable them to have dominion over every living thing, thereby lacking nothing to facilitate their worship of God. A church is not only a gathering where people meet to worship but also a haven for nourishment, both spiritually and economically, which promotes the church's overall growth (Wyk, 2017). It is a place where solutions should be derived, especially by basing every thought and conversation on the word of God. People attend church for various reasons, such as praying, singing, worshiping, listening to the word of God, and interacting with others to gain guidance for their lives (Kioko, 2020). The benefits that church members access during a training program vary greatly depending on the church's management and the projects initiated. These benefits range from material to non-material advantages. Studies have highlighted issues affecting church growth, especially those related to communal training in spiritual and economic projects.

In developed nations such as American states like Michigan, there has been a lack of training in most church-initiated projects, leading to poor management and project failures. In California, there has been Low Church leadership support for training programs, while in Canada, churches have had poor technical knowledge of investment education. In European churches, racism has caused division based on race, affecting the training offered. In Asia, a lack of market availability analysis could undermine the sustainability of church training programs. In

Japan, churches have unrealistic policies regarding training requirements and wealth inequality, where the rich access in-depth training while the poor receive only shallow trainings (Berkley Center for Religious, Peace and World Affairs [BCRPWA], 2017; Center for Religion and Civic Culture University of Southern California [CRCCUSC], 2017; European Methodist Council [EMC], 2020; Norwegian Church Aid [NCA], 2016).

In African nations such as Nigeria, the youth have been neglected in participating in church projects or being economically empowered due to a poor educational background. In Ghana, strict church policies have limited the training curriculum to only a few committed members. In South Africa, poor management of church financial resources has led to frequent embezzlement of training funds by church leaders. In Kenya, poor personal funds management has resulted in members being unable to pay basic training fees and high discrimination against the poor, who are often viewed as sinners or cursed by family, and thus are excluded from training (Karanu et al., 2020; Ndegwa et al., 2018; Omondi, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

The physical and spiritual aspects of an individual and society are equally important, which is why the church emphasizes their training. The presence of community training on spiritual and economic projects within a church requires consistency to uphold the highest ethical standards. Sustainability extends across various areas such as morality, integrity, honesty, and corporate social responsibility to promote the growth of the church.

Despite these initiatives, most of the Methodist Church's growth in Kenya remains slow. This is because many members live below the poverty

line and are unable to meet basic needs, which prevents them from attending or affording training fees (United Nations, 2020). Notably, there has been inadequate monitoring and evaluation of training program membership; embezzlement of training funds by church leaders; poor assessment of training needs in the community; and a lack of long-term business plans due to limited financial literacy among the trainers.

Failing to address poverty among most Methodist church members in Kenya can be harmful. This is because many of those living below the poverty line may have high rates of missing church services and training sessions (Kioko, 2020; Omondi, 2020). Additionally, Rick (2019) states that Satan uses poverty as a powerful tool to keep the world in bondage through lack of knowledge. Therefore, all believers are called to participate in eradicating poverty as part of living out the purpose for which they were called. Rick (2019) also notes that if believers can overcome poverty, they will be better equipped to meet many of their urgent needs, such as seeking information.

Past literature, like Nkansah, (2018) and Qayyum et al. (2019) failed to explore further how empowered leadership structures—allowing gifts of members to flourish—spirituality, active structures, worship, inspiration, loving relationships, holistic small groups, and evangelism are aimed at addressing both spiritual and physical needs of the people. Additionally, there have been few studies on the relationship between training management and conflicts in churches, leading to a decline in growth. Furthermore, very little has been documented about the impact of communal training in spiritual-economic projects and the growth of the Methodist Church in the Kaaga Synod, Kenya.

“The study concluded that communal training in spiritual-economic projects varied due to members lacking financial literacy, expected payment and resistance from some leaders”

Purpose of the Study

To investigate communal training in spiritual-economic projects and the growth of the Methodist Church in the Kaaga Synod, Kenya.

Research Question

What is the role of communal training in spiritual-economic programs on church growth in the MCK, Kaaga synod?

