

## PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Leadership

Adventist University of Africa

School of Postgraduate Studies

Title: THE IMPACT OF DISABILITY ON THE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE AND GENERAL PARTICIPATION BY VISUALLY CHALLENGED SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS OF THE WEST ZIMBABWE UNION CONFERENCE

Researcher: Ngabaite Muchinguri

Primary Adviser: Musa Nyakora, PhD

Date Completed: May 2018

The main objective of this study was to influence the Seventh-day Adventist Church's decision-making bodies to promote the inclusion of visually challenged members at the church's different institution levels. Twenty visually challenged participants from the West Zimbabwe Union Conferences were interviewed on challenges they individually experienced in worship and participation in the Church services. A mixed methods research design was used because of the qualitative data which would be elicited from the respondents and the quantitative membership data from respective District Church clerks. Sixty percent of the participants whose membership length was twenty years and above showed that most of the visually challenged members were ready to participate in the Church's activities and equally have the same worship experience as their sighted counterparts. On the contrary, however, the findings revealed a lack of participation of 65%, which was an unhealthy spiritual condition of any Church member. The findings also showed that

the membership for sighted Church members was on the increase, while membership of the visually challenged remained constant. Overall, these findings seemed to be influenced by the sighted Church members' negative attitude, over emphasized sympathy, and ignorance. Further to their narrated Church experiences, the participants recommended that (a) a Special Needs educational programme on visual challenges be designed, implemented and evaluated; (b) representation of people with visual challenges be made in all of the organisation's structures from the General Conference to local districts; (c) rehabilitation training programmes be designed, implemented and evaluated for assisting Church workers, members and non-Adventist citizens who lose sight at a later stage of life; (d) sanctuaries be made hospitable and user-friendly assembly points for visually challenged Church members; and (e) the *Church Manual* provisions be reviewed or relevant policies be created to include a well-defined budget that will sustain the development and implementation of the above-cited recommendations.

Adventist University of Africa

School of Postgraduate Studies

THE IMPACT OF DISABILITY ON THE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE AND  
GENERAL PARTICIPATION BY VISUALLY CHALLENGED  
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH MEMBERS IN THE  
WEST ZIMBABWE UNION CONFERENCE

A project

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Leadership

by

Ngabaite Muchinguri

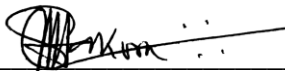
April 2019

THE IMPACT OF DISABILITY ON THE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE AND  
GENERAL PARTICIPATION BY VISUALLY CHALLENGED  
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH MEMBERS IN THE  
WEST ZIMBABWE UNION CONFERENCE

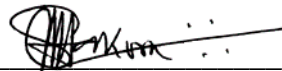
A project  
presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements of the degree  
Master of Arts in Leadership

by  
Ngabaite Muchinguri

APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE:



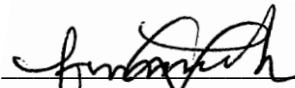
Primary Adviser:  
Musa Nyakora, PhD



Programme Director, MA Leadership  
Musa Nyakora, PhD



Secondary Adviser:  
Larry Evans, DMin



Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies  
Daniel Ganu, DrPH

Extension Site: Solusi University

Date: April 2019

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background of the Study .....	2
Statement of the Problem .....	8
Objectives of the Study .....	8
Significance of the Study .....	9
Setting, Scope and Limitations of the Study .....	10
Geographical Location .....	10
Citizenry .....	10
Seventh-day Adventist Church Constituencies .....	10
Research Description .....	11
Definition of Terms .....	12
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	15
Visually Challenged People’s Participation .....	15
Visual Challenge in Antiquity .....	16
Annihilation .....	16
Veneration .....	18
Medieval Blindness and Institutionalisation .....	19
Education and Employment .....	20
Mobility and Orientation .....	24
Mannerisms .....	25
Courtship .....	26
Rehabilitation and Other Delivery System Forms .....	27
Participation by the Blind in the Christian Church .....	28
Related Studies .....	35
Observations .....	38
Conceptual Framework .....	41
Barrier-lack of Intentionally Created Forums .....	43
Research Already Conducted and Gap to Be Filled .....	43

3. METHODOLOGY .....	50
Hypothesis .....	50
Research Design .....	50
Justification for Visually Challenged Adventists Involvement.....	51
Population and Sampling Procedure .....	52
Research Methods and Design .....	53
Research Study Instruments .....	53
Data Analysis.....	54
Respondents' Protection .....	55
Instrument for Data Collection .....	55
Data Collection Instrument Validity and Reliability.....	57
Feedback Evaluation .....	57
Data Saturation .....	58
Data Collection Procedure.....	58
Participant Identification and Appointment .....	59
Booking .....	59
Interview Appointments .....	60
Note-Taking Mechanism .....	61
Methods of Data Analysis .....	61
Ethical Safeguards .....	61
Reaction.....	62
4. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS .....	63
Category Themes.....	63
Findings .....	64
Membership Length.....	65
Level of Participation .....	67
Service Appointment .....	70
Membership Quantitative Growth Evaluation.....	71
Total Membership .....	72
Cause of Resistance .....	72
Conclusion.....	74
5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	75
Recommendations for Future Studies .....	83
Summary.....	83
Conclusion.....	84
Reaction.....	85
APPENDIXES .....	87
A. RESEARCH LETTER .....	88
B. PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES.....	89
C. RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....	110

D. CHURCH CLERKS' QUESTIONNAIRE.....	112
REFERENCES .....	113
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	116

## LIST OF TABLES

1. Subdivided Conferences of Zimbabwe and their Unions .....	14
2. Accessories for Visually Challenged Persons.....	39
3. Capabilities and Employment Opportunities .....	40
4. Levitical Priests and Pastors' Differences .....	41
5. Church Membership Weaponry .....	68
6. Participation Gender Equity.....	69
7. Total Membership.....	72

## LIST OF FIGURES

1. Membership range. ....	64
2. Membership age brackets. ....	65
3. Adventist education impact.....	66
4. Participation. ....	68
5. Appointment balance .....	70
6. Problem cause proportions.....	73



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Praise to Him “who is, who was and who is to come” for granting me the gift of life and the privilege for learning. May “all that is within me bless His holy name.”

First and foremost, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to Pastor and Doctor Larry Evans for the scholastic advice he kind-heartedly rendered during the project supervision, a period that saw me from my academic infancy to the present stage. His patience and words of encouragement have inspired and shaped me into a being that can never be the same again in the field of research writing.

The well-timed effort by Professor Musa Nyakora, AUA MA and PhD Leadership Programs Director, in twining with Doctor Evans at one supervision point, can never go unmentioned indeed.

I can never forget Professor S. Muchemwa, lecturer in the English Department at Solusi University, whose advice on the literature segment fitted so well with my supervisor’s research expectations as if they were both geographically located at the same place.

The sacrificed school and family time as well as the relentless effort exerted by my book readers can never be reciprocated by words. These are Pastor Humphrey Mupita, Pastor Bruce Hlongwane, Pastor Andile Hlongwane, Pastor Jabulani Chihava, Pastor Knowledge Kamhiripiri, Shepherdess S. Sikota, Elder Philani Ntshingila and Pastor Laxon Gwatipedza. I wish they would know how their eyes became mine and precious at the time I desperately needed them. Also, to be noted here is Dr R. Maturure, the then Solusi University librarian, whose exceptional

understanding on the needs for students with visual challenges allowed me to deploy library resources with least restrained control.

I am also sincerely thankful to Michael Nyathi, an old friend from youthhood, whose opportune employment at the United College of Education was instrumental for borrowing of library books for the research.

My gratitude expression also goes to Elder Austin Njanji for the provision of both the vehicle and driver, Mr. Taurai Gurajena, for ferrying me to and from the informants' residential places. Mr. Dave Zwane's contribution for the provision of the vehicle fuel, indeed, went a long way in enhancing the success of this research.

The precious and indispensable information as well as the cooperation I received from District pastors, Church clerks and visually challenged informants within the West Zimbabwe Union Conference can never be appreciated enough in words.

Had it not been for the immense assistance from elder Bhekimpilo Ndiweni's outstanding ability in masterminding the SPSS programme for diagrams; elder Lloyd Makamure's proficiency in handling the Office software for information presentation and Elder Elvis Zinyemba's financial aid in mitigating the project's final stage related expenses, my research document would not have been as professionally organised as it eventually became.

Last but not least to be recognized is my wife, Samkeliso Muchinguri, whose assorted roles in data presentation graphics, text reading, document's general appearance and moral support were all single-handedly and meticulously performed in her proficiency. Along with her are my children, Tadiwa Ryan; Tinotenda Comfort and Thandolwenkosi Lenience, whose prayers were greatly appreciated.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's ability to uphold biblical truths on commandment-keeping and Christ's Second Advent (among other teachings) has led to the church's quantitative growth. This growth seems to have been also enhanced by the church's flexibility in accommodating the members' Bible-based contributions, which have continually been used in modifying the congregation's fundamental beliefs as a movement organisation.

It is this church's respect for the members' insights and corporate care for individual growth that have made it possible for the congregation's minority groups to withstand membership-related pressures with unwavering optimism. One such group is that of the Adventist members with special needs among which are the deaf, the physically maimed, the skin challenged (whose derogative name is albinos), the mentally challenged and the visually challenged—the latter of whom, this research is centred on. It was, therefore, the combination of this hope for the church's bright future and the researcher's 30-year experience as a visually challenged Adventist that, subsequently, led to an investigation on the impact of disability for Adventists who have learnt to live in such a condition.

The study was expected to establish perception differences between Adventists with visual challenges and those of their sighted counterparts. The disparities between the two parties' perceptions were used in determining the impact of disability on the worship experience and programme participation for visually

challenged Adventists in West Zimbabwe Union Conference. The study culminated in an effort to bring an equilibrium in acceptance and opportunities for service in the church's mission between Adventists with visual challenges and the sighted by proposing recommendations necessary for consideration by the church's responsible committees/bodies.

### **Background of the Study**

The 154 years of existence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have seen the congregation grow to give birth to 28 Ministries since its establishment in 1863. Since the church mission has been of spreading the gospel to "every nation, tribe, tongue and people" (Rev 14:6), a management strategy of breaking the overall task into smaller segments was adopted by introducing Departments or Ministries. Each Ministry was, thus, assigned to accomplish a particular component of the mission. An example of this development was the establishment of a Ministry tasked with the service provision for the Youths and another rendering service in Music. The church's mission for evangelizing the world would, thus, be accomplished through the various church ministries.

By 2017, 13 divisions had been born from the work of these Ministries. These Divisions also constituted a portion of gospel recipients in Zimbabwe who, by being blind, became a part of the multi-disabilities Ministry of People with special needs.

Nevertheless, the conversion of this category of people only revealed the Church's lack of preparedness for nurturing, training and commissioning visually challenged new converts. If well considered, the preparatory efforts would have placed the converts at an equal footing in terms of service rendering and programme participation just as the same as their sighted counterparts.

Although the existence of the Ministry of People with special needs in the studied region had only been in principle, its inactivity had been of serious disservice to Adventists with visual challenges. The ministry's insignificant existence seemed to have been compounded by the visually challenged members' relatively small number. However, the sheer presence of Adventists with visual challenges in the Conferences' congregations should have been enough to propel the Church into a rather more positive action.

The need for an active ministry of people with special needs in this Seventh-day Adventist constituency of the West Zimbabwe Union Conference became more evident as the number of Adventists with visual challenges continued to relatively increase from one level to another. It was unfortunate, however, that a Church growth development of this nature seemed not to challenge the apathy of the conferences' leadership. The reason for the apathy must have been probably that the leaders were no longer as challenged by the sight of disability as they might have been before. This is, somewhat, normal since it is natural for someone to cringe at the first sight of something that is awesomely fearful, and it seems to be human tendency for someone to become accustomed to the sight as he or she gets more and more exposed to it. Since church leaders were not the ones on the receiving end, they, therefore, took their time in making relevant decisions although the delay had a negative impact on the worship experience, programme participation, spiritual growth and ultimate salvation for Adventists with visual challenges. It was, however, very unfortunate that this delay was to take place from the very local leadership since disability awareness should have first been experienced at the local stage and subsequently be passed on to the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Notwithstanding the progress that had then been made by the Seventh-day Adventist world Church in Bible research and administrative procedures, a more assiduous attention was, however, still to be paid in addressing membership-related conditions for Adventists with visual challenges. Listed below, were some of the challenges that are confronted by this Adventist community:

- a. The Master Guide and Voice of Prophecy lessons are intentionally designed to facilitate the Christian's growth and extension of roots into the word of God. On the other hand, Church Hymnbooks contain written sermons for every Christian's life's emotional extremes. However, these materials were not readily available for visually challenged Adventists who often found it difficult to reach Christian maturity through these lessons and hymns. The braille and audio publications that were produced and distributed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church seemed to be only available in English. Some of the publication beneficiaries were not comfortable in receiving the spiritually uplifting material in English. Such members would rather have the publications be presented to them in their local native languages for them to share it with other residents of their condition. Besides, a considerable number of this particular group resided in the country's most remote areas where internet and even postal services may not have been convenient communication channels for them. If not spiritually well fed, such visually challenged members would not be strong enough to resist false teachings which were deliberately planted everywhere by the devil to dilute the truths.
- b. The negative attitude of some of the West Zimbabwe Union Conferences' able-bodied Adventists had given rise to the contemptuous treatment for visually challenged church members. An example of this form of discrimination was when opportunities for serving as Church's Ministry officers would not be extended to

visually challenged Adventists during the Church's annual nominations. Despite their zeal for the service, the Adventists with visual challenges had no other way of expressing their service interests since church officers were only appointed through nominations.

A worse situation was when a member with a visual challenge got inspired to serve as a minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The prospective blind student would, like other sighted Adventists, outwardly demonstrate his/her commitment by enrolling for training in Theology at an Adventist University. On programme completion and submission of application for ministerial service to Conferences, all sighted class colleagues would be engaged while the blind Adventist graduate remained unconsidered even for an interview.

More to the point, some of these affected Adventists would have been convicted to resign from conventional and well-paying jobs with an exclusive desire for being of service to the Lord. On having a head-on ordeal of rejection from the Church, the visually challenged Adventists would painstakingly learn to live with the embarrassment of meeting their former employment acquaintances with contempt.

- c. Although camp meetings are an absolute blessing to the Church, they, nonetheless, can be greatly inconvenienced by the Church's lack of adequate preparatory plans for accommodating visually challenged campers.

One such challenge can be when the camp-site terrain becomes too rocky for the camper with visual challenges to freely communicate his/her way to and from the restrooms and gathering points. Because of the incommutable paths, the condition of sightlessness can overwhelmingly become so burdensome for the

affected individual who must indispensably depend on the sighted companion for every slightest pace to avoid preventable injuries.

