

Effect of African Communal Values on Christian Discipleship in Mwanza City, Tanzania

Baraka Manjale Ngussa

Bugema University, Uganda

Abstract

This study examined how African community values influence Christian discipleship. Conducted in Mwanza City, Tanzania, it employed a descriptive-correlational design. A total of 288 participants took part. Data analysis involved percentages, mean scores, standard deviations, t-tests, ANOVA, and regression analysis. The findings showed that Seventh-day Adventist believers actively engaged in discipleship programs because their local churches provided them with clear follow-up and nurturing strategies. Although all age groups participated, those aged 46 to 65 had a notably higher participation rate than both younger and older groups. The study found that participation, fellowship, and sense of belonging significantly predicted engagement, with participation being the strongest predictor. These results led to the development of an African Communal Model for Effective Mission. The study also offers relevant mission strategies.

Keywords: African communal values, participation, fellowship, belonging, discipleship

Introduction

Discipleship closely relates with community. While Činčala says “discipleship carries different meanings depending on the context in which it is used,”¹ he also asserts that “the Triune God, who is by nature a communal, relational God helps us better understand how holistic small groups foster the growth and support of believers, encouraging them to bring others into God’s

¹ Petr Činčala, “Holistic Community: The Key to Real-life Discipleship,” *Pan-African Journal of Theology* 1, no. 1 (2022): 45.

family.” The communal aspect of discipleship is further evident in Jesus Christ’s command for believers to go and make disciples of others (Matt 28:19-20). According to Nichol, discipleship is the responsibility of every Christian.² Matthew’s gospel predicted a distinct community of believers in the contemporary church toward discipleship. Using the term Ekklesia (Church) twice in 16:18 and in 18:17, he considers Christians as a united community of believers in making disciples.³

The communal values concept in discipleship appears in Acts 2:42-46, where the Apostolic Christians were highly committed to living out the Christian teachings, breaking bread and fellowshiping together. The believers were in harmony and they shared their property. Having sold their belongings, they provided for those in need. Similarly, fellowship, sharing and participation exist in the African community. Freud described the Africans’ fellowship as “a public affair through eating and drinking together.”⁴ The author adds, “To eat and drink with someone.... is a symbol and confirmation of the social community.”⁵ Therefore, fellowship, participation, sharing, and belonging are biblically accepted African communal values that closely relate to discipleship. However, previous studies have not empirically examined the link between African communal values and discipleship.

A study by Činčala linked discipleship with community in a general sense.⁶ A few other studies linked discipleship to animistic worldviews, rather than to African communal values. For instance, Besha studied the dualistic view and its implications for

² “Go Ye” [Matt 28:19], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 5:557.

³ D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1984), 8:45.

⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), 141

⁵ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁶ Činčala, “Holistic Community: The Key to Real-life Discipleship,” 44-63.

discipleship.⁷ Bauer studied the importance of worldview change in the discipling process.⁸ On the other hand, Sanou addressed the challenges of discipleship in urban contexts.⁹ None of these studies attempted to link discipleship with communal values. In response, this study sought to establish the extent to which Adventist believers in an African context embrace African communal values and how these values relate to discipleship.

Like in the apostolic church, effective discipleship requires contemporary believers' engagement in fellowship, sharing and participation. These biblical attributes and African communal values may propel believers in the African context to fulfil the Great Commission of Jesus more effectively. Based on previous studies, a research gap remains for scholars in mission to establish the extent to which African communal values enhance Christian discipleship in the 21st century, given current trends of shifting values driven by north-to-south globalization.¹⁰ This situation may affect the African believers' potential for effective mission. Therefore, a question remains: to what extent do African Adventists uphold their communal values, which are also biblical and how do such values enhance their engagement in discipleship? In response, this study sought to establish believers' engagement in fellowship, participation, sharing, and belonging, and the relationship between these values and discipleship. The uniqueness of this study lies in the use of quantitative methods to establish relationships among the variables under investigation and to compare discipleship by gender and age. The study adds to scholars' and researchers'

⁷ Temesgen Besha, "Dualistic Worldviews: Implications for Discipleship," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 17, no. 2 (2021): 45, accessed 12 January 2024, <https://doi.org/10.32597/jams/vol17/iss2/6/>.

⁸ Bruce Bauer, "The Importance of Worldview Change in the Discipling Process," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 12, no. 2 (2016): 184, accessed 12 January 2024, <https://doi.org/10.32597/jams/vol12/iss2/16/>.

⁹ Boubakar Sanou, "Discipleship in Urban Contexts," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 15, no. 1 (2019): 169, accessed 12 January 2024, <https://doi.org/10.32597/jams/vol15/iss1/13/>.

