

## EVALUATING PASTORAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND THEIR IMPACT ON CHURCH GROWTH IN ABUNDANT GRACE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, LAGOS, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

Churches in urban African contexts increasingly face organisational complexities that require more than spiritual oversight. Despite growing administrative demands, many pastors lack structured managerial preparation, creating a gap between awareness of management principles and their effective implementation. This study aimed to examine the relationship between pastoral and administrative management practices and church growth within the Abundant Grace Baptist Association, Lagos, Nigeria. Anchored in Henri Fayol's management theory, the study employed a mixed-methods design involving 235 survey respondents and 15 in-depth interviews from 18 churches. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression analysis. Findings revealed high awareness of administrative principles but limited practical application. Financial management practices significantly predicted financial stability ( $B = .236, p < .001$ ), while leadership training significantly predicted both financial stability ( $B = .411, p < .001$ ) and membership growth ( $B = .279, p < .001$ ). Administrative application alone did not independently predict church financial stability or membership growth. The study concludes that leadership development serves as a critical mechanism through which management competence translates into sustainable church performance. It recommends integrating structured leadership training and financial governance frameworks into pastoral formation and denominational policy.

**Keywords:** Pastoral leadership; Church administration; Church growth; Fayol's management theory; Leadership training.

### Introduction

In Lagos, the role of the church extends well beyond spiritual activities. They are deeply involved in social support, community organisation, and, in many cases, economic activity. Within this context, pastors are increasingly expected to lead not only in spiritual matters but also in organisational decision-making. Pastoral leadership, therefore, shapes both the spiritual life of congregations and the way church structures operate. As a result, pastors are required to balance spiritual care with administrative oversight, even though formal preparation for these administrative demands is often limited. Traditionally, ministry has been understood mainly in spiritual terms, with less attention given to the organisational dimensions of church leadership. The demands of the contemporary church, therefore, go beyond the need for the pastor to possess sound theological knowledge, as there is also a growing expectation that the pastor will oversee the daily activities of the church. This state of affairs has enabled church pastors to take part in budgeting,

volunteer coordination, and strategic decision-making. However, many of these church pastors do not undertake comprehensive training for these tasks, thereby creating an inconsistency between ministerial and managerial skills. Therefore, leadership training is necessary for effective governance and church development.

Nyakundi and Ayako (2020) argue that churches with good management of activities are more likely to maintain their members and stability. These patterns all indicate the effect of administration in maintaining continuity in church organisations. In a similar vein, Salazar et al. (2024) note that contemporary patterns of church growth are often associated with leadership that can balance vision with practical execution. In light of the above, implementing effective administrative systems tends to give pastoral leaders the space to design programmes that respond more closely to the needs of the surrounding community.

Despite these realities, theological institutions have traditionally prioritised doctrinal formation, often providing limited exposure to the practical dimensions of church administration (Dweba & Rashe, 2021). As a result, many individuals entering pastoral ministry have minimal experience in administrative management, a gap that can affect their effectiveness in leadership roles. This situation, therefore, emphasises the need for more deliberate training programs that combine theological education with administrative and management skills. By effectively applying management techniques, churches can foster a culture of accountability and transparency, thereby increasing trust, participation, and church growth in twenty-first-century ministry.

Guided by Fayol's management functions, the present study assesses the pastoral and administrative practices employed by church leaders. Although Fayol's principles were originally developed within industrial organisations, they provide a useful and structured framework for strengthening pastoral administration and supporting measurable church growth. However, despite their apparent relevance, relatively few empirical studies have examined how these principles operate within ecclesiastical settings. Most of the literature that exists today continues to focus on biblical or charismatic approaches to church leadership, and this has created a noticeable gap for research on the application of structured management theory in the church setting.

This study seeks to bridge existing gaps in the literature by investigating pastoral leadership, church growth, and administrative competence in the Abundant Grace Baptist Association in Lagos, Nigeria. Though past studies have attempted to explore these issues, most studies were either limited to leadership styles or management practices, with few empirical investigations on these issues in specific Christian denominations. In addition, few studies were grounded in classical management theory, such as Fayol's model, to empirically test the effectiveness of these practices on outcomes in African Christian church associations. Moreover, few studies used a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical methods to examine which aspects of management practice were significantly related to church growth and financial stability in urban Nigerian church settings. Thus, this study attempts to bridge these gaps by providing a unique contribution to the literature by exploring pastoral leadership and administrative management practices in the specified association using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical methods to examine the mechanisms by which leadership training and financial management are related to church sustainability.

This study examines how pastoral and administrative management practices relate to church growth in the Abundant Grace Baptist Association, Lagos, Nigeria. This analysis is based on key aspects that are critical to church sustainability, such as membership, financial, and ministry management. In so doing, the study

contributes to the debate on pastoral training, with a particular emphasis on the importance of training models that combine spiritual and management competencies in a manner that is realistic with reference to contemporary church leadership.

