**CHAPTER V**

**CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Introduction**

As stated in chapter one, the purpose of this study was to explore the causal relationship between the independent variables architectural design, church beliefs, visual imagery and project financing to church satisfaction as a dependent variable, according to the previously outlined theoretical model.

The study asked one overarching question: *To what extent has the architectural design, church beliefs, visual imagery and project financing predict church satisfaction of Seventh-day Adventist churches in the five boroughs of New York City, New York?* As the study findings and discussions have shown there is need within the Seventh-day Adventist church organization for a methodical and systematic approach in its strategic planning and mission to present an architectural theological framework for the design, renovation, repair and maintenance of physical structures (buildings).

This research was considered quantitative empirical, explanatory, transversal, descriptive, exploratory and field. This study has the capacity to make contributions in the expansion of theories related to a Seventh-day Adventist architectural theology. It also serves to expand the body of knowledge currently available in academia.

The independent variables were architectural design, church beliefs, visual imagery and project financing, while the dependent variable was church satisfaction. The demographic variables were age, gender, years of membership, profession, years of experience, and academic level. The connection and relationship between independent variables – architectural design, church beliefs, visual imagery and project financing – and the dependent variable, church satisfaction was made clearer.

The sample that was used in this research consisted of 149 church members of the randomly selected Seventh-day Adventists in the five boroughs of New York City, New York, USA.

**Conclusions**

This section provides the conclusions documented for this paper. It includes conclusions made on the arithmetic means and the null hypothesis.

Arithmetic Means

This section shows the conclusions regarding the arithmetic means.

**Architectural Design**

The three highest arithmetic means correspond to the following statements from the architectural design construct: “the sanctuary appearance enhances the worship experience”, “the surrounding community will also serve as a mission field” and “the building design adds value to the community”. On the other hand, the items with the three lowest arithmetic means for the architectural design construct are: “the building’s design symbolizes our church’s beliefs”, “the building attracts attention”, and “online services are reliable and dependable”. The total arithmetic mean for the architectural design variable was 3.82, an indication that the respondent members are somewhat *indifferent* to the architectural design of the Seventh-day Adventist churches in New York City.

**Church Beliefs**

The highest arithmetic means corresponds to the following statements from the church beliefs construct: “believe fully in the doctrines of the church”, “actively participate in church activities” and “being generous with one’s offering”. On the other hand, the three lowest means corresponds to the following statements: “the fundamental belief is graphically illustrated in the building design”, “there are contradictions between symbology and church beliefs” and “there is clarity in illustrations”. The total mean for the construct was 3.98; this means that the members have *some degree* of wanting a better understanding of church beliefs and a desire for a relationship with building design.

**Visual Imagery**

The highest arithmetic means corresponds to the following statements from the visual imagery construct: “there are benefits in understanding the symbols”, “symbols aids in the understanding of God’s glory and beauty” and “the location of furniture and furnishings is where they should be”. On the other hand, the three lowest means corresponds to the following statements: “images show a sanctuary in transition”, “the color of each symbol is fittingly presented” and “symbols are illustrations of divine ideals”. The total mean for the construct was 3.65; this means that the workers have *some degree* of understanding and desire of visual imagery.

**Project Financing**

The highest arithmetic means corresponds to the following statements from the project financing construct: “believe in project planning”, “believe in transparency” and “proud member of my church”. Meanwhile, the three lowest means correspond to the following statements: “the church should recognize donors”, “support loan financing of church projects” and “give consistently to my church’s building fund”. The total mean for the construct was 3.70; this means that the members are mostly committed to their church’s building projects by supporting project financing.

**Church Satisfaction**

The highest arithmetic means corresponds to the following statements from the economic factors construct: “honored to be of service to God”, “God is present at each worship service” and “the church’s presence in the community adds communal value”. Alternatively, the three lowest means corresponds to the following statements: “the content with the way the church cares for its members”, “content with how the church integrates everyone” and “satisfied with the floor layout”. The total mean for the construct was 3.78; this means that the members are *somewhat* satisfied with their churches in the North American Division churches.

**Principal Hypothesis**

The results of the model are described below in this section.

The declaration of the complementary null hypothesis was expressed as follows: architectural design, church beliefs, visual imagery and project financing are not predictors of the church satisfaction of the members of the Seventh-day Adventist churches in the five boroughs of New York City, New York, USA.

Correlations, this is where the multiple regression is based upon. The correlation shows a correlation among all variables, but more importantly shows the correlation of the independent variables to the dependent variable. A review of the results clearly shows visual imagery having the largest positive correlation with church member satisfaction of .643.

The Durbin-Watson statistical table that tested the hypothesis for serial correlation of the data recorded 1.786 which is within the standard interpretation of falling between 1.5 and 2.5 suggests there is no meaningful serial correlation.