Theoretical Review

Resource-based theory was developed by Barney in 1991. This theory states that organizations possess various resources that, through them, gain a competitive advantage for long-term performance and survival. That is, whether public or private, organizations have treasured resources that, when invested in, lead to growth and help the organization secure a specific niche. This niche makes the organization highly competitive, which translates into improved performance.

Resource-based theory was used in this study because a church, which is a private religious organization, strives to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ and reach out to many people in both physical and spiritual need. Achieving this key objective requires resources such as money,

personal commitment from church members, and material support. Therefore, the church needs to use its resources wisely and effectively to gain a competitive advantage. Since the church does not receive any monetary support from the government, it maximizes offerings, tithes, and first fruits, among other types of giving, to ensure it can support its activities, such as meeting the community's needs.

Resource-based theory was criticized by Rumelt (1991) for assuming that, as long as an organization uses its internal resources, it will gain a competitive advantage. However, it does not account for market unpredictability and other external factors, which limit its applicability. This limitation will not affect the current study, since it has been proven over time that as long as a church manages its resources transparently and empowers the surrounding community through training, it consistently enjoys a competitive advantage compared to other churches that do not do this.

Empirical Review

According to United Methodist Insight (UMI, 2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has had largely negative effects on Methodist churches. In an online survey, UMI (2020) found that 59 percent of 958 respondents reported a shortage of funds, and 76 percent agreed that church giving was low. Thirty-four (34) percent of the respondents estimated that giving had declined by 40 percent. According to UMI (2020), although finances had decreased, most respondents had adjusted their lifestyles to fit their reduced budgets. Interestingly, almost 52 percent of respondents revealed that, despite everything not working, the Covid-19 pandemic had led them to improve their prayer time, read the Word of God more, and

reflect on the blessings they had previously received from God.

Furthermore, Qayyum et al. (2019) examined the relationships between religion and economic growth worldwide. The study aimed to explore how religion contributed to economic improvement, such as enhancing mental health, reducing poverty, and promoting ethics in daily life. However, Qayyum et al. (2019) analyzed data from 110 countries, including developed nations, and found that religion was significantly correlated with economic growth. This indicates that people's participation in religious activities greatly benefited them through stress reduction, wealth accumulation, lower poverty levels, and learning how to avoid legal issues by living guided by Biblical teachings.

In Africa, Amanze (2019) conducted an appraisal on how the church benefited disabled people in central and southern Africa. Disabled individuals were often treated inhumanely, as if they were second-class citizens. According to Amanze (2019), in the African context, disability was mostly associated with witchcraft or sin, leading to societal discrimination. The church thus served as a link and voice for disabled people and the community. Additionally, Amanze (2019) highlighted various church initiatives in central and southern Africa, including wheelchair donations, health coverage, interpreting services for the deaf, and support for scoliosis. Disabled and vulnerable groups, like those living with HIV/AIDS, were often the most neglected in many areas. This underscores the importance of this study, which aims to examine how projects of the Methodist Church of Kenya benefit vulnerable groups, especially the disabled and people living with HIV/AIDS in the society.

In Kenya, Kioko (2020) conducted a study on the role of the Redeemed Gospel Church (RGC) in the socio-economic development of the Makueni community. Therefore, Kioko (2020) sampled 30 RGC pastors in the area to determine that the RGC had primarily been involved in education, health, and agriculture. Regarding education, RGC churches in Nunguni, Makindu, and Mtito-Andei established primary schools. This benefited the community by creating jobs for teachers and non-teaching staff. Additionally, community members supplied various products, ranging from stationery to food, to the schools. In terms of healthcare, RGC was involved in praying for the sick, paying medical bills, and raising funds from various donors for those in need. Moreover, church members occasionally visited the sick, which helped them recover more quickly. Regarding agriculture, RGC provided seedlings, and an RGC church in Kathonzweni distributed food to the poor during droughts. However, Kioko (2020) noted that the RGC churches were governed by a single strategic plan from the headquarters, which resulted in a lack of customized strategies for satellite churches.

