

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Religious Outreach According to Seventh-day Adventist Principles among Undergraduate Students at Asia-Pacific International University

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Abstract

The objective of this research study was to analyze confirmatory factors of religious outreach according to Seventh-day Adventist principles among undergraduate students at Asia-Pacific International University by survey research. The sample was comprised of 567 Seventh-day Adventist undergraduate students studying in the second semester of the 2015 academic year. The members of the sample were selected by judgmental sampling, and the data were collected by using an instrument comprised of items that used a six-point rating scale and had a reliability level of 0.883. In addition, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data, and LISREL was used to confirm and analyze the factors.

The research results showed that religious outreach according to Seventh-day Adventist principles is consistent with the empirical data after adjusting the model. The factor loading range for each question was between 0.64 to 0.84, and religious outreach practice according to Seventh-day Adventist principles was conveyed by speech, by writing, and by role modeling.

Keywords: *Religious outreach, Religious outreach according to Seventh-day Adventist principles, Seventh-day Adventists*

Background and Significance of the Problem

Religion is regarded as an important cultural inheritance of mankind. Reverence for religion is treasured in the mind and the behavior, and plays a significant role in human life (Vanindananda, 1993). It helps to regulate proper behavior, set norms of social conduct for individuals, families, and societies, and determine forms of human expression. Religion is part of culture and society that affects people's faith, values, and ways of life (Charuchinda, 2003) Furthermore, religion plays a role in social cohesion and bringing about unity (Ramitanont, 1984).

Though the national religion of Thailand is Buddhism, people may choose to observe any religion. This has resulted in Thai people professing many religions today. Currently, there are five religions certified by the Thai government, namely Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Brahmanism-Hinduism, and Sikhism (Department of Religious Affairs, 2005). Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the 1997 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, Chapter 5, Section 73, which states that "the State must provide patronage and protection for Buddhism and other religions, promoting mutual understanding and reconciliation among all religions. It also supports the use of religious principles to develop morality and improve the quality of life" (Sriworrakul, 2004, p.1). Religion is considered an important institution for national security, because it is a core element in nurturing the development of good people who are moral and ethical and in building a quality society.

Therefore, the Thai government has clearly prioritized promotion of religious work and the moral and ethical development of the people (Department of Religion Affairs, 2005). At the same time, religion has also played a role in educational institutions. This can be seen from Thai education in the past, which was carried out at the temple, with schools later established inside temple compounds. Muslim students studied at mosques where religious schools were later established and referred to as 'Pondok' or Madrasa schools. Centuries ago when Christian bishops came to evangelize in Thailand, they established church schools or convents.

Christianity has played a significant role in supporting Thai educational institutions at various levels. There are many higher education institutions supported by churches. The focus in such schools is on religious outreach alongside education. For example, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a religious organization which has a mission to teach religion along with education from the early childhood to the tertiary level. It established and operates Asia-Pacific International University as a higher educational institution in Southeast Asia under the Christian Medical Foundation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Thailand and the Office of the Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education. It offers undergraduate and master degree programs in Thai and English on 2 campuses: the Muak Lek Campus in Muak Lek District, Saraburi Province, and the Bangkok Campus.

The university offers education in accordance with the philosophy of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its religious principles that guide the learners to become noble, skillful, and happy people in harmony with the intent of the National Education Act. However, some Seventh-day Adventist students neglect proclamation of their religion, which affects both themselves and the church in many ways. An important part of being a Seventh-day Adventist Christian is telling people about God. A survey of relevant documents and research studies revealed that there was a lack of study regarding religious proclamation in accordance with Seventh-day Adventist principles. It also found that Seventh-day Adventist principles are important variables that need further study.

Research Objectives

1. To create a tool for measuring religious outreach according to Seventh-day Adventist principles of undergraduate students at Asia-Pacific International University.
2. To analyze and confirm the factors of religious outreach according to Seventh-day Adventist principles of undergraduate students at Asia-Pacific International University.