### **Research Objectives**

Specific objectives of the study include to:

1. investigate the nature and level of engagement of pastors within the Abundant Grace Baptist Association in pastoral and administrative management practices.
2. examine the relationship between management practices and aspects of church growth, with a particular emphasis on membership and financial management
3. identify key factors that limit pastors' engagement with administrative management practices.
4. identify evidence-based strategies to enhance leadership capacity and administrative competence for sustainable church development.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Pastoral and Administrative Leadership in Church Settings**

Discussions on pastoral leadership in contemporary church settings increasingly move beyond purely spiritual responsibilities. While early perspectives tended to frame pastoral leadership mainly in terms of preaching, teaching, and spiritual oversight, more recent scholarship recognises the organisational dimensions of pastoral work. Dale (1985) presents pastoral leadership largely as a spiritual vocation, yet later contributions complicate this view. Hesselbein (1996) also emphasises that leadership as a practice involves guiding institutions through change, while Nyakundi and Ayako (2020) extend this argument by emphasising the pastor's role as an organisational leader, whose decisions shape church stability and growth.

Although these studies, taken together, extend the scope of understanding of pastoral leadership beyond spiritual attributes, they focus on leadership orientation and organisational influence without clearly examining the role of specific administrative processes through which leadership is linked to institutional outcomes. In addition, there is little consideration of the role of unique managerial functions within institutionalised denominational associations in Africa's urban areas. This therefore points to the importance of examining specific management practices rather than leadership attributes.

#### ***Henri Fayol's Principles of Management in Pastoral Leadership***

Henri Fayol's classical management framework, built around the functions of planning, organising, leading, and controlling, was originally developed for industrial organisations. Nevertheless, scholars have shown that these principles can be adapted to non-profit and religious institutions. Rather than treating Fayol's model as a rigid theory, recent studies explore how its core functions appear in everyday leadership practices within congregational life.

Wollschleger (2018) posits that the implementation of structured management principles could enhance the uniformity of church programmes, the distribution of resources, and the assessment of objectives. This potential for church management has significant implications for the city of Lagos, where church organisations often seek to merge their religious obligations with educational, social, and community service activities. Ugoani (2020) indicates that, despite the significance of church management practices, they remain underutilised across various church organisations in Africa.

Furthermore, Lolowang et al. (2023) contend that even a minimal application of these principles fosters improved coordination and bolsters the church's credibility.

While Fayol's framework is regularly cited in discussions of church management, it has not necessarily been applied in an operational sense in church-based research. Many studies acknowledge the relevance of planning, organising, leading, and controlling, but few actually apply these variables in studies of church organisations. The absence of such operationalisation makes it difficult to determine which of the management functions is most relevant to financial stability or growth in church organisations. These statements provide an analytical tool for examining the pastoral leadership styles of the Abundant Grace Baptist Association.

In the context of this research, the managerial functions proposed by Fayol are applied to measure the leadership styles that can be quantified in a church context. The managerial functions, such as planning, organising, controlling, and leading, are applied in the context of strategic visioning, designing programs, structured role allocations, institutionalisation, controlling, mentoring, leadership development, and decision-making, respectively. The present research attempts to extend the classical application of managerial functions by exploring the linkages with financial stability and growth.

### ***The Necessity of Integrated Administrative Competence***

Although the significance of the concept of administrative competence is acknowledged on the theoretical level, its application on the practical level in the church structures varies. Studies by Ugoani (2020) and Lolowang et al. (2023) point to a persistent gap between ideals of spiritual leadership and the administrative realities pastors encounter. This gap is often linked to a lack of management training during the preparation of ministers. While prior scholarship suggests a positive association between structured management and organisational vitality, findings remain inconclusive about which management dimensions most strongly predict growth indicators. This challenge is amplified in urban centres such as Lagos. Churches that manage large, diverse congregations operate in competitive religious environments and face increasing expectations for transparency and accountability.

### ***Management Practices and Church Growth***

A growing body of literature connects effective management practices with indicators of church growth and stability. Nyakundi and Ayako (2020) report that churches with strong administrative leadership tend to experience higher levels of member retention. Similarly, Butler and Senses Ozyurt (2020) argue that incorporating strategic planning and financial management skills into pastoral formation can improve organisational resilience.

Literature suggests that the presence of management practices is not enough. Also, the application of such management practices is subject to certain conditions. In urban settings such as Lagos, the absence of budgeting mechanisms and communication structures may lead to the disengagement of church members, despite the presence of spiritual activities. This further emphasises the need to adopt management leadership strategies.

### ***Theological Education and Ministerial Preparedness***

Recent literature has emphasized the issue of ministerial preparedness. A number of scholars (Dweba & Rashe, 2021; Adeleye et al., 2024; Shumbambiri, 2024) have questioned the curricula of theological

institutions, which seem to focus more on theological aspects of ministry than on management. Although theological education literature consistently highlights deficiencies in managerial preparation, few empirical studies examine whether structured leadership training statistically predicts measurable church outcomes. Thus, the assumed importance of leadership training requires empirical validation within defined denominational contexts.