2.0 Methods and Methods

A descriptive survey research design was used in this study, targeting 25 circuits in the Kaaga Synod, Meru County. The Kaaga synod was

chosen because, besides having the largest total of 25 circuits, the Methodist church received a warmer reception in Meru, particularly in the Kaaga area where the first church was built, compared to other regions such as Mombasa (MCK, 2020). The respondents included 53 managers of church projects and 652 community project members who participate in and are registered members of the projects. The study used purposive sampling to select all 53 project leaders. It also selected 30 percent of the project members' population, totaling 196, through simple random sampling across various circuits. Data was collected using questionnaires, making the study quantitative. A pre-test was conducted at the Methodist church in Nairobi synod, involving 5 project leaders and 20 community project members. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and percentages. SPSS version 24 was used for analysis, and results were presented in tables.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Reliability Statistics

The study conducted a pre-test to assess whether the instruments were consistent in measurement. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Reliability Results

Instrument	Sampled	Cronbach's Alpha
Questionnaires	25	0.91

According to Table 1, the questionnaires answered by the project leaders and community project members had a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of 0.91. Therefore, it was clear that the questionnaires had a Cronbach's alpha above

0.7. According to Trizano and Alvarado (2016), Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.7 to 1 on the scale were considered reliable for use in the main study.

Response Rate

The study sampled fifty-three (53) church project leaders and one hundred ninety-six (196)

community project members who answered a questionnaire. The response rate is indicated in Table 2.

Table 2

Response Rate

Respondent	Sample Size	Response Rate	Percentage
Heads of church project	53	45	84%
Community project members	196	161	82%
Totals for questionnaires	249	206	83%

The results in Table 2 show that 45 (84%) of the heads of the church project and 161 (82%) of the community project members who answered the questionnaires participated. In total, 206 (83%) respondents completed the questionnaires. This indicates that the response rate was excellent (Mailu et al., 2021). The study was able to include a good number of respondents because the topic was easily relatable to their daily lives, both spiritually and economically.

Descriptive Statistics of Church Growth

Church growth was the study's dependent variable and included indicators such as sound doctrine, discipleship, biblical leadership, inspiring worship, accountability, stewardship, strong fellowship, and quality giving. It was measured using closed-ended questionnaires. The closed-ended questions were assessed using an Ordinal Likert scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagreed) to 5 (strongly agreed). Table 3 presents the results of the questionnaire.

Table 3

Results on Church Growth

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
N=206						
Assisting the needy through initiating various projects has increased the church membership	1(1%)	3(2%)	0(0%)	22(11%)	180(87%)	4.83
The church can comfortably fund evangelism missions	1(1%)	31(15%)	0(0%)	59(29%)	115(56%)	4.24
There is more time allocated to worship and the teaching of the word	97(47%)	103(50%)	0(0%)	6(3%)	0(0%)	2.97
The church members can do discipleship training within the community	2(1%)	3(2%)	0(0%)	23(36%)	178(86%)	4.81
Members have been able to sustain their livelihoods through engaging in church projects	0(0%)	35(17%)	0(0%)	85(41%)	86(42%)	4.08

According to Table 3, 180 (87%) respondents strongly agreed, with a mean of 4.83, that the church's efforts to assist the needy through various projects have increased the number of church members. The results indicate that the

Methodist church has taken the initiative to fight poverty among its members by establishing projects that provide employment opportunities, sponsorship, and training. These projects include teaching members how to maximize agricultural

activities such as buying fortified seeds to improve harvests; using artificial insemination on preferred cow breeds to boost milk and meat production; practicing organic farming to increase crop yields; and seeking markets for farm produce to earn extra income. Nababan (2017) similarly advocated that one way a church can help improve its congregation's economic well-being is through empowerment programs focused on savings, loan issuance, and training on various topics such as finances, business, and farming.

Furthermore, 178 (86%) respondents strongly agreed, with a mean score of 4.81 that church members are capable of conducting discipleship training within the community because they better understand its value as the church grows. This indicates that the church is operating under the dispensation of God's Grace, actively engaging in discipleship training to spread the message of Christ worldwide, as Jesus commanded in Luke 24:47-49 (NIV, 2011). The discipleship trainings typically offered within a church include proper interpretation of the Word of God, evangelism, prayer, and fasting. Nkansah-Obrempong (2018) found that, in addition to improving the livelihoods of community members, the church's primary goal is to ensure that all followers of Christ are fully redeemed and will inherit the kingdom of God someday. Thus, the core message of the church's mission is that Christ came into the world, became sin, died, and rose again on the third day. Anyone who believes this message and dedicates their life to Christ will not perish in eternal fire, since He is the only true way.