Most disgusting times have been situations when a visually challenged camper would have to frequent the restroom because of an upset stomach in a humid weather when dehydration would be at its lowest ebb, and one would be compelled to ceaselessly seek for accompaniment to and from the camp site public restroom. Such incessant dependence has the effect of eroding one's self-esteem away especially in instances when preventive measures could have otherwise been taken. Furthermore, public restrooms require a great deal of sight for the user to comfortably relieve oneself because of their unsanitary state.

Although the camping week has generally been employed for the Church members' spiritual growth; skills training exposure and evangelism, the Union Conferences had, however, not, up to 2017, shown any interest in the compilation and provision of lessons on special needs regardless of the congregations' lack of information on the subject.

- d. Annual conference launch programmes were tailor-made to orient the Church's incoming officers on the Conference's vision and respective Ministries' objectives. On the day, all Conference Departments/Ministries would distribute their well-defined year's goals save that of the Special Needs Ministries. Although it was, at the time, under the Personal Ministry, the Special Needs Ministries' local Church coordinators of the West Zimbabwe Union Conferences would, up to 2017, be advised to join either the Health and Temperance or the Zimbabwe Adventist AIDS Ministry—both of which, the departments' content, would be absolutely irrelevant to Adventists with special needs.



Although the South Zimbabwe Conference is commended for treating the Department as a separate entity at the 2017's programme, the deliberations of the meeting seemed, however, not to have been well aligned with the Worldwide Church's goals. At the gathering, the Special Needs Ministries heads for local District Churches were instructed by the Conference's responsible director to come up with separate Sabbath School classes for students with visual challenges instead of having them mainstreamed. When closely examined, the statement was seen to contravene the 2012 Special Needs Manual and the worldwide principle regarding inclusion for all persons with special needs. Such a directive could potentially bring about disharmony between the Conference department director and Church members who might have been conventionally employed as advocates for worldwide inclusion of people with special needs.

As a result of the Union Conferences' lack of special needs programme prioritization, most local church budget allocations for the Ministry of People with Special Needs appeared to be too minimal to cover the annual programme's estimated costs. This, subsequently, made the local church Ministry's appointed officers fail to have the negative attitude changed despite the quarterly and annual awareness programmes that would have been faithfully conducted by the responsible departments.

These were few of the instances observed during the researcher's membership as an Adventist with visual challenges. The research study was, therefore, carried out in light of the above-presented background challenges with the hope that the document would positively influence the church's responsible decision-making boards for further consideration.

## **Statement of the Problem**

According to the World Health Organisation statistics in 2017, approximately 15%, or one billion people of the world's population, were known to be living with disabilities (<http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>).

Although the population of Adventists with visual challenges was too insignificant to notice, their mere presence should have been enough to move the congregation to action. This concept of placing emphasis on the soul and not on the number is biblically illustrated in the parable of the 100 sheep (Lk 15:4-7). The writer, Ellen White (1941), further elucidates the point by saying, "if there had been but one lost soul, Christ would have died for that one" (p. 187).

The numerical growth for Adventists with visual challenges seemed to have been directly linked with the negative attitude from either the church's sighted community or the visually challenged Adventist themselves. If left unchecked for too long, the destructive bug could have divided the Church and eventually tarnished her image before the world and the God of heaven. On the other hand, the secular world was seen to be doing its best to fight against any forms of segregation—a role which, in fact, should have been assumed by the Church in its quest for perfection and holiness. Had the position been originally held by the Church, the impact would have, else, been even weightier and her evangelism made more effective.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The research study was to lead to the achievement of the following objectives:

- a. The principles that would be uncovered were expected to bring about an awareness which, if applied, was to assist in minimizing the gap between the Seventh-day Adventist members with visual challenges and their sighted counterparts.

- b. The research's desired outcome was to inculcate self-confidence and passion for full participation by Adventists with visual challenges through the provision of Braille/audio native translations of doctrine-centred lessons and other relevant literature.
- c. An important role of this research study was to aid in inspiring the Seventh-day Adventist Church's decision-making bodies to promote the inclusion of persons with visual challenges at all learning institution levels. This promotion was to be enhanced through reviewing the Church's constitutions, policies and other such major documents governing the operations of its internal establishments as churches, universities/colleges, training centres, senior and nursery schools.

### **Significance of the Study**

Despite the Seventh-day Adventist Church's concerted efforts in proclaiming the Bible's irrevocable truths, the congregation's retention level for people with visual challenges seemed not to correspond with that of the sighted. Since the cause of the discrepancy in the retention levels was either with the members with visual challenges themselves, their sighted counterparts or both parties, the purpose of this study was, therefore, to involve this minority group of Adventists with visually challenges as research participants. The group's participation would then assist in shedding light to the rest of the congregation's grey areas which, without their slightest involvement, would not have attracted any Church attention at all.

## **Setting, Scope and Limitations of the Study**

### **Geographical Location**

Zimbabwe is situated in the southern part of Africa and was named after the famous 14th-century stone-built city of Great Zimbabwe, located in the southeast province of Masvingo.

In the north, is the Zambezi River which separates the country from Zambia, Mozambique in the East, South Africa in the South and Botswana in the West. Lying between Zimbabwe and South Africa is the Limpopo river and on the west of which is its confluence with the Shashi river. It is also from this point that the borderline between Zimbabwe and Botswana starts.

### **Citizenry**

According to the 2012 Census, the country's area of 390,759 square kilometres was said to hold an estimated population of about 13 million by 2017 and of which, the two main ethnic and linguistic groups, were the Ndebele in the Southwest and the Shona in the North.

### **Seventh-day Adventist Church Constituencies**

Stretching from the South to the Northwest were the country's three of the ten provinces of Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North and Bulawayo which, in turn, constituted the Seventh-day Adventist South and West Zimbabwe Conferences. Lying from the country's Southeast through to the northern and eastern borders were the other seven provinces of Masvingo, Midlands, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland Central, Harare, Mashonaland East and Manicaland. The seven provinces also housed the Seventh-day's other four conferences of East Zimbabwe, North Zimbabwe, Northwest Zimbabwe and the Central Zimbabwe Conferences. In accordance with the

Seventh-day Adventist Church unions' realignment programme of 2017, the six Conferences were further subdivided to become three Unions, namely, West Zimbabwe Union, Central Zimbabwe Union and the East Zimbabwe Union--all of which are as shown in the table at the end of the chapter. The three Union conferences were part of the South Africa Indian Ocean division of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference.

### **Research Description**

There are generally six categories of disabled people, namely the physically challenged, the visually challenged, the deaf, the simultaneously deaf and visually challenged, albinos, the mentally retarded and the extremely disabled. For feasibility purposes, the research work was confined to the study on the visually challenged community.

A total number of 20 respondents were interviewed. Owing to the respondents' population size limitation, the South Zimbabwe and West Zimbabwe Conferences were covered instead of one. Each Conference constituted 50% of the total population of respondents.

The South Zimbabwe and West Zimbabwe Conferences' head offices were situated in the country's province of Bulawayo and were only three streets apart. This geographical fact was an immense advantage in that, the Conferences' District pastors convened their regular meetings in the same country's province. Coupled with the WhatsApp network system that was required for facilitating access to the pastors' cell phones at a rather low cost, the geographical location of the Conferences was, thus, going to enhance the researcher's statistical data collection from the pastors in a rather great way.

The research involved visually challenged respondents who often did not possess a handy and convenient mode of writing equipment as a pen but, most probably, a Braille writing slate. Where such a writing device was available, Braille paper would not be as readily accessible because of its being an expensive and imported product. Besides, writing would itself have the effect of making it impossible for information transfer both in terms of time spent and researcher's efforts in structuring and restructuring of the follow-up questions. Furthermore, the respondent would also have felt threatened by the need for responding through writing. As a result, the use of semi-structured interviews were seen to be effective instruments for gathering information for this research study.

The study was targeted at persons with visual challenges who, being few, comprised one of the Church's minority groups and were often geographically dispersed. As a result, extensive traveling was needed for eliciting the required information. Although the undertaking was to be done at a cost, the respondents' dispersion was, nevertheless, tremendously helpful in minimizing information bias.

Since the purpose of the research was to improve the visually challenged members' worship experience and programme participation, only those from the Adventist Church were, therefore, involved in the interviewing exercise.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following are terms that will be used throughout this project:

**Blindness:** According to Encarta (2008), blindness is “total or partial inability to see because of disease or disorder of the eye, optic nerve or brain. The term typically refers to vision loss that is not correctable with eyeglasses or contact lenses.”

**Disability:** According to the American Disability Act of 1990, a person with a special need or disability refers to an individual, “with a physical, mental or sensory disability, including a visual, hearing or speech functional disability, which gives rise to physical, cultural or social barriers inhibiting him from participating at an equal level with other members of society in activities, undertakings or fields of employment that are open to other members of society” (Encarta 2008).

On the other hand, the Encarta dictionary (2008), presents disability as a restricted “capability to perform particular activities...an inability to perform some or all of the tasks of daily life...a medical condition restricting activities or...a medically diagnosed condition that makes it difficult to engage in the activities of daily life.”

**Integrate:** The Encarta Dictionary (2008) defines the word as making “something open to all: to make a group, community, place, or organization and its opportunities available to everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender or social class.” Or “fit in with group: to become an accepted member of a group and its activities or help somebody do this”. On the other hand, Hick and Kershner (2009) view this as “fulltime placement of a child with a disability in a mainstream class in his or her local school” (P. 2).

**Inclusion:** Hick and Kershner (2009) define the process as “the extent to which a school or community welcomes pupils identified with special educational needs as full members of the group and values them for the contribution which they make” (p. 3).

**Normalization:** According to Wolfensberger (1972), normalization refers to “the philosophical belief that we should use means that are as culturally normative

as possible to establish and or maintain personal behaviours and characteristics which are culturally normative as possible” (p. 28).

**Mainstream:** According to the Encarta Dictionary (2008), this is to “enrol special students in general classes: to enrol students with physical disabilities or learning difficulties in general school classes”.

**Inclusion:** According to the Encarta (2008), this refers to “education teaching challenged children in regular classes: the practice of educating students with special needs in regular classes for all or nearly all of the day instead of in special education classes.”

Please, note that the phrase “observable disabilities” will interchangeably be used with the phrase “special needs”.

**Visual impairment is also known as blindness:** The term “blindness” is not as commonly used in disability circles as anyone may think. In disability circles, the term “blindness” has often been used to denote the condition’s extremity as shall be seen in the document’s next section. Over and above, the chapter will pay tribute to other authors’ works and, thus, determine how their respective contributions may have impacted on visual impairment today.

*Table 1. Subdivided Conferences of Zimbabwe and their Unions*

<b>Grouped Conferences</b>	<b>Union Formed</b>
South Zimbabwe & West Zimbabwe Conferences	West Zimbabwe Union Conference
Northwest Zimbabwe & Central Zimbabwe Conferences	Central Zimbabwe Union Conference
North Zimbabwe & East Zimbabwe Conferences	East Zimbabwe Union Conference



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This portion of the study is focused on various contributions that were made in shaping the field of visual challenges into what it later became. Here, an effort was made in unearthing the extent to which visually challenged people participated in the building of the economic, social and spiritual growth for countries bearing their citizenry.

The study also closely examined earlier-employed methods used in solving challenges encountered by blind persons. This methodology of analysis was to help in determining whether they were to be adopted, altered or substituted in order to address the perception differences of the West Zimbabwe Union's visually challenged Adventists and their sighted counterparts.

#### **Visually Challenged People's Participation**

A reconsideration of a portion of the definition for disability, "barriers inhibiting him from participating at an equal level" Encarta (2008), revealed that there was need for equal participation between persons with observable disabilities and their able-bodied counterparts. As everything has some form of beginning, a look into yesteryears' participation by blind was, indeed, going to help in appreciating the West Zimbabwe Union Conferences' struggle between the visually challenged and the sighted Adventists.

## **Visual Challenge in Antiquity**

Loss of eye vision has been regarded by Dobree and Eric Bolter (1982) as the world's most dreaded physical infirmity a human being can ever contract (p. 115).

Dobree and Bolter (1982) continue to indicate how persons in this condition were not permitted to discharge any contributory role in a family or community (p. 115).

In his comment, Lowenfeld (1975) pens, "the treatment of the blind was reported to be essentially the same as that of the aged, infirm or the indigent" (p. 14). He further says that all aged and blind persons were regarded as a liability to the nation particularly in times of danger (p. 14). In safeguarding the nation from bearing unnecessary burdens as in caring for the blind citizens, the writer indicates two deployed mechanisms, and these are annihilation and veneration (p. 14).

In his explanation, Lowenfeld says that annihilation had to do with the total destruction of blind people from the society while veneration was a way of "putting them above the ordinary" (p. 14).

### **Annihilation**

The decision for eliminating a visually challenged son or daughter was made by the family head, Lowenfeld says (p. 15). Commenting on the justification for annihilation, Lowenfeld pens:

In the struggle for existence, it was often necessary to limit the number of children in a family; ... to eliminate those who put a strain on the economic or defensive position of the group and retain those whose strong physical qualities were considered a likely asset (p. 15).

The same writer also cites the second reason for annihilation as parents' compassionate act exercised to prevent their blind children from experiencing a life of pain (p. 15). Annihilation, Lowenfeld further indicates, seemed not to have been a

barbaric phenomenon as Greeks and Romans (like other primitive nations) were also engrossed in the practice (p. 15). In other words, annihilation was the parents' way of expressing love for their physically challenged offspring (p. 16).

The third basis for annihilation was religious since it was generally regarded as a protective measure against ancestral wrath (p. 15). Abang (1986) also concurs with the ideology by indicating that the ill-treatment was the society's way of expressing its fear for ancestral curse (p. 3).

According to Lowenfeld, the fourth justification for annihilation was rather economic in that, it reduced wasting of hard-gotten food from donors which, subsequently, would be distributed amidst the country's productive remnant (p. 16). Dobree and Boulter append by pointing out that the act of having the country refrain from giving the blind food was considered as a kind way of curtailing a life of misery endured by the food recipient (p. 116). Both authors also assert that in Rome there is evidence for physically unfit infant killing. This evidence, they say, is of small solid baskets which were used as infant containers to be thrown in the river Tiber and Thebes (p. 116).

In his narration on the execution of the annihilation exercise, Lowenfeld describes how Spartan villagers, for instance, would gather in the presence of an elderly man whose analysis was crucial in the physical assessment exercise of a newly born baby (p. 17). On being diagnosed physically unfit, the child would be thrown into the gorge of the Taygetus Mountains where he/she would be left to perish (p. 4). Dobree and Eric Boulter also assert that "formal rituals were developed for determining whether the degree of imperfection in the young ones was sufficient to justify the destruction and it would be decreed that those who were blind were put to death" (p. 115).