### ***Financial Administration in Church Settings***

Financial administration represents one of the most sensitive areas of church leadership. Deniswara et al. (2023) identify financial mismanagement as a leading source of internal conflict and declining public trust within religious organisations. In Lagos, where congregants are increasingly financially aware, expectations regarding transparency and accountability are particularly high.

Evidence from empirical studies shows that churches with a budgeting and reporting system have more stable finances. Such practices not only support organisational sustainability but also reinforce trust between church leaders and members. As a result, calls for financial training among pastors increasingly frame fiscal management as an expression of responsible stewardship rather than mere administrative compliance.

### ***Mentorship and Leadership Development***

Beyond formal training, mentorship has been recognised as a critical element of leadership development. Jenssen (2019) highlights the value of mentoring relationships in helping emerging leaders navigate practical challenges that formal education may not fully address. Fatiloro (2018), however, cautions that resistance to structured administration within some Nigerian church contexts can limit the effectiveness of leadership development efforts.

In Lagos, where spiritual spontaneity is often emphasised, administrative systems may be viewed with suspicion. Yet, Chatira and Mwenje (2018) argue that sustainable church leadership requires a balance between charismatic authority and organisational consistency. For associations such as the Abundant Grace Baptist Association, where tradition and structure intersect, mentorship offers a practical pathway for transmitting both spiritual and administrative competence.

### ***Conceptual Framework***

This study is guided by a conceptual framework informed by a combination of Fayol's management theory and recent leadership development literature. The administrative management practices were operationalised as structured planning, financial governance, volunteer coordination, and organisational structure, while leadership development was conceived as a mechanism for capacity building to improve the effectiveness of managerial role execution. These variables were hypothesised to relate to financial stability and membership growth. This framework implies that, on their own, administrative awareness would not necessarily lead to any significant outcome, but that the combination of financial governance and leadership development would provide a boost to institutional sustainability and growth within urban church settings.

Guided by this framework, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. To what extent are pastoral leaders engaged in structured administrative management practices?
2. What is the relationship between administrative practices and financial stability?
3. What is the relationship between administrative practices and membership growth?
4. To what extent does leadership training predict church sustainability and expansion?

1. training predict church sustainability and expansion?

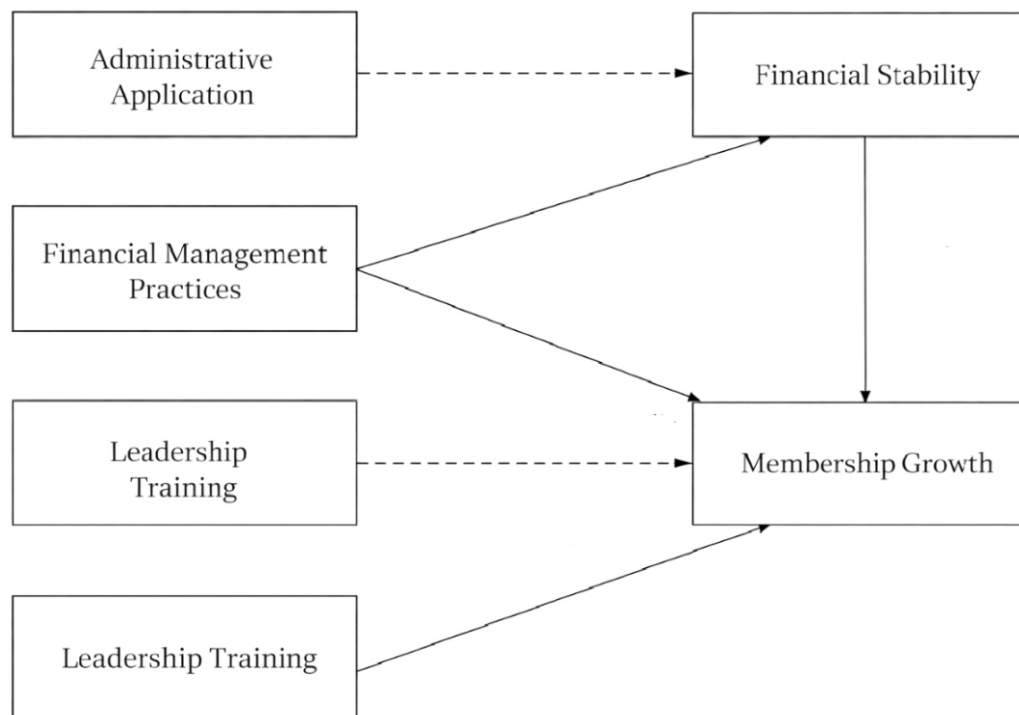


Figure 1: Conceptual framework linking administrative management practices and church growth outcomes based on Fayol’s management theory.