¹⁰ Mary Stella C. Okolo, *African Literature as Political Philosophy: Africa in the New Millennium* (London: Zed Books, 2007), 150.

knowledge of the link between communal values and discipleship. The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do Adventist believers in Mwanza City participate in discipleship?
2. Is there a significant difference in discipleship among Adventist believers in Mwanza City, by gender and age?
3. Is there a significant relationship between discipleship and engagement in fellowship, participation, sharing and belonging?

Biblical Foundation of Community and Discipleship

This section addresses the biblical foundation for community and discipleship, drawing on insights from both the old and new testaments. The section further presents the concept of community and discipleship.

Communal Living in the Old Testament

The concept of community existed before the fall of humanity, particularly in the creation story. In the creation process, God stated that all he had made, and it was very good (Gen 1:31). According to Whybray, the statement is the “craftsman’s assessment of his own work, reporting something about his intention as well as his artistry.”¹¹ The statement indicates God’s perfect work of creation. However, much as God pronounced that the creation work was very good, he said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Gen 2:18). This assertion shows that much as God created man as perfect being, there was still a need for companionship. In Genesis 1:28, God required Adam and Eve to “Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it.” The procreation activity required two people of opposite gender. Therefore, God created Eve as a complimentary being to Adam. After that first marriage, the two couples started producing children. They gave birth to Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1-2). In Genesis

¹¹ R. N. Whybray, “Genesis,” *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 42.

5:1-4, Adam and Eve produced some other children, including Seth and several sons and daughters, whose names the Bible does not mention. Therefore, Adam and Eve constituted the first family, the smallest unit in society.

In the life of Cain and Abel, we see a sign of communal life, where Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” In the scenario, the spirit of togetherness appears even though Cain killed his younger brother in that journey. God expected communal life in the first pair of Adam’s offspring when he asked Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” (Gen 4:9). By pretending lack of awareness of Abel’s presence, Whybray has it that Cain “declines responsibility for his brother—a denial of family solidarity.”¹² God asked the same question to Adam immediately after the fall (Gen 3:9) when Adam and Eve had hidden from God’s presence. This is a sign that something had interfered God’s original plan to fellowship with man. Similarly, God asked Abraham, “where is your wife Sarah?” In response, Abraham demonstrated responsible feedback by indicating where his dear wife was, saying, “There in the tent” (Gen 18:9). This is a sign of communal living, where each member is aware of the affairs of others.

The story of Noah also indicates communal living trends, where God required Noah to enter into the ark with his whole family since He had found him righteous in the generation (Gen 1:7). In response, Noah entered into the ark not only with his immediate family, but also with his son’s wives. This is typical communal lifestyle in the name of kinship. Similarly, African people attach the greatest value to communal belonging through kinship, where each member feels a sense of belonging to respective kinships.¹³ According to Moreau, “Kinship is a subset of association built around marriage, biological progeny and extended biological relationships.”¹⁴ It focuses on biological connections through

¹² Ibid., 43.

¹³ A. Scott Moreau, *Contextualizing the Faith: A Holistic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 22

¹⁴ Ibid, 45.

marriage, lineage and inheritance, kinship roles and even ancestral obligations. Therefore, the African view of kinship existed long time before the flood in biblical history.

In the tower of the Babel story, we see some sort of communal living, where the whole world had one language and common speech. In that period, people said to each other, “Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly (Gen 11:3). In verse 4, the people decided to build a city with a tower that reaches to heaven to make a name and to escape God’s judgment. Much as this story portrays rebellion against God, it also features communal living in terms of unity and collaboration. However, this was a misdirected unity against God’s will, which required them to scatter and fill the earth (Gen 1:28). In response, the triune God collaboratively destroyed the plan. God said, “Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other” (Gen 11:7). This is a “triune God, who is by nature a communal, relational God.”¹⁵

The life of Abraham indicates communal living. In Genesis chapter 12, God told Abraham to leave his people and his father’s household and go to the land the Lord would show him. When Abraham left the land, Lot, his nephew went with him and all the possessions they had accumulated (verse 4). God promised to give Abraham and his offspring a land. This shows that God was concerned not only with Abraham but also with his offspring. When a conflict happened between the servants of Abraham and the servants of Lot, the two resolved the conflict amicably (verses 8-12). That is tolerance, which resembles African ways of resolving conflicts.¹⁶ When Abraham went to sacrifice his son, as per God’s command, Abraham did not go there with Isaak only. Instead, he went with servants (22:5). He left his servant and proceeded with Isaak when it was time to sacrifice his son. This shows that, much

¹⁵ Činčala, “Holistic Community: The Key to Real-life Discipleship,” 45.

