Title: External and internal factors contributing to the church well-being of the East Bangladesh Mission

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Abstract:

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, which began its ministry in Bangladesh in 1906, has grown at a slow pace. Although the lay people and workers want the church to grow, the membership is only 33,837 in a nation of more than 150 million. This study seeks to identify the external and internal factors that affect the well-being of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in East Bangladesh Mission (EBM) and sets forth a possible model for quality growth.

This study discusses how Israelites’ resistance near the border of the Promised Land and the narratives of the church in Acts reveal both external and internal factors which hindered the well-being of both groups. Their resistance affected them in the social, cultural, political, and theological dimensions.

The study attempted to identify the external and internal factors by employing 6 independent variables: (a) the Muslim community, (b) economic factors, (c) political pressure, (d) lack of commitment, (e) lack of the knowledge of God, and (f) presence of nominality in the churches. It employed 10 moderating variables: (a) gender, (b) age, (c) civil status, (d) former religion, (e) position in the church, (f) Muslim friends, (g) highest degree, (h) occupation, (i) years of service, and (j) salary.
The study also employed 7 dimensions of church well-being: (a) passionate spirituality, (b) fruitful evangelism, (c) high impact worship, (d) mission and vision, (e) leadership development, (f) church planting, and (g) financial stewardship. Data was collected from the EBM churches. The perception of 380 respondents was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science.

The study reveals that 1 external factor (political pressure), 3 internal factors (lack of commitment, lack of the knowledge of God, and the presence of nominality), and 3 moderating factors (gender, former religion, and salary) are significant in explaining the 32% of variance that influence the church well-being of the EBM. This indicates that the internal factors in the churches influence the well-being much more than the external factors in EBM.

The findings of the study suggest a fundamental need of spiritual maturity through personal devotion and regular Bible reading among church members’ well-being. It also suggests that church members should devote themselves more to prayer, commit their lives to God, and become faithful in Christian lifestyle. The study recommends that the EBM church members long for the gift of the Holy Spirit in humility and prayer before God for a dynamic and rapid church growth.