In instances where the blind were at least permitted to live and earn living through begging, Lowenfeld says that the government would resolve to terminate the giving of food and drink to the blind for two basic reasons. Firstly, the country would have procured the food from external donors. Secondly, the government felt that giving the hard-gotten resource to the blind was a wasteful exercise since the community was not economically productive (p. 15).

In quoting Guttenberg, Lowenfeld states:

[Bereft of sight was regarded as a useless burden to society and treated with intentional cruelty. ... They died an early death. Compassion in the sense of Christian teaching was unknown to antiquity. The aim was to exterminate physically defected individuals, the blind; an action against the useless eaters] (p. 22).

As time elapsed, Dobree and Bolter indicate that people began to consider annihilation as a barbaric practice (p. 115). Greeks and Romans began to allocate food and even allow blind citizens to beg from temple steps, civic centres and highways to earn a living (p. 115). In China, the authors add, blind citizens were freed from destruction to become soothsayers and citers of annals in the past (p. 116).

Although this stance seemed to be comparatively more human than the primitive years of destruction, Lowenfeld, however, accedes that the beggar's life was generally characterised by sack cloth dressing; food shared with a guide dog; open space shelter and an eventual death in a lonely corner (p. 20).

### **Veneration**

According to Lowenfeld, veneration was the history's stage when blind people's gifts and talents began to be recognised (p. 19). In this regard, Lowenfeld quotes Esser's observation on blind people's occupations during 7<sup>th</sup> century Greece

and Roman time as mainly including “[musicians, poets, lawyers, politicians, teachers, authors and prophets]” (p. 19). In his assertion on poetry, the author writes, “Indeed, one cannot think of Greek poets unless they are blind and poets, themselves, believed that one must be blind to be a poet” (p. 19).

### **Medieval Blindness and Institutionalisation**

According to Dobree and Eric Boulter (1982), the advent and spread of Christianity marked the end of the worldwide destruction for visually challenged people and ushered in humanitarianism and education (p. 117). This revolution, the authors note, became a crucial milestone in the lives of the visually challenged community. This, they write, was the time when spiritual leaders as bishops and educators began considering the need for providing education to persons with visual challenges--amidst other forms of disabilities (p. 117). Lowenfeld states that, despite the Catholic Church’s frantic efforts in meeting the ever-increasing demand for assistance by the needy (including the blind), the numbers kept escalating (p. 37). This, according to Dobree and Boulter, led to government intervention through the efforts of Louis IX to fund the establishment of one of Paris’ greatest institutions for the blind called *Quinze Vingts* (p. 118). The authors indicate that, since its establishment in 1284, the institution has remained to be one of today’s training health centre for ophthalmologists (p. 118).

Dobree and Boulter point out that, *Quinze Vingts* became a forerunner of the establishment of one of the most renowned centres in Paris known as the Education Institute for the blind founded by Valentin Haüy in 1784 (p. 118). Initially employed by the French government, the authors append, Valentin Haüy also became the first to offer formal education to blind persons including French Louis Braille, the originator of Braille writing for blind readers (p. 118). It was at this centre, reiterate the authors

that craft skills and philosophy training were formally extended to blind beneficiaries. He was “one of history’s greatest and most successful champions of the blind,” comment Dobree and Boulter (p. 118). Between the birth of Valentin Haüy’s brain child centre in 1784 and his death in 1822, the writers further explain, famous institutes for the blind including Liverpool 1791, Bristol 1793, Vienna 1803, Berlin and Milan 1807, Amsterdam Prague and Stockholm 1808, St Petersburg and Zurich 1809, Dublin (a protestant school) 1810 and Copenhagen 1811, Aberdeen 1812, Dublin (A Catholic School) 1815, Brussels 1816, Naples 1818 and Barcelona in 1820 (p. 118). Dobree and Boulter concede that:

The acceptance by blind individuals and by organisations of blind people of ever greater responsibility for the planning and administration of those activities which affect their lives has been profoundly welcomed and fostered by all who believe in the abilities of the sightless to shape their own destinies (p. 118).

### **Education and Employment**

Despite the great work that had been done by humanitarian efforts to establish the institutions for the blind and other destitute communities, Lowenfeld indicates that the disintegration of centres for the blind into hospitals subsequently attracted a great deal of criticism from institutionalisation opponents who viewed the charity-inclined motive “as desire for ostentation rather than altruism” (p. 37). Two other such theorists are James Cauffman & Daniel P. Hallahan (1992) who argued that, institutionalisation had a way of making its beneficiaries misfits on returning to their original homes where they were said to live an artificial life (pp. 299-303). Cauffman & Hallahan saw institutionalisation as an obstruction to development of blind people’s social interaction with their respective immediate sighted family members

because of the prolonged and exclusive stay in institutions as blind occupants (pp. 299-300).

In view of these new opinions on deinstitutionalisation, a new concept termed by Wollfensberger (1972) “normalisation” took centre stage (p. 28). Espoused in Scandinavia and popularized in the United States of America, the concept of normalization is recorded by Cauffman & Hallahan to have had its roots in the medical field (p. 3). The main thrust of deinstitutionalisation, writes Wollfensberger, was on making the behaviour of those who had been institutionalised (including sightless persons) “to be as culturally normative as possible” (p. 28). In other words, explain Cauffman & Hallahan, both the ends and means of education for students with disabilities should be as much like those of non-disabled students as possible (p. 46).

Although the concept of normalisation was counteracted by some theorists as Lord (1991) who believed there were some visually challenged persons who had been institutionalised for a long time and consequently felt it too late for them to establish other fresh bonds (p. 4), Cauffman and Hallahan record that deinstitutionalisation became rather too strong to be withstood by institutionalisation opponents (p. 50).

The earliest stage of normalization that also came to be commonly referred to as integration, comment Pijl and Meijer (1997) was implemented in schools during the 1950s (p. 1). According to the authors, integration “is placement of children with special needs in a mainstream or regular education system” (p. 1). In other words, a special school was to be identified in a region that would accommodate students with special needs, where visually challenged students learnt in a specialized classroom separated from that of their sighted counterparts (p. 1). The integration concept, elucidate the authors in their quotation of Hegarty (1991), was adopted for its

strengths in “[fitting schools in an environment to meet a particular community’s needs”] (p. 2).

Pijl and Meijer also have it that, as education and technology continued to usher in more changes in the visual impairment field, the integration concept had to be refined by having special students educated together as is demanded by the inclusion concept (p. 1). The justification for educators to refrain from integration was further echoed by Hick, Kershner and Farrell (2009) who attributed the need for the changeover to the visually challenged students’ emotional restlessness caused by treatment differences between them and their sighted counterparts (p. 66). Chakuchichi, Chimedza, Chiinze and Kaputi (2009) quoted Hegarty (1987) who viewed integration as being special student-centred instead of being society-oriented (p. 9).

Lastly to be considered on the need for the introduction of the inclusion concept is Shuttleworth (2000) who, in quoting the Warnock Report’s ninth claim, stipulated “[Many children are not failing in the system. They are failed by the system]” (p. 34). In their practical example, Chakuchichi Chimedza, Chiinze and Kaputi cited integration challenges that were associated with able-bodied people’s attitudes in which statements as “It could be for Mr W. (mainstream teacher) who has two kinds of children (normal and disabled) and he would spend more time on disabled than he would on us” he says are often made (p. 5).

To redefine inclusion, Chakuchichi and his co-authors emphasize on having a special needs individual’s rights fully exercised and that “taking them from their communities becomes unacceptable except where it is for their benefit” (p. 10). Inclusion, the authors underscore, is therefore a psychological as well as a social process than just physical integration; it affects the society as it affects the individual



because the society and the individual are one (p. 10). Essentially, Chakuchichi Chimedza, Chiinze and Kaputi describe inclusion as an “unequivocal acceptance by society, adequate support systems and access to opportunities in the natural, physical, psychological and sociocultural economic environment where people with disabilities and those without reciprocally value each other” (p. 10). This principle of inclusion, they further indicate, was implemented after the Jomten and Salamanca international conferences on intellectual disabilities and, being a conventional resolution, the concept has been adopted by governments worldwide (p. 9).

Despite the great stride that has been taken by governments in enacting laws on participation equity for blind persons and frantic efforts by the corporate world in engaging blind employees for executive and vocational services, “the belief persists that blindness is synonymous with idleness and penury” concede Dobree and Boulter (p. 162). The general fear for losing a job, status and hope on account of one’s loss of sight, stipulate the authors, has made many absolutely dread blindness because of their irreplaceable dependence on seeing (p. 162). A traditional least of occupations, they concede, in craft and brush making, basketry, hand weaving of chairs and other forms of manual dexterity which correspondingly limit the employment horizon for the sightless has contributed to this general fear from the sighted working fraternity (p. 162).

An analysis on the financial disadvantage for both the sighted and visually challenged working citizen has made Dobree and Boulter concede that the upkeep costs of the guide dog; the escorting companion’s fare consideration; acquisition expenses for equipment required in making a sightless individual as normal as can be, are all seen to have a bearing in disadvantaging a blind individual’s general living (p. 163). It is for this reason, expound Dobree and Boulter, that the world’s governments

(especially in UK and other developed nations) have deliberately allocated budgets designed to subsidise blind citizens' economic upkeep (p. 164).

Owing to the technological advancements brought about by computer developments, Dobree and Boulter cite several professional job opportunities which they say were not possible in past years (p. 164). The use of computerised gadgets has allowed blind persons to contribute to nations' socioeconomic development in a much more marked way than has ever before, write Dobree and Boulter. These and other capabilities have been encapsulated in a table at the end of the chapter.

### **Mobility and Orientation**

Because of the tremendous impact it has on effective participation by the visually challenged, mobility and orientation is one subject that cannot go unmentioned in this section.

According to Tooze (1981), orientation is "the ability to understand the relation between what objects must one another" (p. 2). The author goes onto explaining that training a congenitally blind person is more challenging than training one who would have had sight at any stage of life (p. 2). Tooze advises that, when working on room orientation, a commonly used object as the door, table or bed must be identified and considered as a reference point (p. 2). One more important point Tooze mentions here is the significance of the blind person's memory in any house arrangement since he or she does not identify things through sight. In her advice, the author points out that items like cutlery, soap etc should not be transferred without alerting him or her on the change (p. 2).

Although the other senses of smell, taste and feeling are equally essential to a blind person's daily living, the sense of hearing, she adds, plays a key role in orientation. Further elucidating on the point, Tooze cites an example of the buzzing

fridge, ticking clock and singing birds as constant clues for someone to position him or herself in any of the kitchen's space (p. 2). Sound reverberation or echoes assist one to sense that he or she is walking through a narrow passageway or is now approaching a wall (p. 3).

The use of the olfactory or sense of smell is helpful to blind persons, she notes, as one's whereabouts can easily be detected in relation to fish, bakery shops, petrol pump and other such places whose environment is often inundated with some form of smell (p. 3).

In her writings, Tooze also refers to the use of landmarks and clues in orienting a blind person. These, she says, are permanently fixed objects as trees, rocks, gates etc., which when appropriately used, can be of tremendous benefit to a blind person's orientation and mobility (p. 4). Clues, Tooze asserts, are items that are temporarily positioned at a particular point and can be used as reference objects by the blind and include examples as a parked vehicle, a garden sprinkler, generator etc (p. 5).

According to Welsh (1980), at times, the environment has to be modified to enhance mobility for blind persons (p. 477). Some of the environmental modifications, in the author's view, incorporate construction of ridges between the road and the water drainage systems; ensuring installation of rails for bridge crossing and audio alert systems and Braille printed buttons provisions for use in storey building lifts (p. 477).

### **Mannerisms**

Mannerisms, Tooze writes, have a way of affecting a blind person's acceptance by the sighted community (p. 29). Mannerisms are "movements of the body to which an individual is prone and obviously enjoys but which, if allowed to

continue, can be extended into adulthood” (p. 29). These body movements, she indicates, usually begin as stress indicators at childhood but continue into adulthood as subconsciously indulged actions (p. 29). According to the author, some of these mannerisms include cycling one’s head when making a point; twisting or jumping around on the spot; eye poking etc (p. 30).

### **Courtship**

According to Lowenfeld (1975), blind youths also undergo biological changes that are as painful as those of the sighted adolescence (p. 104). Lowenfeld stipulates that the situation of a blind adolescence is compounded by sightlessness in four ways namely, sex curiosity, dating, mobility and concern for future (p. 104).

For sighted adolescence, sex curiosity, he says, can be satiated through simply seeing girls (p. 104). When dating, rites, sight plays a key role in selection of female partners and also in creating meeting opportunities with opposite-sex friends. This, he admits, can be challenging for a blind adolescence (p. 106).

Lowenfeld also notes that, in a world in which driving has become a basic and not prestige, mobility offers a challenge to blind adolescence who, by virtue of their sightlessness, cannot enjoy the privilege of accompanying “a girlfriend” (p. 109).

The blind adolescence’s concern for future is viewed by Lowenfeld as more adverse than it is for the sighted counterpart (p. 110). From the author’s perspective, the thought on future economic security; future state of marital life; prospects on having a family and the reality of bringing forth a visually challenged offspring can all pose bleak uncertainties in one’s life (p. 110).

## **Rehabilitation and Other Delivery System Forms**

Social and economic participation is not only intended for those who are born with congenital visual challenges and those who lose sight whilst in their stage of infancy. “Blindness can strike at any age but occurs more commonly in those who have established careers and lifestyles and even more often in the elderly” write Dobree and Boulter (p. 150). The authors postulate that, rehabilitation programmes have been designed to assist those desiring to have their condition restored to gain personal independence (p. 150). This stage of sight loss, state the authors, often makes an affected individual lose self-confidence, a condition which may compel the client to unlearn and relearn new methods of moving from place-to-place and freshly acquire skills as reading, writing and general communication (p. 150). In the case of a housewife becoming sightless, new housekeeping; child-upbringing; sporting and recreational techniques would all must be acquired for the individual to be as functional as possible (p. 150).

The rehabilitation training programme, advise Dobree and Boulter, should take place away from the affected individual’s normal environment to avoid the effects of memories whose unfavourable scenes might have contributed to the current condition of sightlessness and, thus, delay learning progress. Commenting further on this crucial topic, the writers emphasize on the need for the rehabilitation training to be done in the presence of those who would have undergone the same experience as a way of assisting new clients to acclimatise to the new condition of sightlessness with ease and expedience (p. 150). Besides, intermingling groups of varying experiences of this nature has a tremendous therapeutic effect (p. 151).