¹⁶ John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1975), 102.

as communal living is important, there are times when one needs to stand alone to fulfill God's requirements.

Communal living appears in the life of Jacob as well in Genesis 29:1-14. When Jacob met strangers in Paddan Aram, he asked them, "My brothers, where are you from?" The strangers replied, "We are from Haran." Jacob asked, "Do you know Laban, Nahor's grandson?" They replied, "Yes we know him." The interaction continued until Jacob visited his uncle Laban, lived there for some years, and finally married Laban's two daughters. When Laban met Jacob for the first time, he embraced Jacob, kissed him and said, "You are my own flesh and blood." Therefore, the African worldview of treating strangers resembles the lifestyle of Old Testament patriarchs as depicted in the story of Jacob. In African culture, people similarly help strangers by offering hospitality. Mbiti argues that African communities engage in acts of kindness toward others. Those who disconnect from hospitality commit a moral evil.¹⁷ For instance, it is common for those travelling to stop and receive kindness from strangers. This lifestyle is at odds with contemporary individualistic ways of life, where people no longer greet strangers or ask for directions. Instead, they simply use Google map to find directions, having minimal interactions with strangers.

The rest of the Old Testament literature entails the communal worldview. In Exodus 25:8, for instance, God commanded Moses to make a sanctuary, which provided an opportunity for believers to come together not only to worship but also to fellowship with God. This shows that God is interested in communal living and fellowship. In Leviticus 19:15-18, there are guiding principles for peace and harmony in society. The passage forbids partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great. It also prohibits revenge and committing things that threaten another's life. In Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, the inspired pen says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him

¹⁷ Ibid., 177.

up.” This message shows the importance of depending on one another in the journey of life. It also provides a powerful lesson for contemporary Christians to help one another if one of the believers falls. Commenting on this verse, Nichol says, “Two workmen engaged in cooperative effort can often earn more than double the wage of a single person.”¹⁸

Communal Living in the New Testament

The New Testament is replete with examples of communal living. The testament provides specific guidelines on how Christians should relate to one another. These guidelines appear in both the Gospel narratives and the Epistles. In Matthew 18:20, for instance, Jesus said, “If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” This passage highlights the importance of unity among believers. Christians who come together in Jesus’ name are likely to experience twofold benefits: first, the opportunity for God to answer their prayers, and second, fellowship with one another and with God. In John 17, Jesus prayed for the unity of believers. In verse 11, the prayer of Jesus was, “Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one.” In John 15:12, Jesus gave a new commandment: “Love each other as I have loved you.” In verse 13, “Greater love has no one than this that he lays down his life for his friends.” He finalizes by saying, “You are my friends if you do what I command.” Commenting on this verse, Nichol holds that the new commandment enjoined the disciples to exercise the same love toward one another that Jesus had manifested toward them.¹⁹

In 1 Corinthians 1:10, Apostle Paul urges believers: “All of you agree with one another, so that there may be no division among you, and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.” In Romans 5:4-5, the Apostle says, “Just as each of us has one

¹⁸ “Two Are Better” [Eccl 4:9], *SDABC*, 3:1078.

¹⁹ “Greater Love” [John 15:13], *SDABC*, 5:1043.

body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many forms one body and each member belong to all the others.” In verse 16, the apostle calls upon members to live harmoniously. These pieces of advice reflect the African worldview, which holds that the lives of other community members depend on one another. In Philippians 2:3, the Apostle says, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility, consider others better than yourselves. Each one should look not only to your only interest, but also to the interest of others.”

Community and Discipleships

Community is an integral part of discipleship. These two aspects cannot be separated. The communal aspect of discipleship appears in the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, which states, “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20, KJV). Jesus gave this mandate using plural terms, which suggest togetherness in fulfilling the command. As the disciples fulfil the Great Commission together, the process involves three personalities of Godhood in the baptism of new converts.

Communal life in the apostolic church appears in Acts Chapter 2, where the apostolic believers continued in doctrine, fellowship and breaking of the bread together. On top of prayer, which was the apostle’s major concern, “the three new elements (teaching, fellowship and the breaking of bread) emerged in regular activities of the apostles.”²⁰ Therefore, it is not easy to separate the community from discipleship. Recognizing this, Cress argued that discipleship begins with one’s recognition of the call to make disciples and then moves into relationships with surrounding communities.²¹ The

²⁰ Loveday Alexander, “Acts,” *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1033.

