

“Just about right”: Contrasting Views of Local Church Efforts in South Korea, China, and the Ukraine

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Abstract

This presentation highlights data from the *2017 Church Member Survey* in South Korea, China, and the Ukraine. The analysis of over 3,300 members reveals statistically significant differences in the levels of satisfaction concerning the local church's efforts in evangelism, community involvement, and nurturing its members. In addition, differences surfaced regarding policy-setting on the local level.

Summary

Background and Literature

The Seventh-day Adventist Church now has a decades-long collection of world-wide data on a variety of behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs among church members and leadership. In one such study, Adventist church members reported relatively low levels of nurturing and discipling, witnessing, participating in missions, personal rich spiritual experience, transmission of Adventism across generations, and establishing an Adventist presence in the community (Institute of Church Ministry, 2002). In the 2006 survey, about 30% of respondents reported not experiencing the joy of salvation (Institute of Church Mission, 2006; Dudley, 2006). Thus, it is important to examine the perceptions of the SDA members world-wide regarding evangelism, community involvement, and nurturing its members (Kent, 2013; Hjarvard, 2016).

Purpose

This presentation will add to the body of knowledge by comparing how respondents from three different countries view their local church efforts in evangelism, community involvement, and nurturing. By highlighting similarities and differences in how respondents in different countries and cultural contexts view their local church's outreach, we hope to provide practical guidance to Church leaders as they seek to strengthen community outreach and congregational development.

Sample Strategy and Development

For the Korean and Ukraine samples, researchers used a multistage cluster sampling approach to obtain the data. The sample was stratified in two ways, (1) by union and (2) church size, to ensure representation from each strata. First, researchers obtained an updated list of churches

from each conference including the size of membership. Next, churches were identified as “large,” “medium” and “small.” The three sizes were defined by dividing the total membership into three equal segments. For each stratum, the number of churches sampled were proportional to the membership of each Union. The selected churches were determined by use of a random number generator to ensure that every church had a known and equal chance of being included in the initial sample.

Once selected, pastors of the identified churches were contacted for their consent to participate. Upon their agreement to participate, the printed surveys were sent to the pastor with explicit data collection instructions. The pastors provided information about the survey one week prior to data collection. Then, on the following Sabbath, the pastor gave the surveys to the church members. The pastor then took the collected surveys to the regular monthly pastoral meeting at the local conference. A person from the local union collected the surveys and arranged to have them entered online (SurveyMonkey.com) to be downloaded for data analysis.

The sample in the Chinese Union Mission used convenience-sampling methodology. Eight regional directors visited churches of various sizes across the union, and organized data collection gathering. After the meeting each of the eight directors entered the data online (encrypted password protected).

Findings

Researchers examined the respondents’ views of local church efforts in evangelism, community involvement, and nurturing members, and compared them across the three countries. Cross-tabulation analysis revealed statistically significant differences in each area with the South Korean respondents reporting those efforts consistently as “just about right.” In contrast, respondents from China and the Ukraine, reported that local church efforts needed to be increased across the board in evangelism, community involvement, and nurturing of members.

The presentation will conclude with cross-cultural comparisons to add insights into why this may be true.

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