Definition of Terms

1. **Sabbath Day** means the seventh day after God created the world and everything in it in six days. God established the Sabbath so that all mankind will remember his creation by respecting the Sabbath Day as a holy day from sunset on Friday evening to sunset on Saturday evening in strict accordance with the teachings of the Bible.
2. **Baptism** means immersion of the whole body in water to affirm one's faith in Jesus. In the Bible, baptism is the ordinance leading to church membership as instructed in the Bible [Matthew 28:19, New English Translation¹ (NET)], "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Seventh-day Adventist pastors baptize persons who decide to become Seventh-day Adventist Christians.
3. **Seventh-day Adventist Church** refers to a Protestant Christian denomination that observes the seventh day of the week as a holy day and worships at church on this day (Saturday). Seventh-day Adventists emphasize the end of the world and the coming of Jesus on the Judgment Day to make the world pure again.
4. **Seventh-day Adventist Christians** refers to Protestant Christians who practice religious activities on the seventh day of the week.

Operational Definitions

Religious Outreach According to Seventh-day Adventist Principles

Students share the Seventh-day Adventist message so that the general public will know the story and teachings of Jesus. This is done for the benefit of people and society without expecting any financial gain or other compensation in return. This religious outreach is carried out in 1) speech, which refers to

¹ All Scripture references are from the New English Translation of the Bible.

missionary work being carried out through words; 2) writing, which refers to missionary work being done through text or sentences; and 3) being examples, which means carrying out the missionary work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church by setting a good example. To measure this religion outreach, the researcher created a questionnaire based on the concepts of Ellen White (1827-1915), who was a messenger of God. It was comprised of a six-level rating scale from "Entirely True" to "Not True at All." Students with higher scores are more active in religious outreach than students with lower scores.

Related Literature

This research analyzes and confirms the factors of religious outreach according to Seventh-day Adventist principles by undergraduate students at Asia-Pacific International University. Relevant theoretical concepts and research studies have been used to create this study's research tool; details of the religious outreach are as follows.

Theoretical Concepts of Religious Outreach

White (1827-1915), a Christian theologian who is considered God's messenger by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, said that it is a Christian duty to proclaim the gospel to those who do not know about God. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Therefore, those who are disciples of Jesus Christ must first believe in Him, and Christians must respond by preaching the gospel to those who are not yet believers. The gospel of Jesus Christ consists of four truths: 1) In this world there is a merciful God who loves mankind; 2) Sin separates man from God; 3) Jesus Christ helps free mankind from the power of sin and suffering; and 4) Humans must believe in Jesus Christ. Church members must faithfully devote themselves to proclaiming these four truths to unbelievers, not only because they were commissioned to proclaim the good news of salvation (gospel), but also so that their lives will better reflect the characteristics of true Christians.

In addition, White stated that young people should live their lives like Jesus Christ and bear the burden of proclaiming His words. They should not be indifferent or idle, but they should work for God by proclaiming His message in their own families and neighboring communities, including to their friends. They must work tirelessly to be successful.

Religious outreach is done through various means including direct proclamation, distribution or selling of books, and singing to and praying for the people whom they evangelize. These good deeds are beneficial to both the recipient and the giver. God said to be merciful and to be willing to help others. God assigned this mission to everyone, but has especially focused on the youth who still have a lot of energy and should follow Jesus' example by serving others.

Believers in Jesus Christ must preach the gospel in order to spread the good news. No matter what job they may do, all have a duty to proclaim God's love by taking His teachings and love to every place that they work, to help others live in accordance with God's ways. White further advised that God has assigned Seventh-day Adventist Christians to evangelize in different roles and in different localities, which may be only a small part of His work, such as showing mercy to the sick, poor, and the sorrowful. The proclamation of the gospel is the most important, but White also mentions work in many departments related to evangelization including Bible work, Sabbath Schools, teaching religion, printing, education, development and relief work, along with medical and public health work, etc. God needs young believers to evangelize everywhere around the world as instructed in the Bible (Mark 16:15) "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." The reason that young people were called is because they are not yet burdened with too much responsibility and worry, which makes them more suitable for religious outreach than married people with families.