Since a considerable number of the clients of this nature would spend a larger chunk of their lives at home, Dobree and Boulter advise that their line of

rehabilitation training be emphatically on type of skills designed to meet “daily life in a family setting” namely, cooking, housecleaning, hand/machine cleaning, food storing and identification, select and mending and launder clothes, table setting, floor and cutlery polishing vacuum carpets; personal management skills as new method of cutting and handling food on the plate, selecting and applying make-ups, shaving without using a mirror and a multitude facets of other daily living means (p. 151). The authors’ least is also swelled to include activities done in combination with other community members which wrap in music dancing, fishing, open discussions, theatre-going, nature walks, table games all of which the authors say prepare a sightless individual for a normal future (p. 152). These rehabilitation training programmes are carried out in consultation with professionals as trained social welfare officers, technical officers and rehabilitation teachers (p. 152).

While the acquisition of daily living skills is essential in rehabilitation, attention on eye-related challenges is also of paramount importance. According to Jose (1985), special needs professionals are often not as readily available like other general educational services (p. 441). As a result, Jose counsels that institutions ascertain the provision for special needs-related services through training of personnel in related services as an interested, determined and dedicated rehabilitation professional and an eye-care specialist (p. 442).

### **Participation by the Blind in the Christian Church**

Given that the slant of the subject on participation by visually challenged persons has, hitherto, taken a secular inclination, a deliberate deflection into the holy pages and related writings will, therefore, massively help in making this research study a complete undertaking. Besides, the inclusion of the Christian component in

the study will essentially help in bringing the research closer home since the South and West conferences are, themselves, Christian entities.

The Bible was written to address men's horizontal and vertical relationships (2 Tim. 3:16). As a matter of fact, the aspect on the participation by visually challenged persons in worship services has also been dealt with in chapter 21 of the book of Leviticus which states:

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, [Speak to Aaron, saying: 'No man of your descendants in succeeding generations, who has any defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God. For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long, a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch. No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the Lord. He has a defect'] (Lev. 21:16-21).

Although there are other forms of defects that are mentioned in the passage as the lame; the marred faced; the long limbed; the broken footed; the broken handed; the hunchbacked and dwarfs (18-20), the focus of this study will, however, only be centred on blindness. Nevertheless, references on other defects may be made in highlighting some crucial point.

There are basically two schools of thought that have emerged as a result of the diverse interpretations of the passage. One camp is that which still upholds the Levitical ordinance and believe that it should continue to be applied to today's priesthood just as it was in the biblical times. The other is that which subscribes to the notion that the principle has since seen its days and is no longer applicable to today's worship and ministerial service.

Amidst the school proponents advocating for the Levitical ordinance is Clarke (2006) who described the view as a wise, rational and expedient way of handling sacred matters. He further appended by saying:

The man who ministers in holy things, who professes to be the interpreter of the will of God, should have nothing in his person nor in his manner which cannot contribute to render him respectable in the eyes of those to whom he ministers. If, on the contrary, he has any personal defect, anything that may render him contemptible or despicable, his usefulness will be greatly injured, if not entirely prevented. If, however, a man has received any damage in the work of God, by persecution or otherwise, his scars are honourable, and will add to his respectability. But if he be received into the ministry with any of the blemishes specified here, he never will and never can have that respect which is essentially necessary to secure his usefulness. Let no man say this is a part of the Mosaic Law, and we are not bound by it. It is an eternal law, founded on reason, propriety, common sense, and absolute necessity (Biblesoft Electronic Database).

In their contribution, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown (2006) also jointly concur with Clarke in advancing the reason for the notion as they write:

Since visible things exert a strong influence on the minds of men, any physical infirmity or malformation of body in the ministers of religion, which disturbs the associations or excites ridicule, tends to detract from the weight and authority of the sacred office (PC Bible Study Biblesoft Electronic Database).

Walton, Matthews and Chavalas (1893) also agree with the above as they assert that, since priests must be “in perfect health and full command of their body



and senses”, persons with physical deformities should be restricted from priestly service rendering (PC Bible Study Biblesoft Electronic Database).

On the other hand, is the school opinion on the premise that the Levitical priesthood has since expired and that all believers are now made whole through Christ the sacrifice. One such proponent is Wiersbe (2004) who, in his assertion, writes:

Everyone born into Adam's race is a sinner, suffering from the tragic consequences of Adam's fall, but our physical and moral defects aren't an obstacle to either salvation or service. When God invites the lost to be saved, He calls to [the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame] (Luke 14:21), the very people Jesus ministered to when He was here on earth (Matt 4:23-25). And all believers can surrender to the Lord and be [living sacrifices] for His glory, no matter what handicaps they may have. ... The Lord certainly doesn't include physical perfection as a requirement for ministry today (1 Tim 3); the emphasis is on moral and spiritual maturity. Paul had a thorn in the flesh which made him even more qualified to serve (PC Bible Study Biblesoft Electronic Database).

More to the point is Henry's contribution (2006) who elaborates the sentiment by uttering:

Under the gospel, those that labour under any such blemishes as these have reason to thank God that they are not thereby excluded from offering spiritual sacrifices to God; nor, if otherwise qualified for it, from the office of the ministry (PC Bible Study Biblesoft Electronic Database).

While the prerequisite for the priest's physical completeness was that significant, the qualities nonetheless placed them on a higher rung of holiness than those whom they led. Deffinbaugh (1998) consolidates the sentiment by writing,

“Higher standards do not necessarily assure [holier] people” but, instead, “that greater position and privilege brings higher responsibility” (p. 128). This, he further explains, was the whole essence of our Lord’s teaching when He said, “to whom much is given, much is required” (Lk 12:48). In a rather more detailed way, the author further qualifies his argument by penning:

There was no basis for a descendant of Aaron to assume that his position as a priest proved him to be holier than others, although it did require him to be more careful not to become ceremonially defiled. God has chosen Aaron to be Israel’s high priest, and his descendants to be priests. A look at Aaron’s life and ministry quickly shows that neither he (remember he led in the worship of the golden calf, (Exodus 32), nor his sons (remember the death of Nadab and Abihu, Lev. 10), were more holy. ... To measure personal holiness in terms of ceremonial and ritual purity is a mistake. The holiness of God is to be manifested through obedience to God’s commands and by loving one’s neighbour as oneself. Remember, too, that even though a priest was ceremonially pure, he still could only approach God by means of the shed blood of an innocent and perfect sacrificial animal (p. 128).

Both schools, however, agree that the Levitical priesthood represented Christ’s righteous priesthood as Clarke comments, “The priest, the prophet, the Christian minister, is the representative of Jesus Christ; let nothing in his person, carriage, or doctrine, be unworthy of the personage he represents” (Biblesoft Electronic Database).

In his close examination on the priest’s intercessory role, Barnes (2006) exhaustively notes:

The flesh of the victim, which represented the sinner for whom atonement was now made, was to be solemnly, and most exclusively, appropriated by those who were appointed to mediate between the sinner and the Lord. The far-reaching symbolism of the act met its perfect fulfillment in the One Mediator who took our nature upon Himself (Philippians 2:7).

To draw a more distinct contrast between the Levitical priest and a pastor or shepherd, the Online Christian Colleges have made a significant contribution in the subject. Some of the Colleges' major points are as enumerated in the third table at the end of this chapter.

Nevertheless, when the right time came, the owner of the Levitical priesthood (Christ) was born (Gal. 4:4). In Christ's capacity as a sinless and physically perfect nature, the Apostle Paul wrote:

By so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore, He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever (Heb. 7:22-28).

From its beginning to the very end, the Bible presents a heavenly Father who, through the perfect and holy nature of the Levitical priesthood, still calls the Israel of today to similarly resemble Him (1 Pet. 1:15-16). In his more vivid expression on how

Christ has extended the priesthood to all Christians through His death, John writes, “to Him who has loved us and washed\* us from our sins in His own blood and has made us kings\* and priests to His God and Father” (Rev. 1:5-6).

But then, Christians are not only priests. Penning to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul describes church members as parts of the body “For by one spirit we were all baptised into one body of Christ” he declares (1 Cor. 12:14).

In amplifying the thought, White (a researcher and director of Church Ministries in Missouri), quotes Swinton (2001) who writes, “[We can only understand the need for change when we realize that we are making changes in order that the Body of Christ can be made whole]” (p. 57).

Expounding on the desire for all men to be part of this holy body, White borrows Kunz’s writings (2011) who states, “[The deepest spiritual need of every person is acceptance as a member of a family of God]” (p. 24). It is in such a setting in which Carter (2010) is also reported by White saying, “[faith is formed, shared and strengthened; relationships are forged and deepened; and gifts are discovered, developed and dispensed]” which, again according to Carter, many persons with disabilities cannot enjoy (p. 2).

In sharing his mind on the cogent reason for being a Christian, Hauerwas (2004) is quoted by White as he postulates that Christianity is not about “[this and that doctrine]” but salvation being attained by “[participating in a community through which our lives are constituted by a unity more profound than our individual needs]” (p. 60).

Can disability be a hindrance or service before God? Responding to this, White quotes Webb-Mitchell (1996) who stipulates, “[One’s mental, physical or

sensory condition is neither a help nor a hindrance in relationship to God]” (p. 184)  
“but that the works of God should be revealed in him” (John 9:3).

Lest in this assumed physical completeness the church of God forgets that life is all about the struggle of pains and death, White again quotes Eiesland (2009) who presents an impressive reminder by asserting:

[The church is impoverished without our presence. Our narratives and bodies make clear that ordinary lives incorporate contingency and difficulty. ...  
People with disabilities in the church announce the presence of a disabled God for us and call the Church a communion of struggle] (p. 242).

### **Related Studies**

According to the 2013 August research study on Factors Influencing Work Participation for Persons with Visual Impairment conducted by Duquette of Nazareth and Louis-Braille Institute, despite their ability to meet the required qualifications and competence in a job for which they may have been engaged, the employment rate for visually challenged individuals remained far below that of the general population. In the research report, Duquette quoted the Canadian Participation and Activity Limitation Survey publication of 2006 of which the findings were that, “[among people aged 15-64 who had a visual limitation, only a third (35%) reported being employed [6], compared to 73% of Quebecers without impairments (7)]”.

The research acknowledged the visually challenged citizens’ lack of inclusion in workplace for their financial independence and how they had historically been under-represented in the labour market. In his report, Duquette indicates how the government had put in place policies for integrating visually impaired citizens into the labour market. Some of the examples cited by Duquette include Quebec’s Social

Integration policy adopted in 1984 and the more recent National Strategy for Labour Market Integration and Maintenance of Handicapped Persons of 2008.

Duquette goes on to point out that, some personal abilities and life habits that could be modified to increase work participation potential were behaviour, communication and mobility skills, responsibilities, education, work and job search.

In the second considered study on “Overcoming Barrier Participation by Visually Challenged Persons” conducted by the British Blind Sport in April and May 2014, some of the sporting activities in which blind people could participate are as indicated in Table 2 at the end of the chapter (p. 7). According to the sporting activities organisation, some participants had positive experiences during their early years who believed that the help and support from family, friends and supportive teachers was vital in the gaining of a positive outlook on sport. This support, indicates the report, helped the organisation’s many participants to manage their impairment and in leading an active lifestyle (p. 10). The report also said that, congenitally blind participants appeared to be more confident in their sporting activities and public travelling than those who had lost sight later in life (p. 13).

The survey revealed some of the benefits cited by the participants which wrapped in competition, health, social interaction, good feeling, participation, self-confidence, stress Relief, enjoyment, challenge, preoccupation, skills acquisition and sports passion.

In a third study on White People with Disabilities in Christian Community conducted by White of the Church Ministries Camp Barnabas in the state of Missouri, the report’s findings from different Christian community members’ comments, thoughts or ideas about the Christian community and their inclusion were as follows:

- a. A total of 18 denominations were represented in the study and these included Baptists, United Methodists and Presbyterians.
- b. There was a wide variety of roles represented, the highest percentage of which is recorded to have come from those who did not specify a role (38.9%). The roles of either the program director or coordinator represented 25.9%, 11.1% were pastors or priests, 6.2% were individual members and 4.9% were volunteers. A small number of representatives are said to be those who claimed to have been teachers, advocates, elders, administrators, committee members, field workers, and missionaries.

The question on how the experience of disability intersected with the respondent's life revealed the degree of interaction between each Christian community member and a person with a disability. In this regard, 90.7% were said to claim to have some degree of interaction with people with disabilities. Interestingly, 46.2% of this category were said to be parents to persons with disabilities and 31% were people with disabilities themselves. 14.8% were volunteers working with persons with disabilities, 11.7% were family members to persons with disabilities, 11.1% were professionals working with people with disabilities, 6.8% were friends to people with disabilities while 5.6% were said to be those who said that disability did not intersect with their lives.

On barriers to inclusion of persons with disabilities, the report indicated that most of the respondents cited negative attitude as a major hindrance which, they added, was in the form of hatred, judgment, negative mindset, and rejection. This barrier was followed by lack of accessibility, lack of acceptance, misconception and lack of training or understanding as well as lack of awareness or ignorance.

## Observations

Through His sinless, perfect and godly nature, Jesus now intercedes for all mankind; the physically complete and the deformed--including the Levitical priests and the current church leadership --who all have “fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). In other words, Christ’s incarnation did not only level the ground for laymen but that of priests and high priests together. It is for this reason, therefore, that in today’s ministry, there is no ranking of superiority. As a result of this equity, the apostle Paul wrote:

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:26-29).

Had this challenge (like any then spiritual problem) prevailed during the Bible author’s time and, thus, adversely have the later generation church adversely affected, he would probably have added, “There is neither sighted nor visually challenged Adventist Church member.”

Quoting Helen Keller, Berthold Lowenveld (1975) wrote, “Not blindness but the attitude of the seeing to the blind has been the hardest burden to bear” (p. 242). A close analysis on the foregoing pages indicate that, all challenges experienced by blind persons through the long corridor of history had something to do with attitude from the seeing. Although the battle had not yet been fully won, credit was to be, nonetheless, given to Christianity through which the socioeconomic and spiritual emancipation for the blind had been gained. In his contribution on attitude, Pierson (2010) remarks, “Over the years of urging churches to include people with



disabilities, I have come to believe that it is not the mechanics or the process that makes it happen. It is the attitude of people that makes it happen” (p. 182).

*Table 2. Accessories for Visually Challenged Persons*

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>FUNCTION</b>
Dog Guide	Leading the blind
Braille embossers	Printing Braille material
Computers equipped with synthetic speech systems	Use by the sightless
Voice output scanners and eye pals	Reading printed text to the blind
Braille calculators	Computing numerical data
Close-circuit television (CCTV)	Translating printed material
Braille and digital note takers	Note taking
Book-readers	Reading PDF HTML and other formats
Braille sensors	Translating projected PowerPoint material into refreshable Braille.