**Methodology**

***Research Design***

The research adopts a mixed-methods research approach in evaluating pastoral and administrative management practices and their impact on growth of the Church, in Abundant Grace Baptist Association in Lagos, Nigeria. The quantitative approach provides an understanding of the prevalence of the practices, while the qualitative approach provides an in-depth understanding of the pastoral and administrative management practices in the Church in the study area, particularly in the context of the bustling city of Lagos, Nigeria, where the Church has many adherents in various urban areas across the state.

***Population and Sampling***

The population of the study comprises the 27 churches that are affiliated with the Abundant Grace Baptist Association in Lagos, Nigeria. For this study, approximately two thirds of the churches (18 out of 27) were selected using purposive sampling. Churches were selected based on accessibility, willingness to participate, and the presence of identifiable pastoral and administrative leadership structures.

Within the selected churches, respondents were purposively selected from pastors, associate ministers, church administrators, lay leaders, and active members who had at least two years of involvement in church activities. Respondents were distributed approximately evenly across the 18 participating churches to ensure representation. A total of 235 participants completed the structured questionnaire. In addition, 15 participants

were selected for in-depth interviews based on their leadership roles and familiarity with administrative practices and church growth trends.

### ***Data Collection Instruments***

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed around Henri Fayol's management functions: planning, organising, leading, and controlling. The instrument assessed strategic planning, financial management practices, volunteer coordination, leadership training, conflict resolution, and perceptions of church growth. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Qualitative data were obtained through semi structured interviews that explored administrative challenges, financial governance practices, leadership preparedness, and growth dynamics within the churches.

### ***Validity and Reliability***

Content validity was established through expert review by two scholars in church leadership and organisational studies. The instrument was pilot tested in two churches within the Association that were not included in the final sample to ensure clarity and contextual relevance.

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The overall scale yielded an alpha coefficient of 0.78, indicating acceptable reliability for social science research.

### ***Operational Definition of Key Variables***

Administrative Application refers to the structured engagement of pastoral leaders in planning, organising, and coordinating church activities.

Financial Management Practices refer to the implementation of budgeting systems, transparent reporting mechanisms, structured fund allocation, and financial training initiatives.

Leadership Training refers to formal and informal leadership development, including mentorship participation and structured training exposure.

Church Growth was operationalised in two measurable dimensions: Financial Stability, assessed through composite measures of reported financial governance, accountability, and sustainability.

Membership Growth, assessed through composite measures of reported changes in membership trends over a five-year period.

### ***Data Analysis***

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, to determine levels of engagement in administrative practices. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships among management practices, leadership training, and church growth indicators. Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the predictive relationships among administrative application, financial management practices, and leadership training with financial stability and membership growth.

Qualitative interview data were analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns relating to leadership preparedness, financial governance, resistance to administrative change, and organisational sustainability.

***Ethical Considerations***

This research was conducted following the ethical principles that have been established to guide research on human participants. The participants were not forced to participate, and their consent was obtained before the actual research was conducted. The subjects were also ensured confidentiality and anonymity, which means that no personal identifying information was obtained from the participants. The research was conducted following the ethical principles that have been put in place to guide scholarly research, and it was not harmful to the participants in any way.

**Results**

***Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N= 235)***

***Table 1: Demographic Characteristics Distribution***

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–25 years	24	10.2
	26–33 years	86	36.6
	34–41 years	51	21.7
	42–49 years	38	16.2
	50 years and above	36	15.3
Gender	Male	174	74.0
	Female	61	26.0
Education Level	No Formal Education	8	3.4
	Primary School	23	9.8
	Secondary School	36	15.3
	OND/NCE	86	36.6
	HND/Bachelor’s Degree	65	27.7
	Master’s Degree or Above	17	7.2
Church Role	Members	90	38.3
	Unit Heads	68	28.9
	Pastors	37	15.7
	Others	40	17.1
Years of Involvement	Less than 1 year	29	12.3
	2 years	33	14.0
	3 years	58	24.7
	4 years	67	28.5
	5 years and above	48	20.4

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of the 235 respondents drawn from 18 churches within the Abundant Grace Baptist Association in Lagos. The age distribution indicates that the largest proportion of respondents (36.6%) was between 26 and 33 years, followed by those aged 34 to 41 years (21.7%). Participants aged 42 to 49 years accounted for 16.2%, while 15.3% were 50 years and above. Only 10.2% were between 18 and 25 years. This suggests that the study sample was predominantly composed of young and middle-aged adults actively engaged in church administration and participation.

Gender distribution reveals a predominance of male respondents (74.0%), compared to female respondents (26.0%). This reflects the gender composition within leadership and administrative participation in the sampled churches.

Regarding educational attainment, the majority of respondents possessed OND or NCE qualifications (36.6%), followed by those with HND or Bachelor's degrees (27.7%). Participants with secondary school education constituted 15.3%, while 7.2% held Master's degrees or higher qualifications. Only a small proportion had primary education (9.8%) or no formal education (3.4%). Overall, the educational profile suggests that most respondents had post-secondary qualifications, which enhances the credibility of responses concerning administrative and management practices.