Therefore, based on the above findings, it is appropriate to note that the Methodist church has made significant efforts to improve the

livelihoods of its members through various projects and also to spread the Word of salvation to its congregation. Additionally, it is accurate to state that the church has equipped its members and the community through training in the correct doctrine of Jesus Christ, which is the church's main purpose. The church has also provided resources to enable these individuals to go out and share the message of salvation through various evangelical missions. Missionary work has been ongoing since time immemorial.

According to the results of Owino et al. (2017), church missionaries in Kaloleni District made a significant contribution to the spread of both Christianity and education in the area over 60 years, starting in 1890. Echoing the same sentiments as Owino et al. (2017) and Qayyum et al. (2020) argued that religion and economic development mainly occur simultaneously. Whenever true religion is preached, it should not only promote Christianity among community members but also guide them to work hard for their livelihoods. This means that spirituality and economic growth must complement each other for a holistic life.

Nevertheless, 103 (50%) respondents disagreed, with a mean of 2.97 that more time was allocated to worship and the teaching of the word. This indicated that the Methodist church had clear standing orders requiring Sunday services to follow a similar schedule and duration. However, it was noted that the MCK council of Kenya had not reviewed its Sunday service programs for a long time. As a result, most members felt their spiritual needs were not satisfied during the few minutes assigned to the services.

In the long run, according to Wyk (2017), interest in worship and genuine hunger for God's word ultimately lead to a faithless congregation. A

study by Wyk (2017) also found that in South Africa, churches experienced significant economic change but less societal reform. It was shocking to notice that most members, especially young people, attend church after sermons mainly to socialize and participate in economic forums. As a result, this led to the rise of prosperity preachers who focus more on earthly riches than on the teachings of God's word, prayer, and fasting. Wyk's (2017) recommendations suggest that the church should develop and regularly review its worship programs to devote more time to preaching and worship compared to other activities.

Communal Training in Spiritual-economic Projects and Church Growth

Communal training in spiritual-economic projects was the independent variable in the study and included indicators such as seminars, conferences, training sessions, general meetings, and financial management courses. It was measured using closed-ended questionnaires. The closed-ended questions were assessed using an Ordinal Likert scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Table 4 presents the results from the questionnaire.

Table 4
Results on Communal Training in Spiritual-economic Projects

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Church members who have been empowered are more cooperative in church functions and attend Sunday services	3(2%)	15(7%)	0(0%)	38(18%)	150(73%)	4.54
Creative ways the church has come up with have enticed the community to become full members, leading to an increase in church attendance.	0(0%)	19(9%)	3(2%)	26(13%)	158(77%)	4.57
The Methodist church has systems in place to conduct due diligence on areas where it establishes its projects.	4(2%)	36(18%)	0(0%)	49(24%)	117(57%)	4.16
There is a strategic plan in the church that guides the circuits on which projects to implement	98(48%)	52(25%)	1(1%)	45(22%)	10(5%)	2.67

According to Table 4.6, 158 (77%) respondents strongly agreed, with a mean of 4.57, that the creative methods the church used — such as educational scholarships, free medical check-ups, and food donations — encouraged the community to become full members of the church, leading to

increased church attendance. The results showed that the church's efforts were effective in attracting the community. This finding was also supported by Kioko (2020) who, found that the Redeemed Gospel Church Makueni supported the poor by funding their children's education,

leading to greater involvement in church activities and consistent attendance at services.

Furthermore, 150 (73%) respondents strongly agreed, with a mean of 4.54, that church members who had been empowered were more cooperative in church activities and attended Sunday services. This indicates that people came to church because of various needs and viewed it as a place of refuge and comfort. Therefore, when the church served as a refuge by providing spiritual and economic empowerment, it gained greater cooperation from members. A study by Pillay (2017) also supported the idea that the church acts as a catalyst for transformation and change by offering hope to help people face both current and future challenges in their lives.

What this meant is that, because the church is an agent of change, it had to help people advance both spiritually and economically. This was the only way the church could keep members engaged and responsive to various functions and services.