Abridged from *Encarta* (2008).

*Table 3. Capabilities and Employment Opportunities*

<b>Sports</b>	<b>LIS</b>	<b>Career</b>
Running	Self-tiding	Teacher
Goal ball	Dish washing	Lecturer
Golf	Cooking	Lawyer
Shooting	Sweeping	Musician
Swimming	Polish floors	Instrumentalist
Snow sports	Bed-making	Physiotherapist
Archery	House arrangement	Accounting
Athletics	Gardening	Management
Horse riding	Harvesting	Salesmanship
Bowls	Push a wheelbarrow	Entrepreneur
Basketball	Basket-making	Storekeeper
Climbing	Knitting	Clergy
Cricket	Brush-making	Machine-minding
Cycling	Mat-making	Computer programming
Sports	LIS	Career
Dance	Shoe-repairing	Rehabilitation training
Football	Laundry	Receptionist
Judo	Sewing	Social work
Rowing		Magistrate
Rugby		Disc Jockey
Sailing		
Scuba diving		
Tennis		
Tenpin		
Weightlifting		
Cardio yoga		

Abridged from: David Werner (1999), (p. 246); Dobree & Eric Boulter (1981), (p. 164); Sachin Srivastava (2011), (p. 100)

**NB:** Please note that, in this table, LIS stands for Life Independent Skills.

*Table 4. Levitical Priests and Pastors' Differences*

<b>Pastor</b>	<b>Priest</b>
Pastorship is related to pasture or shepherd of a flock. "Pastor" is generally used for a minister serving in a Protestant Church. A pastor can be male/female and not required to be celibate. Pastorship engages lay persons (Acts 4:13) although academic training is encouraged. A pastor serves as a congregation guide and provides for its spiritual nourishment. In other Christian denominations, women are now ordained as pastors. Ministry is based on one's piousness and zeal for service (1 Timothy 3:1-4). They normally dress in suits and other formal executive wear.	"Priest" originates from Greek presbyteros meaning "elder". "Priest" Refers to a minister serving in Catholic or Greek Orthodox traditions. Catholicism advocates for celibacy Although Greek orthodox is flexible Priesthood Requires seminary training and a rigorous ordination process.  Priesthood upholds traditions emphasizing liturgical worship, Eucharist or Mass celebrations. Only males were called to serve as priests (Numbers 8:5-26). Priesthood was exclusively allotted to the Levites (1 Chronicles 23:28-32). They are usually dressed in gowns.

Abridged from online Christian Colleges.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study was on the analysis of the impact of disability on the Seventh-day Adventist members with visual challenges. Its attempt was to expose reception and involvement differences between Adventists with visual challenges and their sighted counterparts in the South and the West Conferences of the West Zimbabwe Union. The research was, in fact, prompted by two developments, namely, the corporate world's deliberate move in making relevant policies governing education and employment for citizens with special needs as well as the modern technological advancements that have generally enhanced life for persons with special needs. This positive stance brought a marked improvement to visually challenged persons whose daily dependence upon their sighted companions was, subsequently, tremendously minimised.

Although the corporate world had, however, made such a significant improvement in considering the inclusion of people with visual challenges through the aforementioned ways, it was felt by the researcher that, the efforts were seemingly taking ages to reach maximum fruition. This delay was believed by the researcher to have an immense impact on the church which, after all, was the one to be leading in matters relating to wholeness and holiness since this would be of great benefit to the society's less privileged and defenceless. The church anomaly, thus, necessitated the need for carrying out the study.

People with visual challenges were generally known to be highly sensitive to any slightest negative response or reaction from the sighted community. This sensitivity was believed to determine how people with visual challenges individually related with the sighted in a rather conspicuously emphasized way. Nevertheless, it was noted that both parties were rather responsible for the ensuing differences.

The researcher, therefore, recognized that an attitudinal difference often existed between people with visual challenges and their sighted counterparts. The recognition of this disparity was of cardinal importance as it was meant to alert the involved parties on the need for them to each bury their differences by adopting recommendations proposed at the end of the study.

In John 17:20-21, Christ prayed for His disciples to be as one as He was with God the Father. As Christ's disciples and body of the day, the Church was similarly called to an insubstitutable obligation of maintaining the same type of oneness by nurturing, training and commissioning church members with visual challenges just as the same way as it did with its sighted membership sector.

The members' individual differences were not what interested God the most. Rather, the prevailing disparities demonstrated how God's spirit could make all

church members to be so united in their marked diversity. To be of service to God, it was important for each penitent soul to be willing to “spend and be spent for the course of the gospel” White (1970 [p. 565]). Church members were to bear in mind that God saw more than what could be seen from their physical nature which had its inherent limitations “for the Lord does not see as the man sees; for man looks at the outward appearances but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16:7).

### **Barrier-lack of Intentionally Created Forums**

Due to the congregation’s lack of awareness on challenges encountered by members with visual challenges, no open platforms were deliberately created for the affected members to air their concerns to decision-making committees or other such influential bodies or offices within the Adventist Church. As a result of this inattention, many of them lost heart and join other denominations--leaving the few who, despite the challenges, would continue to press on “towards the price of the upward call” referred to in Phil. 3:14.

### **Research Already Conducted and Gap to Be Filled**

With the different sight range categories that prevailed among visually challenged persons, efforts for authenticating extreme cases of blindness as a conventionally accepted disability were almost fruitless. This challenge was further compounded by certain benefits that were usually linked with total blindness which partially sighted persons would also want to enjoy by faking absolute sightlessness.

Another related complication was that, partially sighted people often felt uncomfortable to be associated with blindness. This bilateral stance would pose unwarranted confusion to laypersons in decision-making positions as they would subsequently sympathize with partially sighted individuals who, in turn, would gladly

take advantage of the situation. In both cases, however, doctor-certified affidavits indicating the visually challenged person's name; level of blindness; eye disease aetiology and name of the responsible ophthalmologist were always helpful in addressing a problem of this nature. Since blindness was a disability and could only be defined by determining the affected person's sight range through the visual acuity process, it momentarily sufficed to have it defined through the term disability. What, then, is disability?

According to the America Disability Act of 1990, a person with a special need or disability refers to an individual:

with a physical, mental or sensory disability, including a visual, hearing or speech functional disability, which gives rise to physical, cultural or social barriers inhibiting him from participating at an equal level with other members of society in activities, undertakings or fields of employment that are open to other members of society (Encarta 2008).

On the other hand, the Encarta dictionary (2008), presents disability as a restricted "capability to perform particular activities," "an inability to perform some or all of the tasks of daily life," "a medical condition restricting activities" or "a medically diagnosed condition that made it difficult to engage in the activities of daily life."

But, then, how did disability really begin.

Having been regarded as a book with the most reliable account on how men became susceptible to hunger, sickness, hatred, wars and all other forms of malice and his ultimate mortality (Gen 3:15-19), the holy Bible therefore became the research document's prime literature. Men's transgression saw the earth disintegrate from the

goodness ascribed to creation's respective phases (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25 and 31) to the current state of being universally disabled.

Not only did the universal disability leave men mortally affected but--amidst sin's other direct effects, became socially dysfunctional. The persons with observable disabilities' manly pride of self-reliance in Gen 3:18, which demanded that men's survival be enhanced through the release of sweat, was substituted by absolute dependence. These men would be sat at strategic points as temple gates and busy highways from where they received alms from generous passers-by for their daily sustenance (Jn 9:1-41, Mk 10:46-52, Acts 3:2-10). This pattern of life is gradually fading away as the application of more and new insights from studies in special needs continue to shed more light in this regard.

Although the subject on disability may not have received as massive attention as other study fields, recently conducted studies have revealed a paradigm shift from the biblically presented setting to the modern community. Unlike the early biblical times when information dissemination was mainly through oral means, the modern electronic methods have made the researchers and authors of these studies (and many others) effectively share their joys and ordeals in a comparatively easier way. Because of the researchers' biological and occupational attachment to persons with observable disabilities, they had their accounts written down to encourage each other and their future readers. For this reason, a substantial amount of literature for this research was, therefore, drawn from contributions by parents, teachers, guardians of people with special needs—some of the latter of whom are also included in the sources list.

The experiences of these men and women later gave birth to the world's renowned institution centres from which many persons with observable disabilities were shaped into being the society's valuable assets. According to Encarta (2008),

two of these major centres were the education institute for the blind in Paris respectively established by a French government employee called Valentin Haüy in 1784 as well as the US-based Gallaudet University for the deaf and blind founded by Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet in 1817.

Nevertheless, as years fled by, institutionalization gradually began to be viewed by other educators as a threat to the general upbringing of institutionalized persons with disabilities. Amongst the new theorists were Kaufman and Hallahan (1992) who argued that, institutionalization had a negative effect of making disability victims feel as misfits when back to their original homes because of the reduced quality of life they would later live (pp. 299-303).

To curb the upbringing disorder that had long been caused by institutionalization, educators introduced a new concept which they termed normalization. According to Wolfensberger (1972), normalization referred to “the philosophical belief that we should use means that are as culturally normative as possible to establish and or maintain personal behaviours and characteristics which were culturally normative as possible” (p. 28).

On the contrary, Lord (1991) wrote to echo sentiments by some of the institution beneficiaries for whom it had become impossible to get integrated into their original societies because of the long-established bond between them and their fellowmen with disabilities (p. 4).

However, despite the resistance by institutionalists, Wolfensberger (1972) continued to affirm that integration was becoming more and more widespread in use through computer technology by people with special needs as well as the distribution of educational publications (28). The level of this change was such that, some integration proponents began to view disability as a socially created construct which



Bogdan (1986) asserted by saying that it “depended on the victim’s social ability to interact with his/her environment” (pp 344-359).

The concept of integration had not only been significant in the above alluded sectors of education and employment but also to Churches, particularly the Seventh-day Adventist congregations of South and West Conferences in the West Zimbabwe Union where this research study was conducted.

Ever since its establishment in 1863, the Seventh-day Adventist Church had notably been growing in the following areas of ministry: Youth, Children, Community service, Music, Sabbath School, Stewardship, Education, Health, Voice of Prophecy, Literature publications and Personal Ministries. Possibly, these facets or departments of ministries were established because of perceived areas of need.

Similarly, on sensing its obligation for extending evangelism to persons with special needs, the church was recorded in the 2012 Special Needs Ministries Manual to have had formed the relevant ministry at the General Conference in 1995. At the time of its establishment, the Department was under the Personal Ministries but, from 2016, the unit was transferred to be monitored from the General Conference President’s office as the “Special Needs Ministries”.

In a bid to equip the responsible personnel in divisions, unions, conferences, districts and local churches, the department manual was compiled and sent to the Church’s institutions. The document was meant to encourage church officers to do what they could in facilitating the spread of the gospel and inclusion of persons with special needs in evangelism. This stance was evidenced by the stepping up of the production and distribution of the Braille and audio publications to both Adventist and non-Adventist visually challenged persons worldwide.

Another positive development in some of the local churches was the introduction of the Sign language for deaf persons who would be invited to a special Sabbath for persons with Special Needs. Although this fast spreading activity was usually provisionally done, it, indeed, became an indicator of bright prospects and purposefulness on the part of the Church.

While the Seventh-day Adventist Church was to be commended for the developments under the well-initiated goal of inclusion, the 21 years of the introduction and implementation of the concept on inclusion did not however seem to correspond with the results that had so far been achieved in the West Zimbabwe Union (among other Unions within the SID). This oversight was evidenced by a statement in the Special Needs Ministries manual (2012) which read, “the mission of Special Needs Ministries is to encourage the inclusion of all members in the Church. Unfortunately, this goal has not been fully met for many individuals with disabilities” (pp. 6-7).

Since considerable ground on general integration/inclusion of persons with observable disabilities had then been covered by other research works, an effort was, therefore, made in this paper to contextualize the concept to the Church setting as was earlier outlined (see section on Significance of the study).

However, as was the case with the prodigal son’s father who struggled in helping his older son to welcome his young brother (Lk 15), so was the Seventh-day Adventist Church expected to bear the pains of assisting its sighted members to accept their visually challenged counterparts.

Since Christ’s body (the Church [1 Cor 12:27]) and the head (Christ [Eph 5:23]) collectively make one body of the Lord, both parts were, therefore, expected to correspondingly move in unison. Furthermore, in as much as Christ’s mission was

bent on “healing of the broken-hearted, proclamation of liberty to the captives, . . . and setting at liberty those who are oppressed” (Lk 4:18), similarly, the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was expected to spiritually empower the society’s marginalized communities.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This portion of the study served as link for the introductory segment and the implemented research work. Topics considered in this section were on methods employed in collecting research data; research techniques or instruments used in eliciting information from participants; the chosen research design; population and sampling procedures; employed data analysis methods as well as the participants' ethical safeguard mechanisms.

#### **Hypothesis**

There seemed to have been perception differences between Seventh-day Adventist sighted and visually challenged members in the South and West Conferences of the West Zimbabwe Union. These discrepancies were, in turn, believed to have adversely affected the worship experiences and programme participation for the Conferences' visually challenged community.

#### **Research Design**

The study was designed to accomplish two main aspects:

- a. To establish the population proportion for visually challenged Adventists against their sighted counterparts in Churches from which the participants were drawn. This exercise was accomplished by backtracking participants' Church registration records to a manageable period of five years. The membership quantitative growth computation process, therefore, demanded that the population for visually

challenged Adventists be annually measured against the Church's total population and a population comparison for each of the quinquennial's consecutive years from 2013 to 2017 be determined.

- b. To verify the authenticity of the hypothesis by creating a conducive conversation environment within which the informant was to provide information through self-expressive means.

A mixed-mode form research design was therefore deployed to meet the demands of this two-dimensional hypothesis.

### **Justification for Visually Challenged Adventists Involvement**

Since the perception differences seemed to be more negatively impacting on the worship experience and programme participation for visually challenged Adventist members than it was with the sighted, the researcher subsequently thought it ideal to chiefly involve this category for three below-stated reasons:

- a. The involvement was expected to mechanically trigger some degree of positive response from sighted Adventists in accepting their visually challenged counterparts and jointly create a workable platform for serving as gospel co-labourers. This oneness-characterised environment was created with the hope of kindling a forum from which the parties' presumed differences could be reconciled.
- b. It was felt by the researcher that the involvement of visually challenged Adventists, more than that of their sighted counterparts, were going to be more convincing to Church leadership and decision-making committees on addressing needs pertaining to those with visual challenges.
- c. The divergent involvement of sighted Adventists as principal research participants was felt to potentially make visually challenged Adventists feel too worthless to

be regarded as acceptable and legitimate Seventh-day Adventist Church members. This outcome would have had a negative impact on the research's ultimate results and Church image by:

- i. The way the visually challenged Adventists would ultimately react on learning about the research and link their resultant assumptions with the Church's overall plans on their spiritual welfare and other membership related matters.
- ii. The way the general public and other denominations would respond and interpret the Church on how members with visual challenges were treated.