In terms of church roles, members constituted the largest category (38.3%), followed by unit heads (28.9%). Pastors represented 15.7% of the respondents, while 17.1% fell within other leadership or service categories. This distribution ensures that perspectives were drawn from both formal leadership and general membership structures.

Years of involvement further demonstrate organisational familiarity. The largest group had four years of involvement (28.5%), followed by three years (24.7%) and five years or more (20.4%). Only 12.3% had less than one year of involvement. The distribution suggests that most respondents possessed adequate institutional exposure to meaningfully assess administrative practices and growth trends within their churches.

Finally, the demographic characteristics indicate a mature, moderately educated, and institutionally experienced respondent base suitable for evaluating pastoral administrative management practices and church growth outcomes.

***Table 2: Pastors’ Awareness and Application of Basic Management Practices***

Management Practice	Aware of Importance (%)		Application (%)		
	Yes	No	Active	Inactive	Neutral
Strategic Planning	75	25	30	65	05
Organisational Leadership	72	28	35	63	02
Financial Management	68	32	38	62	-
Volunteer Coordination	65	35	12	83	05
Conflict Resolution	70	30	40	60	-

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Results in Table 2 present a significant gap between pastors' awareness and application of basic management practices in Abundant Grace Baptist Association. Seventy-five percent were aware of strategic planning, only 30% actively engage in it; 65% are inactive, and 5% do not participate. In the same way, although 72% are aware of the significance of organisational leadership, only 35% implement it in practice, while the remaining 65% do nothing in that regard. 68% of pastors recognise the significance of financial management, but only 38% apply management practices, and 62% do not. Also, in volunteer coordination, 65% recognise its significance also, 12% actively manage volunteers, with 83% inactive and 5% not engaged. Conflict resolution displays comparatively higher engagement, as indicated by 70% acknowledging its significance, 40% actively resolving conflicts, and 60% being inactive. These findings indicate a consistent disparity between awareness of administrative management practices and their practical application within churches.

***Table 3: Challenges Affecting Administrative Practice among Pastors***

Challenges	Percentage of Respondents (%)		
	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
Financial Constraints	68	12	20
Lack of Formal Training in Management	62	20	18
Inadequate Leadership Development	65	23	12
Difficulty in Volunteer Coordination	75	10	15
Resistance to Administrative Changes	65	25	10

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

The findings in Table 3 reveal significant challenges pastors face in church administration. Key issues include financial constraints, with 68% of pastors recognising limited resources as a barrier to effective administration, impacting financial planning and program implementation. A lack of formal management training is a challenge reported by 62% of respondents, indicating that insufficient structured education affects leadership and financial management practices. The lack of proper leadership development is also recognized by 65 percent of pastors, indicating the absence of proper leadership development programs. Moreover, 75 percent also experienced challenges in volunteer coordination. Finally, 65% reported resistance to administrative changes, pointing to a preference for traditional approaches. These findings emphasise the need for training, financial support, and effective change management strategies to improve church administration.

**Table 4: Influence of Financial Management Practices on Church Stability**

Financial Practice	Churches That Apply It			Reported Financial Stability		
	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)
Budgeting and Expense Tracking	58	42	-	75	23	02
Transparent Financial Reporting	50	47	03	72	25	03
Structured Fund Allocation	54	45	01	68	30	02
Financial Training for Church Leaders	60	35	05	65	32	03

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 4 highlights the variability in financial practices and stability among churches. 58% of respondents agree that churches use budgeting and expense tracking, while 42% disagree. 75% of the respondents agree that practising budget and expense tracking leads to financial stability. 50% of the churches practice transparent financial reporting, and 72% of the churches report financial stability when the practice is transparent. This highlights the significance of financial accountability. Structured fund allocation is used by 54% of the churches that adopt this financial practice, and 68% of the respondents report financial stability resulting from the practice.

In terms of financial training for church leaders, 60% of the respondents agree with this. In addition, 65% agree that this leads to financial stability. There exists a deficiency in the financial management practices of the leaders. The findings emphasise the importance of sound financial practices, such as budgeting, transparency, and proper fund allocation, for maintaining financial stability. It also indicates the need to improve the financial education of the church's leaders.