²¹ James A. Cress, *You Can Keep Them If You Care: Helping New Members Stay on Board* (Oshawa, Canada: Pacific Press, 1984), 104

author further maintains that the relationship with the surrounding community is the first step in reaching those we want to make disciples for Christ. This view relates with the African community in which humans, as relational beings, cannot survive in isolation. The African view of relationships in community is reflected in the common African saying: one's existence depends on the presence of other members.²²

Participation is an essential requirement for successful discipleship. Participation as a moral value appears in ancient African philosophy, where people's lives depend on each other, and each member's participation is essential. This situation creates an avenue for Christian communities to embrace unity, participation, and belonging, regardless of one's status in the community. Likewise, discipleship requires believers' participation in mission. "It demands everything—the whole heart, the whole mind, and the whole of life, including one's time, energy and property—for the cause of love."²³

The concept of "discipleship" appears in the work of Winter and Hawthorne, who define disciples as those who have achieved an advanced level of maturity and spiritual formation.²⁴ The authors argue that following Christ entails a vital relationship rather than simply subscribing to a religious organization. It involves humble confession, repentance and obedience to Christ's command. This relates to the African community's worldview, in which Mbiti argues that God gave moral order to people so that they might live happily and in harmony with one another.²⁵ This harmony opens ways for people's interaction and sharing. The interactive and sharing atmosphere opens the way for African people to receive whatever fellow Africans have to share. Therefore, sharing good

²² Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 102.

²³ J. Heinrich Arnold, *Discipleship* (Robertsbridge, UK: Plough Publishing House, 2007), 64.

²⁴ Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Publishing, 2012), 52.

²⁵ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 129.

news to make Disciples of Christ is more successful in African communities, where people are open to receiving from community members.

According to Ndaruhekeye, the word ‘discipleship’ implies intimate relationship and total commitment to God and to fellow members.²⁶ It is important to note that the African community requires a mutual relationship with God and with fellow human beings. The nature of African people is argued to depend on the idea that harmony emerges from good relationships among people and between people and God.²⁷ In the Christian viewpoint, the relationship comes as the result of upholding Christian teachings and by walking in spirit (Gal 5:16). This relationship helps followers of Christ to grow constantly in the knowledge of Jesus into maturity (II Peter 3:18). It also propels disciples to share what they learned,²⁸ thus attracting others to experience, believe and share with others in turn (2 Tim 2:2).

The disciples’ relationship grew through participation in teachings, fellowship, breaking bread together, and prayer. Furthermore, they stayed together as a community of believers and met in the temple for worship. As a result, the Holy Spirit filled them, and the number of believers grew tremendously (Acts 2:42-47). This shows that community-based discipleship yields better results in evangelism. Therefore, local churches in contemporary times ought to imitate the apostles’ approach of fellowshipping, eating together, and praying together to achieve significant results in evangelism.

²⁶ Isacka Vitus Ndaruhekeye, “Discipleship in Three Dimensions: Implications for Home, School and Church as Learning Institutions,” *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences* 2, no. 1 (2021): 54, accessed 23 January 2024, <https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2021v02i01.0065>.

²⁷ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 136.

²⁸ Činčala, “Holistic Community: The Key to Real-life Discipleship,” 44-63.

The word “discipleship” is distinct from the word “Christianity.” It is more than simply being a follower of Jesus Christ. According to Henderson, disciples emerge as companions and collaborators in mission.²⁹ Disciples are active participants in Christ’s mission, not just confessing to be followers of Christ. Disciples should emulate Christ’s own messianic agenda. They should not simply claim to be followers of Jesus; they should do what Christ did. What then did Jesus do? The answer to this question appears in Luke 4: 18, where Jesus declared: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to declare the year of the Lord’s favor.” Therefore, disciples of Jesus must be actively involved in preaching good news and declaring the year of the Lord’s favor to the captives.

A committed Christian must be a disciple of Christ³⁰ who fulfils the great commission of Jesus Christ, to go and teach people, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things which Christ commanded. In response, the disciple of Christ must be willing to go and mingle with people in their communities, preparing others to join the company of believers. While the disciple of Christ must seek to do the will of Christ and to promote the cause of Christ,³¹ the precise will of Christ is to go and teach nations, preparing them to be Disciples of Christ. Therefore, mingling with people in a typical African community is a powerful avenue for sharing the gospel.

²⁹ Suzanne Watts Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 18.

³⁰ Dallas Wilard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins e-book, 2006), 4.

³¹ Winter and Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 443.

Methodology

Research Design

The study used a descriptive-correlational design to examine believers' participation in discipleship, accounting for their demographics and the relationship between communal African values and discipleship. Descriptive research describes characteristics of objects, people, groups, organizations or environments. It attempts to "paint a picture" of a given situation by addressing who, what, when, where and how questions. This study described the extent to which discipleship takes place among Adventist believers in Mwanza City. The correlation aspect, on the other hand, is a quantitative aspect that seeks to establish existing relationships between two or more variables.