### **Population and Sampling Procedure**

Visually challenged people do not normally live close to each other. The distance is even greater in rural areas than in urban settings. Despite the phone and internet characterised urban environment—both of which would have enhanced communication efforts, the geographical severance hampered the researcher's correspondents' accessibility. This drawback, therefore, left the researcher with no alternative but to engage himself in physical contact with the participants.

As a result of these irregularities and backed by Urdan's assertion (2010) to "select participants on the basis of proximity, ease-of access and willingness to participate" (p. 4), the researcher therefore resorted to the use of convenience sampling as a means of identifying research informants.

Since the participants' respective Church clerks was deemed important, it was therefore felt that their selection be equally based on the same premise of convenient sampling. This decision was prompted by the researcher's realisation on the need for the visually challenged participant and clerk's information to complement each other as both were expected to have their membership at the same Church.

Furthermore, the visually challenged people are generally known to constitute a small sector of any given society. As part of such a minority community group, locating them therefore posed a great deal of difficulty. For this reason, the selected population sample was, therefore, made to constitute ten individuals from each of the West Zimbabwe Union Conference.

### **Research Methods and Design**

The purpose of the research study was to improve the spiritual experience for Adventists with visual challenges so that they benefit from worship services and evangelism programmes' participation just as equally as their sighted counterparts did.

Since the research was based on attitude; visually challenged Adventists' experiences and the numerical data on the West Zimbabwe Union overall membership population against that of the visually challenged, a mixed-mode research design was therefore employed. This mode of research design accommodated the research's both qualitative and quantitative aspects.

### **Research Study Instruments**

The research involved visually challenged respondents who often did not possess a handy and convenient mode of writing equipment as a pen but, most probably, a Braille writing slate. Where such a writing device was available, Braille paper was not as readily accessible because of its being an expensive and imported product. Writing had the effect of making it impossible for information transfer, both in terms of time and researcher's efforts in structuring and restructuring of follow-up questions. Besides, the respondents were also going to feel threatened by the need for

them to formally respond in writing. As a result, the use of semi-structured interviews was effectively used for gathering information for this research study.

A total number of 20 respondents was interviewed. Owing to the respondents' population size limitation, two conferences of West Zimbabwe Union were covered instead of only one. Each Conference constituted 50% of the total population of respondents.

Since the purpose of the research was to improve the visually challenged members' spiritual experience, only affected members from the Adventist Church were, therefore, interviewed and not those from other faiths.

The study was targeted at persons with visual challenges who, being few, comprised one of the Church's minority groups and were often geographically dispersed. As a result, extensive traveling was needed to elicit as much information as would possibly be required. Although this was a costly undertaking on the part of the researcher, the respondents' dispersion, nevertheless, immensely helped in minimizing information bias.

### **Data Analysis**

Several respondents happen to be serving in the government's departments of the education, judiciary and media sectors and the exercise, therefore, required that prior arrangements be made for setting interview schedule appointments. This pre-recording requisite also instilled psychological preparedness and general convenience on the part of the respondents—both of which were important in gathering information.

To enhance effectiveness and efficiency in the information-gathering exercise, the researcher used an audio voice-recording device which facilitated accurate coding of data for further analysis. Furthermore, a sample of these interview dialogues was



saved in a suitable data-storage device and attached as part of the research's appendix section.

### **Respondents' Protection**

The following measures were taken to doubly ensure the respondents' security against unforeseeable threats:

- a. Although the interviewer's identity was made known to the interviewee, no form of identity was demanded as a way of maintaining as much anonymity as possible.
- b. Maximum privacy was exercised during the research interview by ensuring the provision of a two-occupant room confinement for each session unless otherwise indicated and deemed fit by the respondent.
- c. Recorded material was discarded as soon as the task was accomplished. However, only one recording was preserved for the research's appendix purpose.
- d. No provision of financial allowance or such incentive was given out to respondents and an indicatory clause was, thus, provided during the interview-booking period to prevent any rising of possible hopes from potential respondents.
- e. Because of the preceding provision, the respondent's voluntary involvement was absolutely determined by his/her mere willingness. This, again, was established during the interview-booking period—an interval which provided for withdrawal if, otherwise considered.
- f. The interviews were research-centred, and such assurance was made between the interviewer and the interviewee during the interview-booking period.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

The mixed-mode research design required that two or more data research techniques be concurrently used which, in this case, were the semi-structured

interview and the questionnaire. When appropriately used, the research design combination has a way of complementing each other's strengths and weaknesses. Although the focus of the research was on both qualitative and quantitative variables, its thrust was, to a larger extent, more qualitative-inclined than otherwise.

The researcher's deduction on this aspect owed its basis to the governing hypothesis that perception differences were likely involved with the parties' attitudes. The use of semi-structured interviews as a data-collection instrument for the variable of this nature was thought to be effective and advantageous in three ways:

- a. It called for a one-to-one form of dialogue that would allow the interviewed correspondent to fluently express him/herself.
- b. It enabled the interviewer to minimise ambiguity by asking follow-up type of questions to ensure conversation clarity and conciseness.
- c. The instrument reduced the gap between the interviewer and interviewee and, correspondingly, created a good rapport between the conversation parties. This rapport was crucial in granting the interviewee the freedom and self-confidence he or she needed to unleash the prized data.

On the other hand, the research also required that a comparison in the total number for the annually registered visually challenged Adventists be made. This undertaking was meant to detect the membership growth level for the studied category during the quinquennium from 2013 to 2017.

Since the variable to be analysed was numerical (population), a quantitative research design instrument was required which, in this case, was the questionnaire.

According to the 18<sup>th</sup> edition of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, Church membership registration is kept and handled by the Clerks' Department. As a result, each of the participant's Church clerk was procedurally requested to complete

a questionnaire. To accomplish this, six of ten Churches had their membership registration records consulted.

### **Data Collection Instrument Validity and Reliability**

In his abstract, Golafshani quoted Lincoln & Guba (1985) who regarded validity and reliability as equally important in qualitative and quantitative research designs. In their definition analysis, the authors are reported to have highly preferred the use of the term “[dependability]” for the qualitative paradigm than any other (p. 300).

The researcher was aware of possible loss or alteration of information during its transfer from the interviewee to the interviewer. To minimise such data transfer-related errors, the researcher employed the feedback evaluation and the data saturation processes.

### **Feedback Evaluation**

The feedback evaluation technique required that the researcher transcribe the participants’ audio recorded responses into written scripts. These scripts were then returned to the respective participants for evaluation on information given during the interview sessions. This process was meant to detect the possible loss or alteration of information during its transfer from the interviewee to the interviewer. On assessing the interviewer’s response version, the participant would then either disapprove or confirm the script.

Notwithstanding the researcher’s efforts in translating the questions into one or two of the indigenous languages of Ndebele and Shona for some participants who were less conversant with English, the interviewer’s follow-up questions and the

participants' interjectory remarks, nonetheless, went a long way in curtailing the possible misinterpretations.

### **Data Saturation**

In an Abstract by Saunders, Grady (1998) was recorded defining data saturation as “[the point at which New data tend to be redundant of data already collected]” (p. 26). According to Grady, when the researcher began to hear the same comments resurfacing again and again during an interview, it was an indicator that data saturation had been reached and was, thus, time to stop collecting information and start analysing what had been collected.

Although the researcher was not quite certain on whether the figure 10 for each of the two Conferences sample population size would be reached, he was, however, convinced that the ability to reach such a level of participation would meet the data saturation expectations. On implementing the research plan, the researcher became aware of information saturation when he was interviewing the sixth participant. The method, therefore, exhibited a great degree of validity and reliability in the data collection instrument that had been chosen for the task.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher had to follow a deliberately set layout of questions, both of which served as a guide and as a way of assisting oneself to remain in track during interview discussions.

Although a question would sometimes require further clarification through deployment of one or more explanatory words, the researcher had to, nevertheless, ensure that the discussion sense would not be lost in the process. Often, the question

sense-preservation would be guaranteed by having the interviewee ask a particular question in his or her re-phrased way.

The questioning plan was set in such a way that, at most, five sessions were conducted consecutively for each day to minimise monotony on the part of the interviewer. Although it had its expenses through increased days and lodging costs, the dividends were, however, tremendous.

Some of the questions included in the interview schedule were as follows:

1. How old is your membership in the Adventist Church?
2. Were you a Christian of another faith before becoming an Adventist?
3. If your answer is yes, what marked contrasts or similarities might you have observed in the relationship between visually challenged and sighted Church members of your former and the current faiths?
4. Have you, during your membership, had an opportunity to participate in any; some or all of the Church's public praying, singing, Bible study, evangelism and/or camping activities?

The Church clerks' partial questionnaire was structured as below:

1. Name of the conference.....
2. Name of the district.....
3. Name of the Church .....
4. Population for visually challenged persons and total Church membership in 2013.....

### **Participant Identification and Appointment Booking**

While a handful of participants' identifications had been earlier done from elementary school education years, there were others that needed to be established

through formally booked visitations and would, thus, require extensive travels using public transport. However, most participant identification had already been done during the researcher's Church crusade and Guests' Sabbath invitations.

### **Interview Appointments**

Interview appointments were made three to five days prior the actual occasion as a way of granting psychological preparedness to the participant. A reminder phone call was again made before the actual day to confirm the arrangement or any changes that needed to be made beforehand.

There was no challenge for interviewing participants residing in less density areas since an extra room would often be made available for the interview to be conducted in a serene and private environment.

A considerable degree of hardship, however, was experienced with participants who dwelt in high density suburbs where most of them had been born and bred in homes with extended families to which they were too attached to allow anything unusual to disturb their biological affiliations. Such a relationship extremity could be sensed in homes in which the family would have only one Adventist who, at the same time, happened to be the interviewee. In such a case, the participant was to be intelligently withdrawn from the family and have him or her interviewed from the vehicle used by the researcher. This informal undertaking was beneficial in three ways:

- a. It preserved the Seventh-day Adventist Church's somewhat harmful information from negatively influencing non-Adventists whose understanding on the faith would else be eclipsed by the interviewer's misinterpreted conduct.

- b. The risked arrangement had a way of putting out any tensions that would possibly be raised between the researcher and the interviewee's non-Adventist family members.
- c. It became a cost-effective measure that averted unnecessary expense accruals which would have been propelled by the need for more private and formal settings.

### **Note-Taking Mechanism**

The interviews demanded that notes be made for each question and subsequent response. To facilitate this, the researcher digitally recorded all interview sessions. This was done with the participant's prior arrangements and consent. Notes would then be taken during the recordings' replay.

The sessions also required that two computer folders be created for the South and West Conferences respectively. The file in each folder was numerically renamed from 1 to ten and saved as a recorded file depending on where the interview was conducted and the interviewee's response.

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

Analysing qualitative data demanded that some form of pattern be deliberately designed to facilitate a more meaningful and statistical interpretation. To achieve this, data from informants was, therefore, organised, coded and analysed according to emerging themes and subsequent categories. The findings were graphically displayed using tables and figures.

### **Ethical Safeguards**

The research was conducted in the Seventh-day Adventist Churches of the South Zimbabwe and West Zimbabwe Conferences. A letter was also written by the

Adventist University of Africa (AUA) Director of MA and PHD in Leadership Programs to authenticate the research and related procedures. This letter also served as a Church's buffer against intentionally devised unscrupulous practices by non-authorized researchers.

Furthermore, a researcher's application for permission to use the Church's institutions' resources was also attached to the copy from AUA. The researcher was also aware of the need to uphold the participants' rights which included the treatment of provided information unaltered and with a high degree of confidentiality. In line with this requirement, the researcher therefore guaranteed involved informants to have this obligation unreservedly met by taking the following measures:

- a. All research interviews were going to be conducted anonymously.
- b. The informants were also doubly assured that all interview recordings were to be discarded as soon as the research was completed.

### **Reaction**

Although participants generally viewed the research as a positive development in bringing Seventh-day Adventist Church members together, it was rather overwhelmingly appreciated by visually challenged individuals. They felt that a research initiative of this nature was a big stride in conscientizing the Church on the need for carrying out a needs-analysis survey for the Church's unobserved membership categories as this was the way to have their needs known and addressed.



CHAPTER IV  
PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION  
OF RESULTS

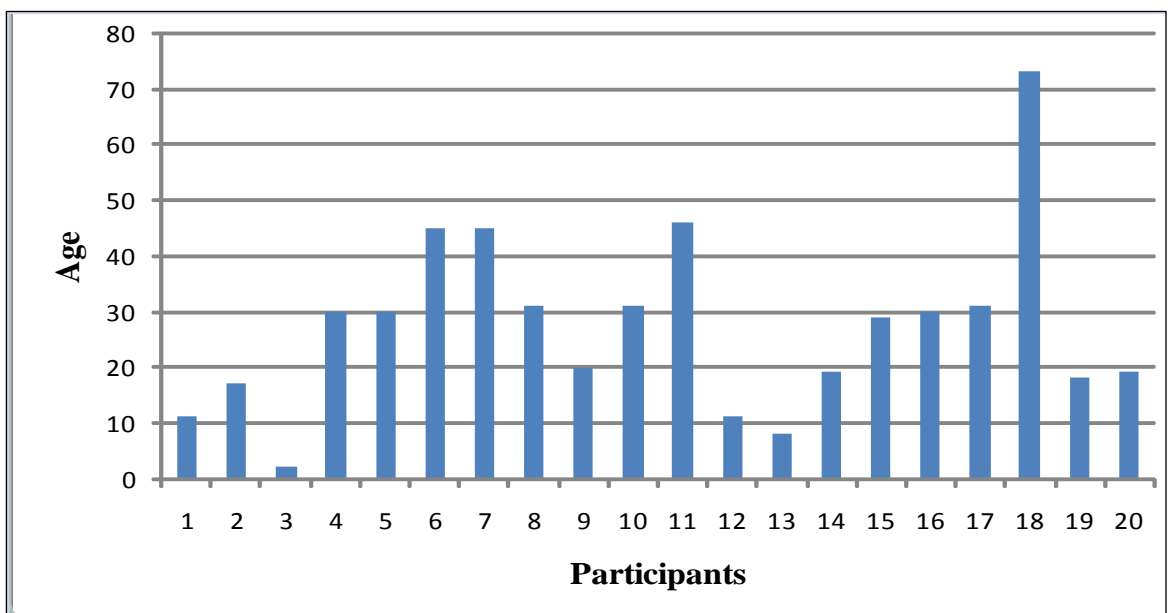
This section of the study discusses data collected from research participants. Its thrust was to analyse the results to detect the degree of deviation from the research's initially set objectives. To achieve this, the research participants' responses were subdivided into the below-described six themes. The results have not been apportioned to respective Conferences from which participants were each drawn but, rather, bunched into one constituency of the South West Zimbabwe Union.