**Table 5: Effect of Pastoral and Administrative Practices on Membership and Financial Growth**

Management Practice	Reported Membership Growth			Reported Financial Stability		
	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)
Applied Fayol's Management Principles	30	65	05	78	20	02
Regular Leadership Training for Pastors	25	73	02	70	30	-
Structured Administrative Frameworks	28	50	22	74	25	01
Financial Management Systems	32	60	03	80	20	-

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

The findings shown in Table 5 provide insight into the relationship between management practices and church growth, with a focus on membership and financial stability. The application of Fayol's management principles showed a stronger relationship with financial stability. Seventy-eight percent of the churches are showing economic health compared to the 30% showing membership growth. The churches that did not use the principles faced challenges. Sixty-five percent are encountering membership stagnation, whilst twenty percent are facing financial instability. Leadership training for church pastors showed limited effectiveness in terms of membership growth. However, the impact on financial stability was more pronounced: 70% of churches that offered such training achieved financial stability. This further emphasises the importance of leadership development in enhancing financial management within these organisations, even if it does not increase their membership numbers. In addition, having effective administrative structures yields mixed results. 28% of the churches experienced an increase in membership, while 74% experienced financial stability. Lastly, financial management systems proved most effective: 80% of churches that employed them achieved financial stability, and 32% experienced membership growth. Overall, the findings emphasise the vital role of effective management practices in church administration, enhancing financial stability while suggesting that other factors may influence membership growth.

**Table 6: Extent of Pastoral Participation in Leadership and Mentorship Development Initiatives**

<b>Leadership Training Participation</b>	<b>Agree (%)</b>	<b>Disagree (%)</b>	<b>Undecided (%)</b>
Have Formal Leadership Training	35	60	05
Rely on Personal Experience	50	40	10
Participate in Mentorship Programs	42	55	03
No Leadership Training	28	72	-

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

The data presented in Table 6 highlights the extent of pastors' participation in leadership development. 60% of pastors reported not having formal leadership training; only 35% acknowledged receiving it; and 5% remained undecided. In contrast, half of the respondents indicated that they rely on personal experience for leadership, whereas 40% disagreed with this approach, and 10% were undecided. Participation in mentorship programs was also relatively low: 42% confirmed involvement, 55% stated otherwise, and 3% expressed uncertainty. Additionally, 28% of the pastors acknowledged having no leadership training at all, whereas a significant 72% disagreed with this statement, suggesting that a majority had received some form of training, albeit informally.

**Table 7: Impact of Management Strength on Church Growth Trends**

<b>Management Strength</b>	<b>20–30 (%) Increase</b>	<b>10–18(%) Increase</b>	<b>0–5(%) Increase</b>
<b>Strong Management Practices</b>	80	15	5
<b>Moderate Management Practices</b>	10	70	20
<b>Weak Management Practices</b>	5	25	70

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 7 examines the influence of pastoral management practices on church growth over five years. The findings suggest a relationship between management strength and church growth. Among churches with strong management practices, 80% experienced a membership increase of 20–30%, 15% reported a more moderate growth of 10–18%, while 5% reported marginal growth of 0–5%. Churches that exhibited moderate management practices had a less steep growth curve. 10% of the churches reported increases of 20-30%, while the majority (70%) reported increases of 10-18%. A further 20% reported marginal increases of 0-5%. Churches that exhibited weak management practices reported even poorer results. Of these, 5% reported increases of 20-30% in membership, while 25% reported moderate increases of 10-18%. The remaining 70% reported little or no growth during the period.

### ***CORRELATION ANALYSIS***

***Table 8: Correlation Analysis of Administrative Practices and Church Growth***

***Indicators***

<b>Variable</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. Administrative Application	1.00				
2. Financial Management Practices	-.005	1.00			
3. Leadership Training	.062	-0.340**	1.00		
4. Financial Stability	.002	.149*	.267**	1.00	
5. Membership Growth	-.041	-.359**	.396**	-.194**	1.00

\*\*p < .01, \*p < .05.

Table 8 presents Pearson product-moment correlations among administrative application, financial management practices, leadership training, financial stability, and membership growth. First, the Administrative Application shows no statistically significant relationship with any of the outcome variables. Its correlation with Financial Stability is negligible ( $r = .002$ ), and with Membership Growth it is weak and non-significant ( $r = -.041$ ). This suggests that general administrative engagement, without structured managerial depth, does not independently relate to measurable financial or membership outcomes in the sampled churches.

Second, Financial Management Practices demonstrate a positive, statistically significant relationship with Financial Stability ( $r = .149, p < .05$ ). Although the relationship is modest, it indicates that churches that apply budgeting systems, transparent reporting, and structured fund allocation tend to report greater financial stability. This aligns with Fayol's controlling function, which emphasises financial oversight and systematic governance. However, Financial Management Practices show a significant negative relationship with Membership Growth ( $r = -.359, p < .01$ ). This suggests that churches with stronger financial controls may not necessarily experience membership expansion.

Third, Leadership Training shows strong and statistically significant positive relationships with both Financial Stability ( $r = .267, p < .01$ ) and Membership Growth ( $r = .396, p < .01$ ). The correlation with Membership Growth is particularly notable, indicating a moderate positive association. This finding supports the theoretical expectation that structured leadership development enhances strategic capacity, vision casting, and congregational mobilisation, thereby facilitating expansion. Additionally, Financial Stability is negatively correlated with Membership Growth ( $r = -.194, p < .01$ ). This inverse association suggests that

financial robustness does not automatically translate into congregational growth and may reflect different organisational priorities or growth models within the churches studied.