According to Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic concepts, White mentions that God wishes for young people to by faith become His workers, to spread His teachings, and to be His witnesses. This is

because having faith without doubt is the only way to gain knowledge and expertise in evangelization. When they are proficient in this work, they will be enthusiastic and passionate in carrying out God's work. He wants them to work and train themselves to be disciplined, and to gain knowledge about their assigned work. God wants them to be responsible for the opportunities that He gives them by following the teachings of the Scriptures, by being good examples to others, and by witnessing about the salvation from sin that they have received. God will help train their thoughts, habits, words, manners, and actions so that others around them may see that God has saved them from sin and taught them these things.

Jesus's last command, which is called the Great Commission, was recorded as follows: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved, but the one who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). From this command, Jesus exemplifies how to proclaim the gospel as follows.

1. Jesus came into the world to proclaim the gospel.

Jesus came into the world to preach the gospel to all classes. He emphasized the necessity and urgency of proclaiming the gospel; there is nothing more necessary and urgent than this proclamation. He proclaimed the gospel according to God's will, and this work was part of His mission. The Bible summarizes His mission by stating that, "Jesus went throughout all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and sickness" (Matthew 9:35). The three important missions of Jesus are: 1) teaching in the synagogues; 2) proclaiming the good news; and 3) healing various diseases.

2. *Jesus sent out his disciples to proclaim the gospel so that those who did not know Him will repent because the kingdom of God has come near (Luke 10:1-12).*

3. *Jesus commands all Christians to evangelize.*

Proclamation is the duty of every Seventh-day Adventist Christian, to bring those who do not know God to Him by 1) praying; 2) visiting acquaintances; 3) telling them about Jesus; and 4) bringing them to Jesus.

Inthasa and Naphon (1995) explain that the propagation or proclamation of religion is an important process related to religious growth which has occurred since ancient times. There are 3 ways to propagate Buddhist Dharma (religious teachings), which are by: 1) speaking; 2) writing; and 3) modeling an example which can be seen. Outreach by speaking involves several elements, such as a speaker's (or Dharma teacher's) qualifications, preparation, and personality, as well as adequate preparation and supporting evidence for what is being presented. Written outreach is different because writing expresses thoughts, hopes, dreams, and the author's wisdom as in speech; however, it requires more time, and written expressions can be revised so that they are more beautiful than spoken words.

Outreach by role modeling is very important for teaching people who are close to us. It is more important than speech because one's example is like a movie that is repeatedly shown to the followers over and over again every day. If the role model's words and actions are admired as a good example, then they will make a deep impression on the follower until they are molded into a permanent part of his/her character. Thus, living a good life is in itself a form of religious outreach.

Panaram (2002) wrote that the propagation of Buddhism is to present its teachings to individuals, groups, and mass audiences by various personal and mass media. The objective is for recipients to understand and assimilate the benefits by becoming calmer and being cleansed from sin as the path to Nirvana.

At Asia-Pacific International University, where the researcher collected data for this study, emphasis is placed on education as balanced human development in all dimensions of life. Virtue precedes learning so that it may be wisely and conscientiously applied, and knowledge, skills and technology will be responsibly used to serve society. The University's commitment is to nurture virtue, wisdom, and holistic development in order to build an academic community that is strong in learning, teaching, and research, and that cultivates moral sensitivity and nurtures character development so that students are

prepared for lives of joyful and selfless service to others. The university offers a holistic education which focuses on academic excellence, noble characters, and spiritual growth in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ for the purpose of serving society and all mankind. It emphasizes developing a lasting relationship with God in order to share His loving kindness with others inside and outside of the university (Academic Bulletin, 2014). The university and its church promote various forms of religious outreach, including Wednesday Chapels, Friday Vespers, Festivals of Faith, Prayer Meetings, Branch Sabbath Schools, Dormitory Worships, Bible Study, Community Outreach Projects, Adventist Youth, and the Seekers.

In conclusion, religious outreach is a voluntary activity to take a knowledge of Seventh-day Adventist teachings to a person, group, or mass audience through various personal and mass media outlets with the aim of helping recipients to benefit by understanding and putting them into practice. The evangelism of Asia-Pacific International University, which was selected by the researcher, consists of various methods as discussed above, and the purpose is to let people know about God's love and mercy toward mankind.