**Category Themes**

1. The first objective called for the visually challenged Adventist's establishment of membership length to link the individual's spiritual growth with his or her eligibility for participation in the Church's activities for which he or she would have been appointed.
2. The second objective was intended to establish the participant's level of spontaneous participation which, despite apparent adversities, would demonstrate the individual's resolute purposefulness and appreciation for the Church's Bible-based doctrines.
3. The second objective was meant for prompting the Church to outwardly express its appreciation for the visually challenged individuals' unexpected level of participation by appointing them for serving in any of the departments like other sighted Church members.

4. The second objective was additionally designed to establish the membership quantitative growth for visually challenged Adventists.
5. The third objective was intended to establish the root cause of the Church's seemingly unyielding position for not engaging the visually challenged individual in its activities when his or her membership and participation were the same as that of the sighted counterpart.
6. The fourth objective was meant to attend to the visually challenged individuals' suggestions on the improvement for service and programme participation for their membership to be at an equal footing with that of their sighted counterparts.

### Findings



*Figure 1. Membership range*

## Membership Length

Figure 1 shows the participants' respective membership periods ranging from two to seventy-three years.

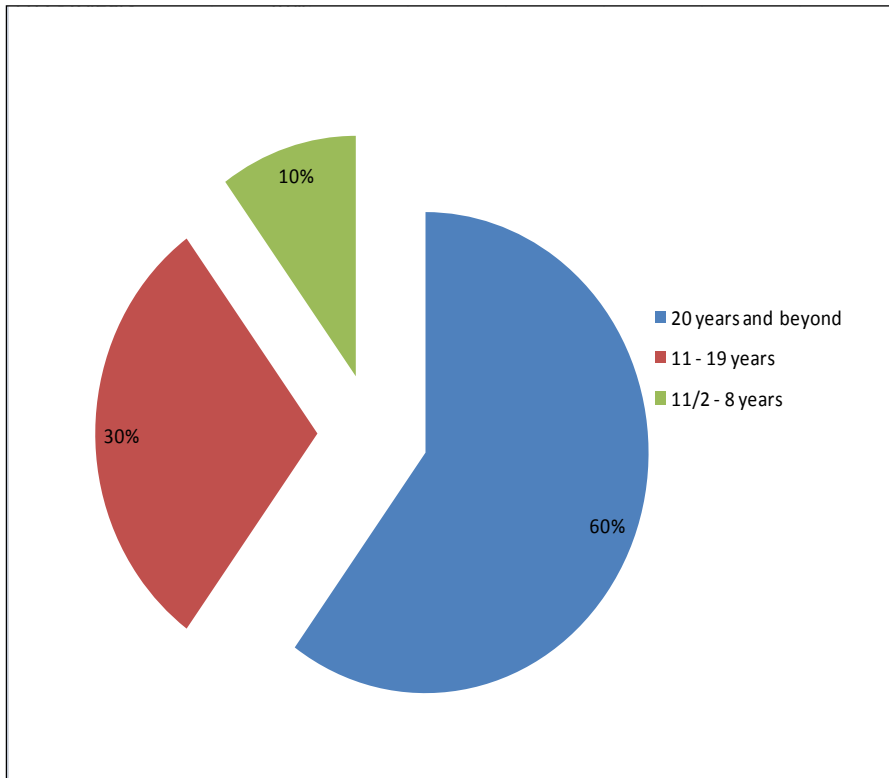


Figure 2. Membership age brackets

Figure 2 depicts the participants' three brackets of age groups which were:

- 2 to 10 years;
- 11 to 19 years and
- 20 years and above

Since the first objective was partly meant to establish the visually challenged participants' respective membership period, it was noted from Figure 2 that 60% of the participants had been Adventists for 20 years and above while 30% of them had their membership ranging between 11 and 19 years. The remaining 10% portion of

those with 2 years to eight years was evidence that the West Zimbabwe Union had had no baptisms for visually challenged candidates for 2 years.

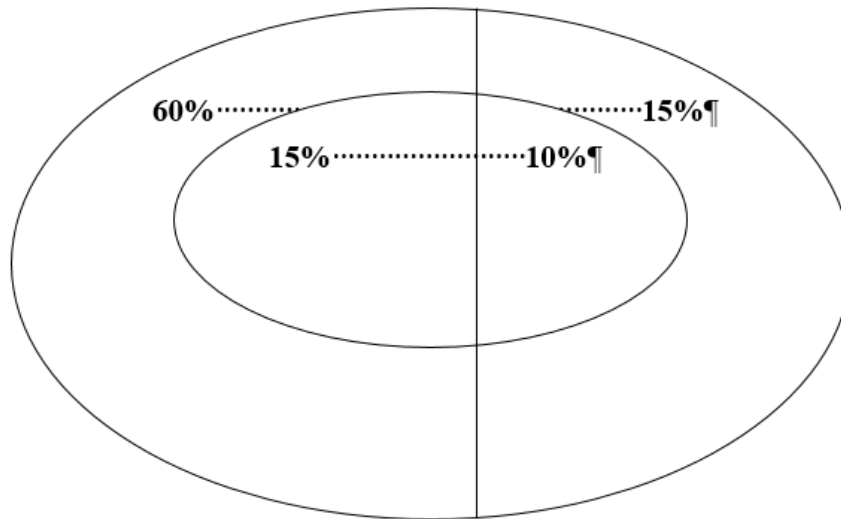


Figure 3. Adventist education impact

In Figure 3, 15 or 75% constituted those who were converted into Adventism. Among these were 12 who, one time or another, had attended Adventist schools while 3 or 15% were those who never went to Adventist institutions at all. On the other hand, there are five or 25% who were born in Adventist families and 3 or 15% of whom, at one time, went through Adventist schools while 2 or 10% did not. From this reflection, it could therefore be deduced that, 75% of the participants was of those who, at some time, had received Adventist education.

This finding undoubtedly proved the significance of the role played by integrated Adventist education centres (schools with inclusion programmes) for visually challenged young and elderly students.

### **Level of Participation**

According to the research findings, membership participation was in four categories which are as indicated below:

- a. Those who participated in all the Church's five major activities of praying, singing, Bible studies, evangelism and camping;
- b. Those who participated in praying, singing, Bible studies and camping;
- c. Those who participated in praying, singing and Bible studies and
- d. Those who did not participate in the Church's major activities at all.

The research survey revealed that, eight of the participants constituting 40% participated in all five activities, five or 25% were not involved in evangelism, four or 20% neither participated in evangelism nor camping while the remaining three or 15% were not involved in any of the Church's activities at all. This therefore means that, 65% of the interviewed participants were not involved in any evangelistic activities of witnessing and preaching while 35% could not benefit from the Church's annual camps. About 25% of the participants attributed the lack of participation to failure of accessing relevant literature as Sabbath school pamphlets, Voice of Prophecy etc.

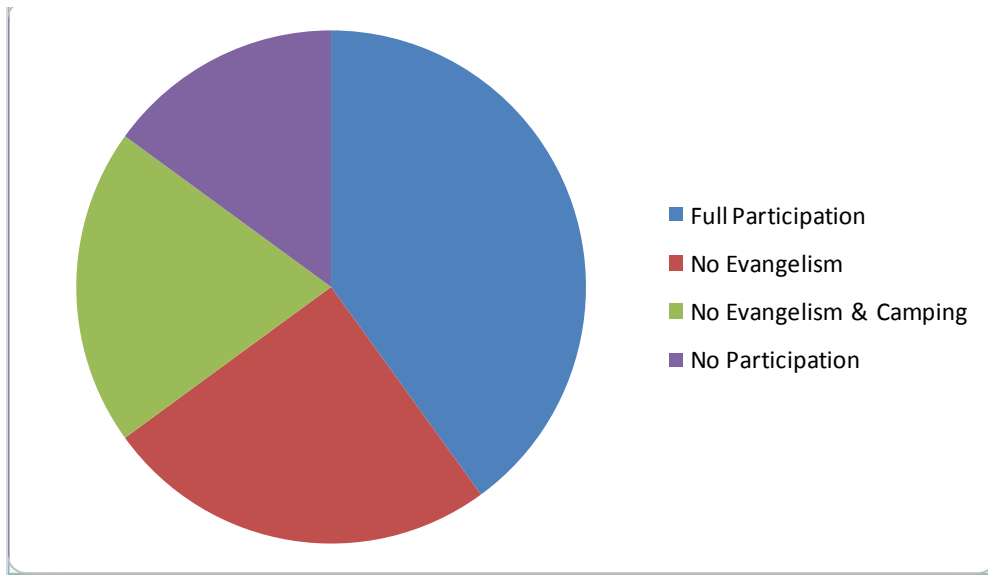


Figure 4. Participation

Table 5. Church Membership Weaponry

		Activities Done			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	None	9	45.0	45.0	45.0
	VOP	2	10.0	10.0	55.0
	Quarterly	1	5.0	5.0	60.0
	Master Guide	1	5.0	5.0	65.0
	Master Guide & VOP	4	20.0	20.0	85.0
	Bible & VOP	1	5.0	5.0	90.0
	Bible, Quarterly & Master Guide	1	5.0	5.0	95.0
	VOP, Quarterly, Master Guide & Bible	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Table 5 indicates that:

- a. Only 5% (1) participant had had access to both the Bible, the Sabbath School Lessons Quarterly, Voice of Prophecy (VOP) Discovery lessons and Master Guide Training.
- b. Only 5% (1) had a complete Braille Bible, accessibility to Sabbath School lessons and was also a Master Guide certificate-holder.
- c. Only 5% (1) had a complete Bible and access to Sabbath School Quarterly.

- d. 20% (4) were VOP and Master Guide Certificate-holders.
- e. 5% (1) was a Master Guide certificate-holder.
- f. 5% (1) had access to the Sabbath School lessons.
- g. 10% (2) had access to the Sabbath School Lessons.
- h. 45% (9) did not have any of the above-mentioned spiritual growth tools.

When closely analysed, Table 5 demonstrates that only 15% (3) of the 20 participants had Bibles while 15% (3) had access to Sabbath School Lessons. In other words, about 85% of visually challenged Adventists had no Bibles and 85% had no access to Sabbath School lessons.

It should also be pointed out that, the handful few of those who have had access to VOP, and Master Guide lessons attributed their success to other fellow Adventists' voluntary reading services. Nevertheless, participants applauded the Church's Christian Record Services for the provision of Sabbath School and VOP Discovery Lessons although 50% were not aware of the service at all.

Interestingly and providentially, 50% of the participants were females and the other 50% were males. Nevertheless, only 30% or 8 of the female participants were numbered as being actively involved, as shown in Table 5, while 50% of males were also among the actively participating members.

It could be deduced from Table 6 that, the Women's Ministry still had much to do in spiritually empowering visually challenged women to raise the participation rate for this category.

*Table 6. Participation Gender Equity*  
**Gender & Church Activity Cross Tabulation**

		Church Activity		Total
		Not Active	Active	
Gender	Female	7	3	10
	Male	5	5	10
Total		12	8	20

However, contrary to the above findings on Church participation, the research on Overcoming Barrier Participation had all 35 participants motivated when they engaged themselves in sports activities despite their individual visual challenges. It was the researcher's strong belief that, the Church could learn and unlearn much from such findings. If Church participation of the visually challenged was as important as it practically ought to be, then there was still much work to be done.

### Service Appointment

As portrayed in Figure 5, only 35% of the interviewed participants had once or frequently been appointed for serving in the Church's departments while 65% of them had never had the opportunity.

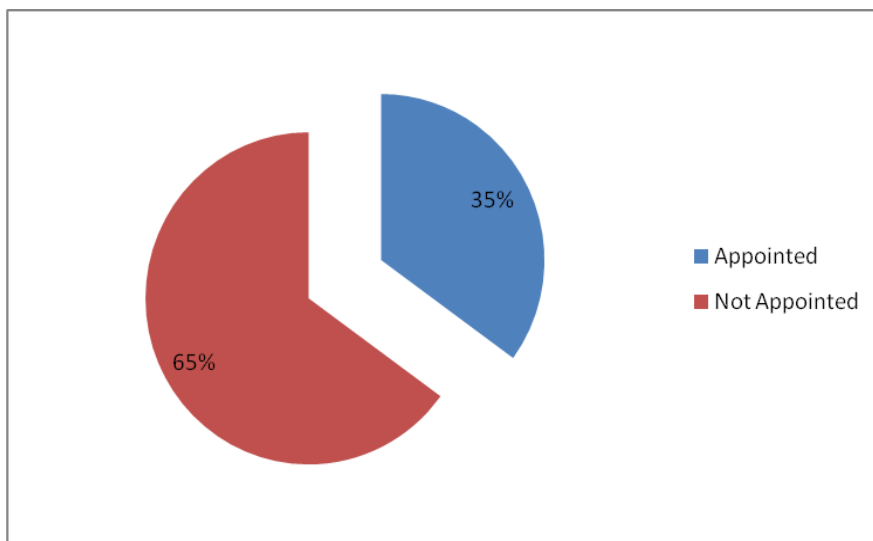


Figure 5. Appointment balance

One point raised by participants was that, general participation differs from appointment in that the former is intrinsic while the latter is extrinsic. What they actually meant was this that, while Church activity participation can be self-adjusted to be either increased or decreased, appointment is, according to the 18<sup>th</sup> Seventh-day



Adventist Church Manual, only determined through the Nominating Committee's votes.

It is for this reason that the research findings went onto reveal that, amidst the 20 interviewed participants, only 2 or 10% (who were also among the appointed few) managed to train and graduated in Theology although they could not be appointed for ministerial positions.

These results, however, contradicted the research findings of the White People with Disabilities in Christian Community conducted by George F. White of the Church Ministries in Missouri which reported that 25.9% was said to be of those who were either a programme directors or coordinators and 11.1% for pastors or priests with disabilities. Furthermore, the 25.9% and 11.1% participation referenced in the study were directed at pastors with physical deformities and not visually challenged persons.

### **Membership Quantitative Growth Evaluation**

The 20 interviewed participants came from 16 Churches. Three of the participants were from one family and congregated at the same Church. Two participants were neighbours congregating at one church.