Linear regression was used by the method of stepwise regression. This revealed that these four variables, architectural design, church beliefs, visual imagery and project finance account for 51.60% of the variance of the dependent variable, church satisfaction.

It can therefore be affirmed that the hierarchal layers of administration of the Global Seventh-day Adventist must formulate and adhere a theological framework position of architectural design, church beliefs, visual imagery and project financing of the organization’s physical structures when evaluating the church satisfaction of their members. The empirical evidence therefore supports the confirmatory hypothesis in that architectural design, church beliefs, visual imagery and project financing are predictors of the church member satisfaction of the Seventh-day Adventists churches in the five boroughs of New York City, New York.

**Discussions**

In this section, the results are discussed and answers to the questions and initial objectives of the research by construct are presented.

Architectural Design

The items with the highest arithmetic means are: “the sanctuary appearance enhances the worship experience”, “the surrounding community will also serve as a mission field” and “the building design adds value to the community”. On the other hand, the items with the three lowest arithmetic means are: “the building’s design symbolizes our church’s beliefs”, “the building design attracts attention”, “internet services are available to the congregation”. This result is consistent with the literature. As pointed out by Falconer (2017), church architectural design is a perceptible theological expression of the community of believers involved in the regular worship experiences and their relationship with God. Although a lack of understanding and meaning of some design structures may have caused some level of dissatisfaction, there still exist as evident by the responses, an overarching sense of belonging to an authentic and beautiful community that is comfortable with their church building stewardship responsibilities. Additionally, as pointed out by Proctor (2014), the church building and the attending congregants during the services reflects in a major part the organization’s beliefs and teachings. As can be seen from the results, responding members showed a desire for major improvements to most church buildings.

The total arithmetic mean for the architectural design variable was 3.82, indicating that the church members are dissatisfied with the architectural design of their church building’s. From the results, respondents imply that the sanctuary appearance enhances the worship experience and that the surrounding communities are mission fields. On the other hand, members believe that the building designs do not symbolize our church’s beliefs, neither are the building design attract attention and internet services are not available to the congregation. In this technological advanced era, it is reprehensible to think that these influences do not negatively impact the emotional and behavioral traits of satisfaction of the general membership. The results also indicate that members are discontented with the conditions of the restrooms and the inadequacy of the lighting of the building. This study is in no way promoting or advertising a one-size-fits-all design program for all architectural designs or renovation.

Architectural design, the project management and strategic planning of our church buildings must be governed by the Seventh-day Adventist church’s fundamental beliefs, practices and values.

Church Beliefs

De Luca-Noronha (2018) reaffirms prior research that points to the ability of religious belief with its causal power to transform lives as a favorable effect on church satisfaction (De Luca-Noronha, 2018). An arithmetic mean of 3.98 indicates church members are *somewhat* committed to the Seventh-day Adventist church beliefs. The items with the highest arithmetic means were: “I believe fully in the doctrines of the church”, “I actively participate in church activities” and “I am generous with my offering”. These items suggest that parishioners are intrinsically steadfast to the Seventh-day Adventist foundational church beliefs. Meanwhile, the items with the three lowest means correspond to the following statements: “the fundamental belief is graphically illustrated in the building design”, “there are contradictions between symbology and church beliefs” and “there is clarity of illustrations”. As can be seen from the items with the lowest arithmetic mean, Seventh-day Adventist church members of the five boroughs in the New York City, New York region feel the need for better graphic pictorial representation, linkage and relation between fundamental beliefs and building design. This would suggest that there is call for church administrations to articulate an architectural design theological position for compliance by local churches.

The results of this survey is consistent with the literature (Leondari & Gialamas, 2009; Sahraian et al 2013; De Luca-Noronha, 2018; Przepiorka & Sobol-Kwapinska, 2018) which suggests that religious beliefs is linked with beneficial fundamental life issues, that strongly influences human psychological functioning to get satisfaction and happiness from fulfilling their intrinsic motivation.

Visual Imagery

Li et al (2017) supports the notion of preserving external appearance and spatial commitment that leads to favorable outcomes on church satisfaction. An arithmetic mean of 3.65 indicates that there is *somewhat* a level of assurance by the members to the understanding and principled practice of Seventh-day Adventists organizational ideals that foster’s church member satisfaction. The items with the highest arithmetic means were: “there are benefits in understanding the symbols”, “symbols aids in the understanding of God’s glory and beauty” and “symbols are illustrations of divine ideals”. These items suggest that church members are eager to have a better understanding of God through symbology that does not contradict or distract from the spoken messages. Meanwhile, It is observed that the items with the lowest arithmetic mean are that correspond to the following statements: “images show a sanctuary in transition”, “the color of each symbol is fittingly presented” and “the location of furniture and furnishings is where I think they should be”. As can be seen from the items with the lowest arithmetic mean, the respondent members at the Seventh-day Adventist churches in New York City feel the existential symbolic representations need to better reflect our fundamental principles and beliefs and at present do not adequately aid the teaching and preaching messages. This would suggest that the fabric of the Seventh-day Adventist church administration needs to take a new look at the values in designing, renovating and constructing churches to organization’s fundamental beliefs.