Description of the Study Area

According to the Office of Archives, Statistics and Research, Mwanza is the Headquarters of South Nyanza Conference (SNC), one of the six Church entities (Fields and Conferences) that constitute the Northern Tanzania Union Conference (NTUC) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.³² SNC is one of the most productive areas in NTUC for evangelism, in terms of the number of people who receive the gospel and are baptized. Evangelistic productivity in SNC is evident in the recent Net Event, which took place in Karartu Town in 2022 for three weeks and reached 11,995 people from SNC. A year later, in a similar event, 7,468 souls from SNC received the gospel through baptism.

Population and Sampling

An Interview with the South Nyanza Conference Personal Ministries Director revealed that Mwanza City has 33 local

³² Office of Archives, Statistics and Research, 2024.

districts.³³ Therefore, the study took place in the city, with 33 church districts of which six constituted the actual population. The six districts had 1,410 members who regularly attend Sabbath worship services. Based on the Krejcie-Morgan and Cohen statistical formulas³⁴ and using simple and systematic sampling procedures, the study selected 306 members as the sample, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Population and Sampling

District	Churches	Sampled Church	Population of Sampled church	% of Sample	Sample
Shamaliwa	4	Shamaliwa	300	21.3	65
Nyamanoro	6	Nyamanoro	250	17.7	54
Kishiri	5	Semba	110	7.8	24
Kapripoint	3	Kapripoint	83	5.9	18
Mabatini	5	Mabatini	600	42.5	130
Butimba	4	Mkuyuni	67	4.8	15
Total	27	6	1410	100	306

Research Instruments

Given that this study was quantitative, the closed-ended questionnaire was the only data source. A closed ended questionnaire provides predetermined options for respondents to choose from to express their opinions and perceptions. Each of the items in the questionnaire had four options for respondents to tick: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4)

Validity and Reliability

The researcher ensured validity by aligning each research question with a specific section in the questionnaire. Three theology and mission experts verified the questionnaire items. Additionally, a pilot study was conducted at a local Mwanza City church not included in the six sampled churches, with 40 randomly selected members completing the questionnaire. Table 2 displays Cronbach’s

³³ Interview with the South Nyanza Conference Personal Ministries Director took place on 9th April 2024 in his office

³⁴ Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion, and Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*, 5th ed. New York: Routledge, 2000), 94.

Alpha values from .772 to .860, demonstrating acceptable internal consistency and reliability.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Discipleship	10	.795	Reliable
Participation	8	.771	Reliable
Belonging	7	.860	Reliable
Fellowship	7	.859	Reliable
Unity and sharing	8	.772	Reliable

Data Analysis

The study analyzed the questionnaire data using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages, mean scores and standard deviation. The interpretation of the mean scores was as follows: 1.00-1.49=strongly disagree, 1.50-2.49=disagree, 2.50-3.49= agree, and 3.50- 4.00 = strongly agree as reflected in Table 3. The inferential statistics included t-test and regression analysis.

Ethical Considerations

This study used several strategies to address ethical issues. The researcher ensured that each participant in the data collection process voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. The study maintained high anonymity and confidentiality as none of the respondents indicated their names. This study was approved by the Adventist University of Africa Institutional Scientific Ethics Research Committee (approval no. AUA/ISERC 18/4/2024) on 1st May 2024.

Results and Discussion

This section covers data analysis and the presentation of findings. It also offers an interpretation of the results in relation to existing literature. The results are organized into two categories: first, the

demographic characteristics of respondents; second, the findings related to the guiding research questions.

Demographics of Respondents

The analysis of the data begins with the demographic characteristics of respondents in terms of affiliated churches, gender and age. Of the 306 expected sample, only 288 returned completed questionnaires, yielding a response rate of 94.11%. In terms of gender, male respondents were 131 (48.9%) while female respondents were 137 (51.1%). Participants aged 18 to 25 numbered 62 (23.1%), while those aged 26 to 35 numbered 64 (23.9%). Those aged 36 to 45 were 63 (23.5%), while those aged 46 to 65 were 56 (20.5%). Finally, those aged 66 and above accounted for 23 (8.6%). Therefore, young people (18-35 years), who constituted 47% of the sample, were the largest group. This trend is similar to the worldwide Adventist population, where young people aged 35 and below constitute 51%.³⁵

Research Question 1: To what extent did Adventist believers in Mwanza City participate in discipleship?