Research Related to Religious Outreach

A prior research study related to religious outreach and practice by Hall (1999) was entitled "The Development of a Program for the Retention of New Members in the New Jerusalem Seventh-day Adventist Church." The sample was new members of the New Jerusalem Seventh-day Adventist Church. This research study was conducted in 3 phases: Phase 1) Pre-assimilation of the members; Phase 2) Assimilation of both old and new church members; and Phase 3) Post-assimilation with genuine harmony and unity. This study was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the church – both locally and globally – in the process of Seventh-day Adventist evangelism. The study found that churches needed to consider the relationship between evangelism and the growth and stability of new converts. What happens after baptism is just as important as what happens before baptism. Knowledge of all doctrines and lifestyle changes was taught before baptism, but in practice, it was found that lifestyle changes took place after baptism and after becoming a church member.

Scope of the Research

Population and Sample

The population used in this study was a total of 698 undergraduate Seventh-day Adventist students enrolled at Asia-Pacific International University, from both the Bangkok and Muak Lek Campuses.

Sample

The sample used in this study was a total of 567 undergraduate Seventh-day Adventist students at Asia-Pacific International University enrolled during the second semester of the 2015-2016 academic year, from both the Bangkok and Muak Lek Campuses. The total number of samples was 567 because the research population was limited to 698, and 100 of these students were selected as the experimental group to develop the research instrument. So there were only 598 students left who could be used as the sample for collecting data in the field. In this study, confirmatory factor analysis was used. Because confirmatory factor analysis uses the parameter estimation method with the Maximum Likelihood (ML) method, it requires a large sample size (Saris & Stronkhorst, 1984). The researcher decided to use all the remaining students as the sample, using judgmental sampling because of consistency and good representation of the population being studied, and because this group was appropriate given the problem and purpose of the research. A total of 598 surveys were distributed to collect data in the field, and of these 567 were returned

Research Methodology

Research Instrument

Part 1: A questionnaire about respondents' personal information in the form of a check list regarding their demographic characteristics and backgrounds.

Part 2: A questionnaire about Seventh-day Adventist evangelism in the form of a six-point rating scale consisting of "Entirely True", "True", "Somewhat True", "Somewhat Not True", "Not True", and "Not True at All" with a reliability level of 0.883.

Data Analysis

1. Basic analysis of the sample data and research variables consisted of the mean, standard deviation, and statistics used to find the quality of the instrument.
2. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine the consistency of the hypothesized Seventh-day Adventist model of religious outreach with the empirical data. The parameter estimation was done with the Maximum Likelihood (ML) method, which was evaluated by the Chi-squares (χ^2) to determine the model fit. The Chi-squares had no statistically significant differences in value at degrees of freedom (df) of < 3.00, and the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) were more than 0.90. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) were less than 0.08 using the LISREL statistical program.

Table 1. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Religious Outreach

Variable	Factor Loading	Construct Reliability
Factor: Religious Outreach by Speech		0.923
1. I preach the good news about God when there is an opportunity.	0.82**	
2. I have been a witness for God.	0.77**	
3. I teach the Bible to proclaim the good news about God.	0.84**	
4. I have told my fellow Christians and other religious believers about God.	0.84**	
5. I talk about God with those who haven't heard about Him yet.	0.79**	
6. If I go to a Branch Sabbath School, I will tell others about God.	0.74**	
7. I explain about God when people have doubts and ask questions.	0.76**	
Factor: Religious Outreach by Writing		0.889
8. I evangelize through social media.	0.70**	
9. I write letters telling friends of different religions about God.	0.76**	
10. I help distribute evangelistic leaflets in public places.	0.66**	
11. I send religious postcards to people on important occasions.	0.82**	
12. I send religious messages to relatives and friends with my mobile phone.	0.75**	
13. I distribute church newsletters to relatives and friends.	0.84**	
Factor: Religious Outreach by Example		0.897
14. I study the Holy Bible.	0.74**	
15. I sing "special music" songs of praise to God in church.	0.64**	
16. I am very careful to keep the Sabbath day holy.	0.78**	
17. I dress very neatly when attending church on Saturday.	0.67**	
18. I behave as a good Seventh-day Adventist Christian.	0.81**	
19. I identify myself as a Seventh-day Adventist Christian to my relatives and friends.	0.73**	
20. I behave myself as a role model for the purpose of proclaiming religion.	0.83**	