**Table 9: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Financial Stability (N = 235)**

<b>Predictor</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>P</b>
Constant	1.827	0.395	4.629	< .001
Financial Management Practices	0.235	0.056	4.175	< .001
Administrative Application	-0.040	0.130	-0.311	.756
Leadership Training	0.411	0.074	5.533	< .001

Model Statistics:  $R^2 = .137$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .126$ ,  $F(3, 231) = (12.19)$ ,  $p < .001$

The regression model significantly predicted financial stability,  $F(3, 231) = 12.19$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 13.7% of the variance (Adjusted  $R^2 = .126$ ). Financial management practices emerged as a significant positive predictor ( $B = 0.235$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that increased application of structured budgeting, transparent reporting, and fund allocation systems is associated with improved financial stability. Leadership training also significantly predicted financial stability ( $B = 0.411$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This indicates that churches reporting structured leadership development also report stronger financial sustainability, possibly due to enhanced governance competence and accountability. Administrative application did not significantly predict financial stability ( $B = -0.040$ ,  $p = .756$ ), suggesting that general administrative engagement, without structured financial or leadership mechanisms, may not, on its own, strengthen financial robustness. These findings are consistent with the correlation analysis, which showed that financial practices and leadership training were positively associated with financial stability.

**Table 10: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Membership Growth (N = 235)**

<b>Predictor</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>P</b>
Constant	2.463	0.293	8.413	< .001
Financial Management Practices	-0.170	0.042	-4.070	< .001
Administrative Application	-0.103	0.090	-1.068	.286
Leadership Training	0.279	0.055	5.069	< .001

Model Statistics:  $R^2 = .217$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .207$ ,  $F(3, 231) = 21.40$ ,  $p < .001$

The regression model significantly predicted membership growth,  $F(3, 231) = 21.40$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 21.7% of the variance (Adjusted  $R^2 = .207$ ). Leadership training was a strong positive predictor of membership growth ( $B = 0.279$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This indicates that structured pastoral development is positively associated with strategic expansion, mobilisation, and congregational retention. Financial management practices demonstrated a significant negative association with membership growth ( $B = -0.170$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This indicates that stronger financial control systems were negatively associated with membership growth in the present dataset. This pattern may suggest that churches prioritising financial governance and

organisational consolidation may not simultaneously experience rapid membership expansion, although further research would be required to explore the mechanisms underlying this relationship. This finding should be interpreted cautiously, as correlation does not imply that financial management reduces membership growth, but rather that the two variables move in opposite directions within this dataset. Administrative application was not a significant predictor ( $B = -0.103$ ,  $p = .286$ ), reinforcing the earlier finding that general administrative engagement alone does not drive growth outcomes. These regression results align with the correlation matrix, which shows that leadership training had the strongest positive association with membership growth ( $r = .396$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

### ***Qualitative Perspectives on Church Administration***

Beyond the quantitative findings, interviews with pastors and church leaders highlighted concerns about financial sustainability, resistance to change, and the lack of structured leadership training. Many pastors expressed the difficulty of balancing spiritual responsibilities with administrative duties. Some described financial constraints as a persistent challenge, limiting the church's ability to implement structured financial systems. Others highlighted the importance of mentorship and experiential learning in overcoming administrative difficulties.

Pastors who had experienced leadership training emphasised its impact on their ability to manage church affairs effectively. One respondent noted, "Without structured training, we rely on intuition, which sometimes works but often falls short in addressing complex church management challenges." Another pastor acknowledged the need for improved financial literacy among church leaders: "Financial transparency is crucial for trust, yet many churches struggle due to poor financial management."

### **Discussion**

The study corroborates a growing perspective in both leadership and church management literature that spiritual leadership, by itself, does not ensure church growth or stability. Pastors in Abundant Grace Baptist Association, Lagos, a city known for its diversity, cultural richness, and religious activities, experience church ministry challenges that require not only strong leadership skills but also substantial theological understanding (Salazar et al., 2024). More than 70% recognised their value, even though consistent engagement with these practices remained relatively low. This finding corroborates Dweba & Rashe's (2021) concern that African theological schools are more focused on doctrine than management skills, which is a critical challenge in church management, especially in a city like Lagos, where churches must operate with remarkable organisational sophistication, a challenge that most pastors are not prepared to handle because of inadequate management training.