This research question called for investigation into the members' participation in discipleship. The demand stemmed from the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, which required believers to make disciples of Jesus Christ. In response, Table 3 shows an overall mean score of 3.09, which falls within the agreement zone, indicating that the member participated in discipleship. The fact that members did not strongly agree with, but simply agreed to, all the statements in the table shows that they participated in church programs to some extent.

Members' participation in discipleship is shown in the specific items in Table 3. For example, the local churches trained and

³⁵ Seventh-day Adventist Church, "Office of Archives, Statistics and Research," 2024.

equipped members for discipleship. Additionally, the local churches had clear follow-up and nurturing strategies.

Table 3. Discipleship in Local Churches

Participation in Discipleship Activities	Mean	Mean Interpretation	Std. Dev.
Local church trains and equips members for discipleship.	3.46	Agree	.69
Local church has clear follow-up and nurturing strategies.	3.34	Agree	.76
Members participate in family prayers on daily basis.	3.32	Agree	.75
Church members participate in public evangelism activities.	3.32	Agree	.75
Members dedicate time for daily personal prayer and meditation.	3.21	Agree	.69
Members spend time reading the bible and spiritual books daily.	3.07	Agree	.82
Members participate in distributing Christian books and magazines.	2.85	Agree	.87
Members spend time visiting non-believers for evangelism	2.76	Agree	.90
New converts joined the church through members' personal efforts.	2.76	Agree	.86
Members conduct bible studies to non-believing neighbors.	2.71	Agree	.90
Overall Results	3.09	Agree	.68

As a result, discipleship characterized members' lifestyle. Specific aspects of members' discipleship include family and personal prayers, public evangelism, commitment to Bible study, distribution of Christian literature, and visiting non-believers for evangelism. Therefore, Adventist believers' participation in discipleship existed. A Sabbath School working tool commends the established members' participation in mission in that, "Participation is vital to understanding, spiritual growth and outreach."³⁶ Through active participation, members feel free to share their life experiences,

³⁶ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Sabbath School Handbook: Guidelines for Sabbath School Personnel* (Berrien Springs, MI: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Sabbath School/ Personal Ministries Department, 2016), 2.

joys, and burdens. The more they know about the circumstances that shaped the lives of fellow members, the more they understand and love them and are encouraged to support one another.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in discipleship by Adventist believers in Mwanza City, according to gender and age?

Having established the rate of members’ participation in discipleship, the second research question sought to identify differences in discipleship among believers by gender and age.

Table 4 shows the mean scores for members’ discipleship by gender. The Table indicates the mean score of 3.12 for male believers and 3.07 for female believers. Both scores range in the agreement zone (2.50-3.49), suggesting that both genders were equally active in discipleship.

Table 4. Difference in Members’ Discipleship by Gender

	What is your gender?	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Discipleship	Male	131	3.12	.50	.04392
	Female	137	3.07	.58	.04966

Table 5 indicates the p-value, which determines the significance of potential differences. It shows the p-value of .435, which is greater than the critical value (.05), indicating that the difference is not significant.

Table 5. Independent Sample Test for Discipleship by Gender

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper
Discipleship	Equal variances assumed	1.043	.308	.781	266	.435	.05195	.06651	-.07900 .18290
	Equal variances not assumed			.784	263.391	.434	.05195	.06629	-.07858 .18249

Discipleship According to Age

The third research question called for testing of the following null hypothesis: *There is no significant difference in discipleship by Adventist believers in Mwanza City, according to age.* Since age distribution appears in multiple options, the use of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was essential in determining possible differences in discipleship by age groups as appears in Tables 6, 7 and 8. The table shows the mean scores for various age groups, ranging from 2.50 to 3.50, indicating that all age groups were active in discipleship. However, there were some variations in the mean scores. While the age group of 46 to 65 had the highest mean score of 3.3357, the age group of 18 to 25 had the lowest mean score, suggesting that the 46 to 65 age group may be more effective in discipleship.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for Discipleship by Age Groups

Age Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
18 to 25	62	2.9130	.47534	.06037	2.7923	3.0337	1.00	3.90
26-35	64	2.9945	.51005	.06376	2.8671	3.1219	1.60	4.00
36-45	63	3.1216	.62226	.07840	2.9649	3.2783	1.00	4.00
46-65	56	3.3357	.53192	.07108	3.1932	3.4781	1.50	4.00
66 and above	23	3.1762	.37520	.07823	3.0140	3.3385	2.50	3.78
Total	268	3.0924	.54387	.03322	3.0270	3.1578	1.00	4.00

Table 7. Analysis of Variance for Discipleship by Age Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.138	4	1.535	5.541	.000
Within Groups	72.838	263	.277		
Total	78.976	267			

