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## Factors Influencing Migration of Church Members from Methodist Church of Kenya to Other Denominations: A Case of Kaaga Synod

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### Abstract

*Migration of church members from one denomination to another is of concern to many churches especially the relatively established mainline ones. The study sought to investigate the factors influencing migration of church members from the Methodist church in Kenya, Kaaga Synod, to other denominations. The study endeavored to ascertain whether conservatism, struggles for power, increased monetary giving and the emergence of prosperity gospel have any significant influence on the migration. The study was guided by the Relative Deprivation Theory which explains how individuals are influenced by deprivation. Descriptive survey research design was used. The study targeted 4,6000 members from Kaaga circuit and 205 migrants to other denominations. Cluster sampling technique was applied and data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedule and focus group discussions. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study revealed that individuals migrated from the Methodist church due to conservatism, power struggles, and emergence of prosperity gospel and high demand of monetary giving. The study recommended that church activities should be flexible and responsive to modernization and social changes*

**Keywords:** *Migration, Methodist church, Power struggle, monetary giving, Prosperity gospel.*

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### Introduction

Pentecostalism and charismatic oriented churches, fellowships and ministries have proliferated in almost all parts of Kenya especially urban centers. These churches tend to be more appealing to the masses of people because they provide a form of religion which provides for the needs of the impoverished and poor. They preach and encourage the gospel of prosperity and divine healing. This has attracted a large following in pursuit of a God of providence (Gichuru, 2010). The emergence of these churches has greatly affected the mainline churches numerically. The Methodist church which is one of the mainline denominations in Kenya has recorded declining membership in the recent years according to Nthamburi (1982). Synod records (2012) indicate that Kaaga synod lost about 500 members between 2010 and 2012. Kaaga circuit in particular lost about 205 members between 2010 and 2012.

Christianity in Kenya is homogenous where every major tradition of Christendom is represented. Gichaga (2007) cited that since the year 1914, over 150 schisms have occurred in Kenya with many missions and churches adversely affected. For example in 1930, the Presbyterian mission lost nearly half its members to the independent churches while between 1914 and 1972, the Anglican church resulted to over thirty separatists bodies and lost over half its membership. According to Nthamburi (1991), between 1959 and 1963, nearly 100,000 Catholics left and joined the

Legio Maria sect of Africa. Migration is not limited to mainline churches because smaller churches have also seen migrations and counter migrations. In recent years Pentecostalism and charismatic movements and fellowships have proliferated in Kenya with the main effect of attracting members from other relatively established churches. These new religious movements are appealing to the masses of people because they provide a form of Christianity which provides for the needs of the impoverished and poor. They preach and support the gospel of prosperity and divine healing. This has attracted large fellowship (Gichuru, 2010).

The study was informed by the Relative Deprivation Theory by Stouffer Runciman and Merton (1949). Relative deprivation is the experience of being denied something which one believes to be a right. If deprivation takes place, discontentment follows. In religion, both absolute and relative deprivation causes dissatisfaction and hence leads people to defy their current situation in favour of another more perceived situation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Migration of Christians from one denomination to another is a common feature in many churches. The reasons for this migration vary from one region to another and from one denomination to another. Such migrations have adverse effects on the well being of churches concerned. The Methodist church in Kenya has continued to record decline in membership as a result of these migrations. This study therefore investigated the factors that influence members to migrate from the Methodist church to other denominations.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i) To investigate whether conservatism and struggle for power influence migrations of church members from Kaaga synod to other denominations
- ii) To find out whether increased monetary giving and many development projects influence migrations of church members from Kaaga synod to other denominations.
- iii) To find out whether the rise of prosperity gospels influences the migration of church members from Kaaga synod to other denominations

### **Research Methodology**

Descriptive survey research design was adopted. A total of 4600 members in Methodist church Kaaga synod were targeted where a sample of 291 members and 20 migrants was used. Questionnaires and an interview schedule were used to collect the needed data after validating and determining their reliability. The coefficients of the reliability were computed at 0.8499 for church members and migrants. Since Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) recommends a reliability of at least 0.8, the instruments were reliable. Data collected was coded and then entered into the computer via Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 16.0). Descriptive statistics in form of percentages and frequencies were used to analyze the data obtained. Thematic analysis was derived from the open ended questions while percentage, frequencies and cross tabulations were used to report the analyzed data. Table 1 shows period of membership for Methodist adherents.