In churches where planning, organisation, and control were more deliberately structured, financial performance was generally more stable. Wollschleger (2018) supports this view, noting that the role administrative systems play matters for keeping church organisations stable over time. This becomes especially relevant in a city like Lagos. Many churches are made up of educated professionals who tend to expect openness in financial matters. As shown in Table 4, approximately 75% of churches that used budgeting and expense tracking systems reported stable finances. A concern also noted by Deniswara et al. (2023), where such systems were absent, issues of donor hesitation and internal mistrust were more common. While this study establishes a strong link between effective management practices and financial stability, the data show a less robust relationship between administrative management and membership growth. Only about

30% of the churches that applied Fayol's principles reported a noticeable increase in membership. This suggests that management practices alone may not fully explain church attendance patterns, especially in urban ministries in Lagos. The results of the regression analysis indicate that each outcome explains a modest percentage of the variance, with 13.7% for financial stability and 21.7% for membership growth. Despite these limited levels of explanation, they are consistent with a range of studies across organisational and leadership research, which show that complex social and contextual factors impact organisational outcomes. Factors influencing church growth, particularly in urban contexts such as Lagos, include spirituality, culture, and demographic and community engagement. Therefore, the results of this study highlight the roles of leadership training and financial governance among a range of factors that impact church growth and sustainability. As Nyakundi and Ayako (2020) also note, leadership structures help with retaining members, but factors such as spirituality and the vitality of church programmes often play a stronger role in attracting new ones.

Mentoring and leadership training appeared to matter for pastoral effectiveness; in the way church administration was handled. In churches where pastors had some exposure to training or mentoring, administrative tasks were often managed with more clarity and consistency. Jenssen (2019) and Butler and Senses-Ozyurt (2020) make a related observation, suggesting that leadership training plays an important role in helping church leaders develop resilience over time. In a highly competitive religious market such as that in Lagos, mentoring is important in preventing burnout and church schisms.

Moreover, 55% also show a level of resistance to administrative changes, which resonates with Fatiloro's (2018) assertion that many churches in Nigeria are characterised by charismatic leadership styles that are sceptical about secular administrative practices. In Lagos, where many churches still emphasise spiritual spontaneity, administrative planning is sometimes considered overly rigid. However, churches that integrated spiritual leadership with operational discipline demonstrated a more balanced and effective ministry approach, reinforcing the synergy between theological vision and administrative execution (Chatira & Mwenje, 2018). Finally, the Lagos urban setting complicates volunteer management and program implementation. High mobility, economic stress, and social fragmentation mean churches must be agile and structured to maintain engagement.

The disengagement of church volunteers, as shown in 60% of the responses, reflects the general urban social life in Lagos. The study asserts that for churches to thrive in the Lagos urban landscape, they need to adopt structured management concepts that are able to manage the disengagement of church members. The study findings show the significance of administrative practices such as budgeting, coordination, and planning in modern church leadership concepts, which are also a representation of the classical management functions.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to evaluate pastoral and administrative management practices and their impacts on church growth in the Abundant Grace Baptist Association in Lagos. The study is based on Henri Fayol's management theory, which is applied in church management practices by church pastors and leaders in different ways in their ministries. This study extends Fayol's management theory into empirical ecclesiastical settings, demonstrating how specific management functions operate within denominational church structures in an urban African setting.

The results of church growth within different church settings show that, although most church pastors

recognise the significance of Pastoral and Administrative management practices, they do not seem to apply these practices in church administrative management. In church settings where administrative management practices were applied, financial results were more pronounced, while improvements in membership growth were less pronounced. However, issues of financial management, leadership development, and administrative management are more challenging in Lagos, especially due to competition for church growth.

The analysis of church growth also shows that church leadership in Lagos is not only based on spirituality but also on church pastors' alignment with administrative management practices, as proposed by Fayol. Practices, including Church budgeting, coordination of church leadership, and programming are examples of the application of classical management theory in church management within the Abundant Grace Baptist Association.

### ***Recommendations***

This paper proposes the following recommendations to enhance pastoral leadership and church administration:

1. Theological institutions should ensure that they include elements of strategic planning, financial management, conflict resolution, and human resource development in ministerial education to ensure that pastors are equipped with necessary knowledge in church administration.
2. Church denominations and governing bodies should establish mentorship programs where experienced church administrators are matched with younger pastors to provide them with necessary knowledge on how to administer a church effectively.
3. Churches should establish financial policies and provide financial literacy training to pastors to ensure that they are accountable and able to establish trust with church members.
4. Leadership workshops and seminars should be conducted regularly to ensure that pastors are aware of the latest developments in church administration; church denominations should promote structured frameworks using successful case studies.
5. Church leadership should adopt a formal governance structure and innovative leadership concepts; church growth may be affected by a lack of administrative change. Church leadership should ensure that church members are educated on the need to adopt a structured management system.

### **Suggested Areas for Future Research**

While this study provides insight into pastoral and administrative management practices within the Abundant Grace Baptist Association in Lagos, several areas remain open for further investigation.

- Conduct comparative research in different denominational settings (e.g., Baptist, Pentecostal, etc.) in Lagos and other cities in Nigeria to determine the role of organisational structure, theology, and leadership culture in the use of administrative practices.
- Design a longitudinal research study to examine the long-term effects of church growth as a result of continued use of administrative practices.
- Investigate the role of theological education in relation to administrative competence through a survey of theological institutions in Nigeria.

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