Table 8. Multiple Comparison of Discipleship by Age Groups (Post Hoc Test)

(I) Age groups	(J) Age Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
18 to 25	26-35	-.08154	.09378	.385	-.2662	.1031
	36-45	-.20866*	.09414	.028	-.3940	-.0233
	46-65	-.42268*	.09702	.000	-.6137	-.2317
	66 and above	-.26323*	.12848	.041	-.5162	-.0102
26-35	18 to 25	.08154	.09378	.385	-.1031	.2662
	36-45	-.12712	.09340	.175	-.3110	.0568
	46-65	-.34115*	.09630	.000	-.5308	-.1515
	66 and above	-.18169	.12794	.157	-.4336	.0702
36-45	18 to 25	.20866*	.09414	.028	.0233	.3940
	26-35	.12712	.09340	.175	-.0568	.3110
	46-65	-.21403*	.09665	.028	-.4043	-.0237
	66 and above	-.05457	.12821	.671	-.3070	.1979
46-65	18 to 25	.42268*	.09702	.000	.2317	.6137
	26-35	.34115*	.09630	.000	.1515	.5308
	36-45	.21403*	.09665	.028	.0237	.4043
	66 and above	.15946	.13033	.222	-.0972	.4161
66 and above	18 to 25	.26323*	.12848	.041	.0102	.5162
	26-35	.18169	.12794	.157	-.0702	.4336
	36-45	.05457	.12821	.671	-.1979	.3070
	46-65	-.15946	.13033	.222	-.4161	.0972

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

In Table 7, the p-value of .000 is smaller than the critical value (.05), indicating significant differences in discipleship among Adventist believers in Mwanza City across age groups. The Post Hoc test in Table 8 indicates significant differences in discipleship by age group.

For instance, the p-value of .028 indicates a significant difference in discipleship between the age group 18 to 25 (mean score 2.9130) and the age group 36 to 45 (mean score 3.1216). Likewise, the p-value of .000 indicates a significant difference in discipleship between the age group 18 to 25 (score of 2.9130) and the age group 46 to 65 (mean score of 3.3357). The p-value of .000 indicates a significant difference in discipleship between the age group 26 to

35 (mean score 2.9945) and the age group 46 to 65 (mean score 3.3357).

The increase in age positively affected discipleship as members moved from 18 to 65. However, the age of 65 marked the beginning of a decline in discipleship. This suggests that members aged 65 and beyond were no longer active in discipleship compared to their counterparts aged 36 to 65. Therefore, the most successful age range for discipleship in this study was 36 to 65.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between discipleship and engagement in fellowship, participation, sharing and belonging?

This research question sought to establish the relationship between discipleship and Adventist members' engagement in fellowship, participation, sharing and belonging by employing regression analysis, as shown in Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12.

Table 9. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.679 ^a	.461	.459	.39564
2	.709 ^b	.503	.500	.38048
3	.719 ^c	.517	.511	.37599

a. Predictors: (Constant), Participation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Participation, Fellowship

c. Predictors: (Constant), Participation, Fellowship, Belonging

Table 10. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	35.328	1	35.328	225.694	.000 ^b
	Residual	41.324	264	.157		
	Total	76.653	265			
2	Regression	38.579	2	19.290	133.249	.000 ^c
	Residual	38.073	263	.145		
	Total	76.653	265			
3	Regression	39.614	3	13.205	93.406	.000 ^d
	Residual	37.039	262	.141		
	Total	76.653	265			

a. Dependent Variable: Discipleship
b. Predictors: (Constant), Participation
c. Predictors: (Constant), Participation, Fellowship
d. Predictors: (Constant), Participation, Fellowship, Belonging

The analysis indicates that three independent variables (participation, fellowship and belonging) are significant predictors of discipleship. The multiple correlation coefficient (the relationship between discipleship and the three independent variables) is .719. The coefficient of multiple determination is .511, which is interpreted as 51.1% of the variance in discipleship is accounted for by participation, fellowship and belonging.