Project Financing

The total mean for the construct was 3.89, indicating that Seventh-day Adventist church members *are generously motivated.*

The items with highest arithmetic means are: “I believe in project planning”, “I believe in transparency” and “I am a proud member of my church”. This is consistent with the literature, as noted by Anthony et al. (2015), project development clearly defines its vision thereby enabling all persons to understand the objectives with transparency (Anthony, Burkette, & Sparks, 2012). As can be seen from the item with the highest arithmetic mean, church members are motivated and excited to accomplish their required tasks of church building projects on time and within budget. Additionally, members seem eager and willing to engage proper project planning and accounting in a transparent manner. From the results, the items with the three lowest means are: “the church should recognize donors”, “I support loan financing of church projects” and “I give consistently to my church’s building fund”. Members apparently are reluctant to publicly acknowledge and recognize donor contribution, yet reluctant to entertain loan financing which is contradictory. In many church business meetings, the biblical exhortation “the borrower is slave to the lender” (Proverbs 22:7b), is used passionately to discourage the church from securing loan financing.

A carefully investment strategy for long-term financing future projects and activities for churches is long overdue and needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Church Member Satisfaction

Yavuz (2018), describes satisfaction as the positive emotional behavior of happiness and fulfilment that involves serenity as a result of the fulfilment of accomplishments and expectations. Satisfied church members are integral to a very successful religious organization. Religiosity is of utmost importance in the life of created beings in relation to the positive values of happiness and satisfaction (Przepiorka & Sobol-Kwapinska, 2018). As can be seen from the results, 85.9% of the respondents have more than 25 years of church member experience as a Seventh-day Adventist. The items with the highest arithmetic mean were: “I am honored to be of service to God”, “God is present at each worship service” and “the church’s presence in the community adds communal value”. The model reinforces the view that church satisfaction is the perception or view that allows for the fulfilment of the values (Locke, 1979). Alternatively, the items with the lowest arithmetic means were: “I am content with the way the church cares for its members”, “I am content with how the church integrates everyone” and “I am pleased with how the provides for the needs of the members”.

Church members seem to want more compassionate responses to be meted out to the physical needs of members. The respondents highlight a dire need for church members to be more integrated in the decision-making process of the church.

**Recommendations**

The results of the investigation lead to some recommendations:

To church administrative hierarchy and Directors

1. The Seventh-day Adventist Church globally needs to introduce a new theological conversation regarding the design and development of church buildings and needs to encourage continuing education among its global membership by providing guidelines.

2. Dissatisfaction with the church building design, construction, renovation and maintenance among church members seems to be a recurring theme. Church leadership need to assess and address this aspect, by developing a Seventh-day Adventist architectural theological outline.

3. Church members are not satisfied with the symbology as outlined in the architectural design and visual imagery constructs. More research needs to be done to ascertain the root cause of this troubling dissatisfaction.

For Future Research

This section presents recommendations for future research to find models that contribute to a Seventh-day Adventist architectural theological design framework**.**

1. Replicate the study beyond the geographic scope New York City, New York, United States of America.

2. Replicate the study with the need to include targeted groups and additional independent variables. Given the impact architectural design, church beliefs, visual imagery and project financing has on the community of believers, the replication of the study will provide helpful insights in formulating a Seventh-day Adventist architectural design theology.

3. Formulate a new model that includes other variables that can possibly affect the church member satisfaction, such as Seventh-day Adventist Church commitment and religiosity.

4. Conduct a similar study that considers life satisfaction within Seventh-day Adventists tertiary educational institutions. Ultimately, the success of the Churches are dependent on the youths rightly trained in the required fields of architecture, engineering and financing. It would therefore be important to understand the relationship with the level of learning and member satisfaction.

5. Church members shown dissatisfaction with the symbolic experiences and more research needs to be done to dig deeper to find the root cause of this dissatisfaction

As a not-for profit religious institution, the Seventh-day Adventist Church needs to introduce and support a theological conversation regarding the architectural design, visual imagery and project financing as it relates to the fundamental beliefs about renovation and construction development of church buildings.

The chapter was quite extensive in presenting the results of the investigation. One can conclude that the demographic data showed the extent of behaviour and correlation between the independent and dependent variables. All the respective and relevant social scientific tests needed to the confirmatory model were addressed, presented and accepted.