Note: ** $p < .01$

Findings

The findings reveal that confirmatory factor analysis of the Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic model fits with the empirical data after adjusting the model. The Chi-square statistic (χ^2) = 653.06, df = 167, Comparative Fit Index = 0.98, p-value = 0.000, SRMR = 0.054, GFI = 0.90; AGFI = 0.90; Consistent Akaike Information Criteria (CAIC) = 968.69; RMSEA = 0.072, Composite Reliability (CR) = 0.97, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.59. The weights of individual questions containing elements of the Seventh-day Adventist religious outreach model, which were evangelization by speech, by writing, and by role modeling, ranged from 0.64 to 0.84, with values shown in the following table.

Discussion

This research study entitled “Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Religious Outreach according to Seventh-day Adventist Principles among Undergraduate Students at Asia-Pacific International University” found that religious outreach can be carried out in 3 ways: by speech, by writing, and by role modeling. The Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic model is consistent with the empirical data after the model is adjusted. There are two aspects of the Adventist outreach program that are consistent with the findings of Inthasa and Naphon (1995) and should be discussed. The first is that propagation or proclamation of religion is an important process related to religious expansion from ancient times. The second is that there are 3 ways to spread the Dharma: 1) by speech; 2) by writing; and 3) by example.

These results are also consistent with the writings of Ellen White, a Christian theologian who is considered God’s Messenger by Seventh-day Adventists. She wrote that religious outreach is a Christian duty; it is the proclamation of the good news about God to those who do not know or understand Him. Evangelism is a voluntary activity by which a knowledge of Seventh-day Adventist teachings is shared with individuals, groups, and mass audiences. This message may be proclaimed through personal, social, or mass media, with the aim of helping recipients to benefit by understanding and putting them into practice. Adventist religious outreach principles also correspond to those of Panaram, (2002), who commented that the propagation of Buddhism was also to take its teachings to a person, group, or mass audience through various media. The aim is that recipients to benefit by understanding and assimilating these teachings, which will help them to become calmer and to be cleansed from sin as the path to Nirvana. The results were also consistent with the findings about religious outreach and practice of Hall (1999), who suggested that the Adventist church needs to re-evaluate its evangelism relative to the growth and stability of new converts.

The three aspects of Seventh-day Adventist outreach described above are consistent with Adventist teachings as found in the Bible.

Recommendations

1. Recommendations for Implementation of Findings

- 1.1. This study confirms and identifies the factors related to religious outreach according to Seventh-day Adventist principles by undergraduate students at Asia-Pacific International University. These findings can be used to formulate religious activities and educational policies since this is a higher education institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Southeast Asia that was established under the Thai Christian Medical Foundation of Seventh-day Adventists.
- 1.2. The results of this study provide important and useful information to the University's Chaplain's Office in making plans to encourage and develop religious activities and establish educational policies.
- 1.3. The findings of this study provide data which the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Thailand Foundation can use in developing evangelistic strategies or organizing religious activities for church members who are undergraduate students.

- 1.4. Use of these research results should be based upon Seventh-day Adventist Church doctrines; because of restrictions concerning these beliefs, caution should be exercised.
- 1.5.1.5. This instrument was developed solely for measuring Seventh-day Adventist religious outreach, and so it may not cover other applications. Therefore in such cases, measurements must be based on other tools, such as observation, a check list, behavioral records, etc.

2. Recommendations for Further Research

- 2.1. Since this study of confirmatory factor analysis in accordance with Seventh-day Adventist principles focused only on undergraduate students, in future studies, a sample of graduate students should be examined.
- 2.2. Future studies should include members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from other areas in order to obtain a wider range of data and research results.

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