According to Rogers (2017), both faith and fortune must work together in the setup of religion to include everyone in society. When one is ignored, an imbalance of individual needs becomes apparent, leading to resistance in religious functions and services. For example, Rogers and Konieczny (2018) conducted a study to determine whether religion truly aimed to help people experiencing poverty while comparing nations in the Western and Southern regions of the world. According to Rogers and Konieczny (2018), regardless of religion, poor people in the West seem to benefit from religious programs because these programs balance both religion and economic empowerment. However, in Southern regions such as Brazil, Vietnam, India, and other nations, people experiencing poverty rarely received real help, as religion was overemphasized with less focus on economic empowerment. Instead,

they were often required to pray repeatedly, with little work. As a result, many became tired and resorted to crimes and unhealthy social practices such as prostitution to survive.

Nevertheless, 98 (48%) respondents strongly disagreed, and 52 (25%) disagreed, with a mean of 2.67, that there was a strategic plan in the church guiding the circuits on which projects to implement and the order in which they should be implemented. The results showed that the church had not restricted the branch churches' choice of projects. It was up to them to make independent decisions about what they wanted to pursue as a circuit. ACK Kenya also used the same approach. According to a report by the Anglican Church of Kenya (2016), Zimmerman Church had developed its strategic plan to guide it from 2016 to 2020, separate from the head church. This indicates that the churches understood they operated in different environments and with different people. Therefore, project plans for urban church branches could not be the same as those for rural areas. To reduce confusion, conflicts, and underperformance, each church was allowed to chart its own course for project suggestions and implementation.

However, there have been exemptions with the Catholic churches, whereby every project was initiated through the main church branch. For example, a report by the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at the University of Southern California (2017) noted that in Uganda, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's Catholic Sisters Initiative had origins dating back to Italy. Therefore, as was evident, the initiator of projects was entirely dependent on the mother branch church's constitution. Nevertheless, the respondents in the Methodist church case disagreed, stating that project control was not managed from the main circuit.

Additionally, the questionnaire asked respondents to identify various seminars designed to help church members with spiritual and economic projects. The respondents indicated that each group organized its own seminars, such as men's, women's, and youth seminars. The leaders of each group coordinated with church leadership to be given a day, likely with a speaker well-informed on issues affecting both the spiritual and economic aspects of their lives. For example, most recently, the youth group invited Robert Burale, a renowned preacher and businessman, to their annual youth conference to motivate them on how to serve God while also succeeding in their careers.

The findings by Junaedi and Waruwu (2020) revealed that the Jembran Bali had adopted a model that combined economic and spiritual aspects to empower the church. This model was developed following the church's observation that the village of Blimbingsari was evidently being engulfed by poverty, despite its keen interest in spiritual activities. Bringing the point closer home, Karanu et al. (2020) found out that the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Nyahururu Parish, had established a platform for reviewing church policies to facilitate economic transformation in the lives of the youth. This definitely attracted a large number of youths to attend church services since they understood the value the church brought to their spiritual and career lives.

The other question asked respondents to describe the challenges faced when implementing various community training projects, such as financial management courses. The challenges mentioned included a lack of funds, a lack of focus due to conflicts of interest among members, and resistance from some leaders. Regarding the lack of funds, it was noted that at times the church operated with a limited budget and strict guidelines for how to use

the funds, and failing to follow these guidelines often stalled projects. This was confirmed by findings from the European Methodist Council (2020). The mission, intended to be carried out in Europe, also operated under strict financial guidelines, which dictated how the program would run. These guidelines involved a list that the mission team used to reach out to the masses, which limited the opportunity for new developments during missionary activities.