Table 11. Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	.882	.149		5.900	.000
	Participation	.675	.045	.679	15.023	.000
2	(Constant)	.810	.144		5.609	.000
	Participation	.536	.052	.540	10.297	.000
	Fellowship	.195	.041	.248	4.739	.000
3	(Constant)	.598	.163		3.672	.000
	Participation	.455	.060	.458	7.644	.000
	Fellowship	.167	.042	.213	3.980	.000
	Belonging	.159	.059	.157	2.705	.007

a. Dependent Variable: Discipleship

Table 12. Excluded Variables^a

Model		Beta In	T	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics
						Tolerance
1	Belonging	.214b	3.701	.000	.223	.582
	Fellowship	.248b	4.739	.000	.280	.687
	Unity and sharing	.154b	3.133	.002	.190	.821
2	Belonging	.157c	2.705	.007	.165	.547
	Unity and sharing	.078c	1.505	.134	.093	.701
3	Unity and sharing	.044d	.816	.415	.050	.649

a. Dependent Variable: Discipleship

b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Participation

c. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Participation, Fellowship

d. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Participation, Fellowship, Belonging

The results of the regression, using the stepwise method, indicate that the model explained 51.1% of the variance and was a significant predictor of discipleship. This means that the remaining 48.9% for discipleship is accounted for by factors other than participation, fellowship, and belonging. Participation accounted for 45.9%, fellowship for 4.1%, and belonging for 1.1% of the variance in discipleship. Therefore, participation was the most significant factor in determining effective discipleship in Mwanza City.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study came up with the following conclusions:

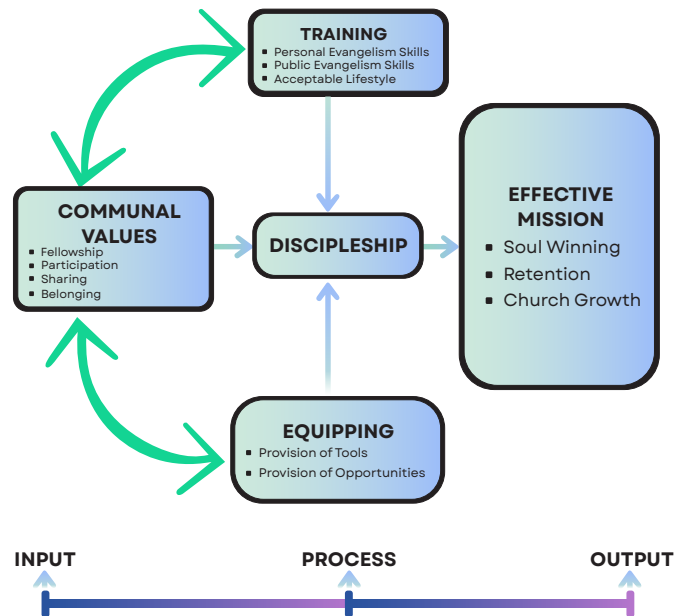
1. Adventist believers actively participated in discipleship programs through family and personal prayers, public and personal evangelism, and the distribution of Christian literature. Their engagement emerged from their local churches' training and equipping them with clear follow-up and nurturing strategies.

- 2. Participants were from various age groups. However, the 46- to 65-year-old age group registered a significantly higher participation rate than their younger and older counterparts. Likewise, the 36 to 45 age group outperformed the 18 to 25 age group in discipleship. Therefore, age positively affected discipleship engagement as members moved from 18 to 65. However, the age of 65 marked a decline in discipleship, as members over this age were no longer active.
- 3. While participation, fellowship, and belonging significantly predicted members’ engagement in discipleship, participation was the most significant predictor.

African Communal Model for Discipleship

The study’s conclusions enabled the researcher to develop the African Communal Model for discipleship (Figure 1). The model has three sections: input, process, and output.

Figure 1. Model for Effective Mission



Input

Under the input, there are four independent variables: fellowship, participation, sharing, and belonging. These are necessary components in local churches. They are apostolic values, which are also African communal values. The four factors positively affect discipleship, as revealed in the study's findings.

Process

In the process, discipleship is at the center and depends on communal values. Effective discipleship also depends on training (providing the necessary skills to church members) and equipping (providing materials such as trucks, books, and other resources for evangelism). Therefore, effective discipleship depends on communal values, training and equipping.

Output

The final stage is the output. This is where enhanced discipleship leads to an effective mission in soul winning, retention, and subsequent church growth as presented in Figure 1.

Proposed Mission Strategies

There is a need for Seventh-day Adventist local churches in Mwanza City to provide opportunities for members to fellowship by eating together after worship services and through Sabbath School units. The fellowship will increase unity among the believers and strengthen members' collaboration in discipleship.

There is a need to strengthen Sabbath School programs, since attractive programs may propel members' effective learning of God's word and its application in discipleship endeavors.

There is a need for local churches in Mwanza City to strengthen the training and equipping of members for discipleship. The training should cover personal evangelistic strategies to increase members' engagement in evangelism.

There is a need for local churches in Mwanza City to provide opportunities for members' participation, fellowship, and belonging programs, since these variables play a significant role in discipleship engagement.

Funding Statement

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Conflicts of Interest

None