**Table 1: Period of Membership**

<b>Period</b>	<b>frequencies</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1 – 5 years	22	10.8
6 – 10 years	29	14.2

11 - 15	20	9.8
Over 15 years	133	65.2
Total	204	100

### Results and Findings

Information was sought on the extent of conservatism in the Methodist church. The following areas featured in order of priority, 56.9% felt there is conservatism in the method of singing, 45.6% in the church's calendar themes, while 37.7% with regard to the mode of preaching. The respondents were of the opinion that rigidity in addressing these areas contributed to migration of members. Other areas that indicated conservatism included singing, preaching, pastoral care and spiritual nourishment. This is summarized in table 2.

**Table 2:** Rating of aspects of worship

Rating	Very good %	Good %	Poor %	Very poor %	No opinion
Singing	5.9	50	29.4	6.3	1
Preaching	12.7	69.1	9.3	1.5	0
Pastoral care	12.7	32.1	32.9	4.9	2
Spiritual Nourishment	6.3	21.1	32.8	3.4	2
Concern for one another	7.4	32.8	37.8	10.8	2

The results as indicated in table 2 shows that on average, singing and preaching in the Methodist church is good while spiritual nourishment and concern for one another is poor. Pastoral care was rated below average with 32.9% indicating it is poor. Migrants and regular church members had diverse opinions on the status of worship in the Methodist church with 30.9% and 69.1% respectively saying it is good. Based on this, the respondents felt that there was need to modernize the church to be in line with societal dynamism. Table 3 summarized these findings.

**Table 3:** Extent of modernizing some aspect of worship

	Very great extent	Great extent	Moderate extent	No. extent	No. opinion
Singing	16.7	16.7	16.7	0	0

Preacher	0	33.3	67.7	0	0
Modern instruments	16.7	33.3	50	0	0
Mode of preaching	0	33.3	50	16.7	0
Dressing	33.3	50	16.7	0	0
Language	16.7	67.7	0	0	0

On whether the members were aware of migration of church members from their churches to other denominations, majority (89.2%) were positive which only 10.8% stating that they were not aware of migration. Regarding the extent to which members thought conservatism had contributed to migration of members 59.8% indicated that it has contributed to a great extent while 40.2 of the respondents thought it has no significance. This result shows that the Methodist church is conservative in various aspects, a factor that has contributed to migration of members to other denominations. The study sought to find out the contribution of power struggle on migration. The responses indicated that 48% of the Methodist church member felt that migration was as a result of leadership issues while 29.4% indicated that leadership issues were inconsequential. This shows that most of the Methodist church members thought that members migrated to other denominations due to leadership issues.

On whether monetary giving and development projects influenced migration of Methodist church members from Kaaga circuit to other denominations, majority of the respondent thought that monetary giving contributed to members' migration. Table 4 shows the summary.

**Table 4:** Extent to which monetary giving is contribution to members' migration

<b>Extent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very great extent	109	52.5
Grate extent	51	25.0
Small extent	27	13.2
No extent	19	9.3
No opinion	0	0
Total	206	100

Table 4 indicates that members were migrating from the Methodist church because of too much emphasis on monetary giving and development projects. On whether the rise of the prosperity gospel influenced migration of church members, the respondents indicated that prosperity gospels were attracting members from Methodist churches. Table 5 shows the reasons why this was so.

**Table 5:** Extent to which prosperity gospels attract members form Methodist church

Characteristics	Very great extent %	Great extent %	Small extent %	No extent %	No opinion %
Offer solutions on health	16.7	25.5	23.5	9.8	8.3
Promise wealth/prosperity	31.4	37	16.7	9.8	4.4
Promise miracles	33.3	17.6	14.2	12.3	7.4
Address immediate needs	25.5	27	18.3	5.9	6.4
Lively singing	45.1	21.1	14.2	2.9	1
Pastoral care	32.8	10.3	22.4	4.9	5.9
Charismatic leadership	23.5	24.5	14.2	5.9	4.9

Based on these responses prosperity gospel was attracting member from the Methodist church.

## Conclusion

The study established that conservatism and struggle for power influenced the migration of church members from Kaaga Methodist synod to other denominations. Both Methodist church members and migrants rated Methodist church as conservative and indicated conservatism as having contributed to mass migrations. Increased monetary giving and non-ending development projects influenced the migration. Migrants indicated monetary giving to having contributed to a great extent of migration. Prosperity gospel with its characteristic faith healing, promise of wealth, miracles, and charismatic leaders among other also influenced migration.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the current study the following recommendations were made.

- i) The Methodist Church should be flexible so as to accommodate emerging issues.
- ii) The church should modernize her structure and instruments to allow her members to connect with God in their own ways.
- iii) Monetary giving and development projects be re-evaluated to ease members commitments.

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