Additionally, members did not prioritize completing the financial management courses because they either lacked financial literacy or expected payment for attendance at the end of the course. The same complaints were also voiced by Gates (2017) who, noted that faith-based institutions had many members with low financial literacy, highlighting the need for innovative practices and strategies to provide financial training. Some of the suggested strategies included offering financial management courses to help them learn the basics. Furthermore, an issue that hindered the proper implementation of the financial management course was resistance from some leaders. This was because the leaders felt that the timing of the implementation was wrong, as other matters needed priority. For example, leaders would prefer to feed hungry members or buy cows, goats, or chickens for low-income families. As a result, when new ideas diverged from their priorities, they resisted.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to identify ways in which the church leadership benefited from training and conferences on managing church projects. The benefits cited included gaining information or knowledge and building connections through interactions. The church leadership learned new ideas and information about management processes. For example, when church leaders were taught how to file taxes, they applied this knowledge

not only in project operations but also in their personal businesses. Additionally, when they learned about laws relevant to specific aspects of the project, they understood the potential losses the church could face if these laws were broken. The same sentiments were echoed by Kwemboi (2019) who, found that before women in the Salvation Army church were allowed to participate in village banking, their leaders had to undergo training on the laws governing public banking.

This was to help them understand the consequences of not surrendering a member’s savings to the owners upon request, as well as issues related to misappropriation and corruption of funds. Regarding the question at hand, the church leadership also built connections through interactions with trainers, organizers, corporate

leaders, other wealthy members, and fellow leaders in the training. These connections could prove useful after the training, when they might meet again or share more ideas during project discussions. For example, the church leaders could meet lawyers whom they could hire to serve as the church’s legal representatives in specific court cases.

Research Question on the Role of Communal Training in Spiritual and Economic Programs for Church Growth

The question about the role of communal training in spiritual-economic programs in church growth in the MCK Kaaga synod, Kenya, guided the study. The study conducted a Pearson Correlational Analysis and also directly asked the respondents. Table 5 shows the results of the Pearson Correlational Analysis.

Table 5
Pearson correlation results

		Communal Training	Church Growth
Communal Training	Pearson Correlation	1	.404**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	224	224
Church Growth	Pearson Correlation	.404**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	224	224

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 4.7, the Pearson correlation coefficient for communal training was $r = 0.404^{**}$ at the 99% significance level ($\alpha < 0.000$). Since the Pearson correlation coefficient was less than 1 and its significance level was below 0.05, the findings indicated that communal training initially had a positive and significant impact on church growth. Based on this, the study found that when community members received training, they gained knowledge, information, skills, and exposure that contributed to church growth. Specifically, when members were trained on managing finances, reducing debt, reinvesting profits, and paying taxes, they became more

innovative and established various sustainable businesses.

Additionally, when community members were trained, they gained various soft skills that helped them understand the procedures used and the technical know-how required to operate machines, knit, and handle plumbing and other tasks. These skills would improve their chances of getting employed or training others. Furthermore, the training also included exposure to different people, cultures, systems, and professionals. When properly utilized, the connections made could enable community

members to link up and form professional groups, giving them collective bargaining power to access government funds. A past study, such as Akanbi and Bayers (2017) found that by training its members in various income-generating activities, the church could act as a transformative agency that propels society toward new horizons of self-sustainability.

Summary of the Findings

The results revealed that 158 (77%) respondents strongly agreed with a mean of 4.57 that the creative approaches the church had adopted encouraged the community to become full members, leading to an increase in church attendance. Furthermore, 150 (73%) respondents strongly agreed with a mean of 4.54 that empowered church members were more cooperative during church activities and attended Sunday services. However, 98 (48%) respondents strongly disagreed, and 52 (25%) disagreed with a mean of 2.67 that there was a strategic plan guiding the church circuits on which projects to implement and their order. The Pearson correlation coefficient for the communal training was $r = 0.404^{**}$, with $\alpha < 0.000$ and a 99% significance level. Therefore, since the Pearson

correlation coefficient was less than 1 and its significance level was less than 0.05.

4.0 Conclusion

The conclusion of communal training in spiritual-economic projects varied, as members did not focus on completing the financial management courses because they either lacked financial literacy or expected payment for attendance at the end of the course. The study also found resistance from some leaders, who felt that the timing of the implementation of communal training activities was inappropriate, given other priorities.

5.0 Recommendations

The recommendations for communal training in spiritual-economic projects suggest that church leadership should increase awareness programs about the importance of financial management courses to boost members' interest. Additionally, the church should use these awareness programs to provide basic financial knowledge, ensuring members have a solid financial foundation before enrolling in the courses. These programs should also serve as a platform to inform members about the benefits, expectations, and what not to expect, such as payments after attending the course.

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