Each of the 16 church clerks received the five years' total membership questionnaire although only 10 (62.5%) responded. The responses are shown in Table 2.

As can be deduced from Table 2, the figures for visually challenged members are seen to be constant while that of the total membership increase or fluctuate. The invariable membership for visually challenged members did not signify a positive membership retention for visually challenged Adventists.

## Total Membership

NB: In Table 7 below:

1. The letters “CH#” denotes the numerical name of the Church.
2. The membership figures for each year are a set of two; the first category is for total membership (TM) and the second for visually challenged members (VM).

*Table 7. Total Membership*

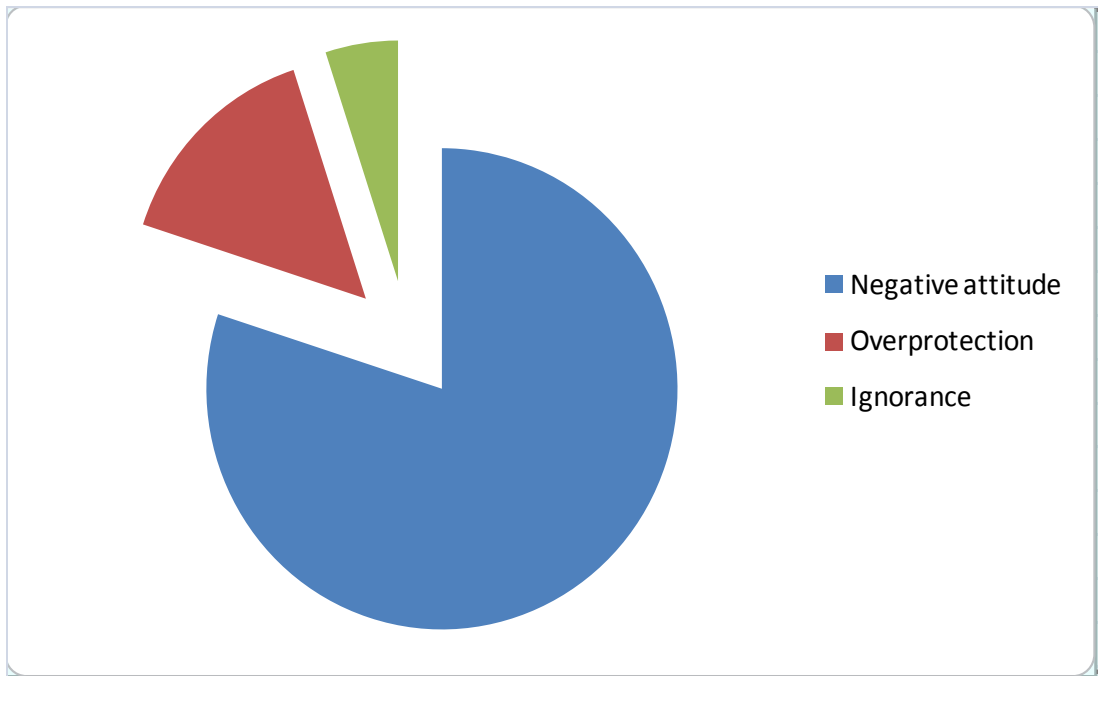
Church	2013		2014		2015		2016		2017	
	TM	VC	TM	VC	TM	VC	TM	VC	TM	VC
CH1			57	1	72	1	125	1	234	1
CH2	2,500	3	2,500	3	2,500	3	2,500	3	2,500	3
CH3	302	1	334	1	352	1	378	1	408	1
CH4	162	2	162	2	162	2	162	2	162	2
CH5					993	3	1,098	3	1,124	3
CH6					203	1	248	1	248	1
CH7	56	1	56	1	56	1	56	1	56	1
CH8	908	1	1,009	1	653	1	673	1	713	1
CH9	289	1	364	1	451	1	466	1	565	1
CH10	200	2	237	2	276	1	296	1	359	1

## Cause of Resistance

According to the research findings, three major hindrances affected the visually challenged members’ acceptance as full participants in Church’s activities and service appointments. These were:

- a. Negative attitude by sighted members towards the visually challenged community;
- b. Over emphasized sympathy by a handful few sighted congregants who were of the feeling that, tasking visually challenged church members was, rather, being unkind since they were already physically overburdened by blindness which mechanically incapacitated their involvement.

- c. Sighted members' lack of knowledge on how to relate with visually challenged congregants.



*Figure 6.* Problem cause proportions

As reflected by Figure 6, the findings revealed that, about 80% of the participants attributed the Church's apathy to negative attitude while 15% viewed the Church's over emphasized protection as the root cause. Only 5% of the participants, however, saw the Church's lack of knowledge on disability as the major problem.

Although both studies portrayed the adverse effects of the negative attitude, there was, however, a difference between the study conducted by George F. White regarding the Christian community and the findings on the visually challenged. While the study by White had a rather generalised approach in that it incorporated various disabilities, the study in question was specifically on visual challenges. The sentiment on the effects of the negative attitude, in addition to that of Dobree and Eric Boulter in

one of the earlier chapters, was also reiterated by Duquette in the Factors Influencing Work Participation for Visually Challenged Persons as the cause of the differences.

It was therefore to be borne in mind that, the Christian Community research findings are to be regarded in the context of physical disabilities and not visual challenges.

### **Conclusion**

This segment of the research study was based on the presentation and analysis of information obtained from West Zimbabwe Union's 20 Adventist participants with visual challenges. The research findings revealed that participation by visually challenged in the ministry of the church was much less than that of their sighted counterparts. The findings attributed the participation imbalance to sighted Church members' negative attitude, overprotection of visually challenged members and the Church's ignorance on how to relate with visually challenged persons.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the participants' proposed improvements in the research's third objective, the researcher was, therefore, of the opinion that:

1. A Special Needs educational programme on visual challenges be designed, implemented and evaluated to:
  - a. Educate the Church on the different types and effects of blindness to demystify the myths and misconceptions prevailing in the Church because of the members' diverse cultural backgrounds. These cultural traces, emanating from the members' long-held beliefs, were thought to have a way of negatively influencing decision-making by committee members whose subsequent resolutions had an adverse effect on the worship experience and programme participation for visually challenged Church members. The creation of this awareness was, therefore, to be achieved by conducting workshops for the Church's employed workers including pastors, administrators and staff members. Seminars were to be carried out for Church members who also happened to have been the Church's only employment catchment's source. The workshops and seminars were to be facilitated by the Adventist school resource centre's specialist teachers and rehabilitation training personnel. According to the researcher's understanding, these individuals constituted a part of the Church's underutilised professionals in the field of visual impairment. In addition to the awareness creation, the

workshops were subsequently to lead to establishment of Church inclusive participation strategies, their implementation and evaluation.

One other awareness creation mechanism would be through identification of a dynamic book with lessons on visual challenges. In liaison with the Literature and Publishing Department and possibly other responsible committees, the book was to be used as the “Book of the Year” to educate the Church’s members on visual impairment-related topics.

- b. Bridge the gap between visually challenged and their sighted counterparts through deliberately created forums for blindness-related information exchange. These information-exchange programmes (involving positive-minded and spiritually active blind persons) were to assist in loosening tension in visually challenged members. Furthermore, the programmes were also intended to promote an atmosphere of freedom of self-expression for sighted members whose destructive myths and misconceptions needed to be eradicated through dialogues of this nature. Open forums were to be resorted to because verbalised feelings and suspicions tend to die a natural death when they are openly discussed in a dialogue.
- c. Generate self-confidence and self-esteem in visually challenged Church members whose self-worth and optimism would have long been eroded by contemptuous talk and behaviour from family members and relatives. Some visually challenged Adventists were from homes whose unchristian beliefs made family members view blind persons as traditionally cursed elements of the society. The visually challenged members’ conversion into Christianity (Adventism) ushers such individuals into a new life of untold new experiences of being loved for the first time. To such, the Church was to automatically

assume the parental role of reshaping and reculturing the individual. This was to be done by involving positive-minded and spiritually active persons in similar condition of sightlessness to stimulate a Christ-based hope and self-worth. This involvement for sightless members was going to have a way of inspiring both sighted and visually challenged members by kindling a more positive view blindness in the minds of the former while challenging the latter to view the fellow sightless presenter as a role model to imitate or outdo in spiritual matters. The Church was, in this regard, to organise congresses and camp-outs to be attended by visually challenged Adventists and their family members (both from within and out of the Adventist faith), responsible elders and Department directors, Adventist school resource centre specialists and interested sighted Church members. Further to the above-stated objective of self-confidence and sense of belonging generation, the gatherings were also to assist in bringing Church's visually challenged members together and facilitate exchange programmes from other Unions and Divisions.

- d. Introduce blindness-related programmes or courses in the Adventist institutions' education curricula for pastors, teachers and administrators. This move was to facilitate integration of visually challenged persons in Adventist elementary through to tertiary education centres as well as their occupational absorption for ministerial service or any other vocation of their choice. The curricula adjustment was (through eye-care hospital, education resource-centre field visits and related course content) to assist in redeeming students from the effects of long-held traditional myths, misconceptions and ensuing negative attitude towards persons with visual challenges. The move was also to enhance the inclusion of visually challenged youngsters in Church youth clubs as

Adventurer, Pathfinder, Ambassador and senior youth programmes which, up to then, had not been tailor-made to include members in this condition.

Furthermore, the stance was additionally to assist in cultivating and concretizing Adventism in the affected infants' early stage of childhood as the approach had a way of creating an intractable type of faith that would be able to withstand all forms of Adventism-related adversities experienced from tender age to adulthood.

- e. Publicly demonstrate the Church's position on the above indicated recommendation (d.) by creating a policy to be implemented, monitored and evaluated in the Church's Unions, Conferences, Districts, educational and health centres.
2. Like other Church departments, representation of people with visual challenges be made in all the organisation's structures from General Conference to local districts to facilitate effective and efficient implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes tailor-made for members with special needs. This development was to enhance an even distribution of information and resources to relevant Church beneficiaries. In addition, the stance would go a long way in leaving no room for regarding the Department's programmes as optional engagements and also minimise individual discretion that seemed to be governing the general running of Departments for persons with special needs in some Churches. The resultant unison was subsequently to facilitate the much-needed sense of belonging and pride required for members with visual challenges to catch the attention of fellow friends from other faiths into the Adventist flock.
  3. Design and implement rehabilitation training programmes as a deliberate move for assisting Church workers and members who lose sight at a later stage of life for



them to remain as effective and efficient as possible in their respective areas of employment. These training programmes were to include Braille/computer literacy skills acquisition, mobility and orientation dynamics and life independent skills (see table 2.1). Since none is immune to disability, an arrangement of this nature was to serve as a Church's health investment plan for safeguarding both Church workers and members against life's unforeseeable ordeals. These preparatory provisions would be done for preventing the Church's major decision-making bodies tasked with hiring of Church workers and service termination from taking measures that were often seen to also negatively affect their own later future service rendering as ministers and administrators. Besides, the rehabilitation programme was to tremendously go a long way in enhancing the Church's outreach mission since services of this nature were uncommon in the Church's Union constituencies.

4. Introduce the branch study of ophthalmology as a way of augmenting the Church's health delivery services at Loma Linda hospital and subsequently have the training cascade to Unions and Conferences local health centres. The eye plays a significant role in all human and animal life. All successful enterprises as heart transplants; extraction of precious minerals from mining activities; sea, ground and air transportation channels; national and international military peace-keeping activities (to name but a few), are examples of indispensable services revolving around the proper functioning of the eye. In fact, the list includes the development of screen-reader software and other assistive technological gadgets that have made life for visually challenged people less dependent than ever before and would not have been possibly designed without the involvement of the eye. According to the researcher, there were, by 2017, two medical institutions offering the study on

ophthalmology in Zimbabwe and, the major of which, was run by the state while the other was by the Dutch Reformed Church. It was, however, no doubt that through the colossal health knowledge bestowed by God upon the Seventh-day Adventist Church, tremendous development would have been done in the study area. This medical development was to go a long way in alleviating blindness which, according to the researcher, resulted in service termination for one of the former Union's pastors who possibly could have benefited from such medical developments.

While the development was to usher great improvement in sight restoration and prevention for both young and old clientele, the medical stance was also to be of immense benefit to the Church's accomplishment of its mission in evangelism in that, non-Adventist patients were also going to be reached out to through the same medical services.

5. Make our sanctuaries be as accessible and user-friendly as possible by training sighted Church members to be a hospitable congregation by organising educational programmes, specially designed to meet the need. These programmes were to be facilitated by the Church's school resource specialists working with visually challenged students in the Adventist Education centres within the West Union. The aspect on hospitality was, in this case, to be broadened to include all sighted members whose interaction with visually challenged members would else have been affected by their cold attitude.
6. Educate the Church on the General Conference's Special Needs Ministry programme during annual camp meetings. These massive gatherings can be of immense benefit for information dissemination in terms of costs. Myths and misconceptions are also easily demystified at august assemblies of this nature.

7. Choose camp sites with visually challenged members in mind by involving the Union's selected school resource centre specialists and environmental health technicians. Where the camp site in use could not possibly be changed, an effort was, therefore, to be made to plan on the site's terrain to make the camping atmosphere and experience as conducive and exciting as possible for visually challenged members. The Church was, regarding camp site restrooms, called to consider any one of the following measures:
  - a. Maintain restrooms as meticulously clean as possible to prevent visually challenged campers from getting in contact with soiled toilet bowls.
  - b. Identify one, among the readily available restrooms, which was to be solely used by visually challenged campers and to be kept under the above-described conditions.
  - c. Consider the hiring of mobile restroom(s) to be used by visually challenged campers and, again, to be kept under the above described conditions.
8. Streamline the Special needs Department by alienating it from the Personal Ministries to make it a stand-alone unit like other Church departments. This development was to grant autonomy to Department officers at the Church's different levels to make visual impairment-related decisions independently. Such decisions would include consideration of identifying specialised resource personnel for training visually challenged Adventists in music notation and translation skills and other seemingly complex Church duties. This, in turn, was to help it to earn its full recognition in representing Church members with special needs which, in some of the Union's congregations, seemed to be hampered by the Personal Ministries personnel's absolute lack of concern.

9. Empower visually challenged Adventists to participate in worship services and evangelism programmes by making adjustments on the Church Manual's section on special needs. According to the 18<sup>th</sup> edition of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, the Department seemed to have been only tasked with the transportation of members with special needs (including visually challenged persons) to and from their homes. Although the view had its proper place in the Church's initial consideration for extending the gospel to persons with special needs, the outlook had its constraints in that, it weakened any move that would have been intentionally meant to grant responsible personnel and affected members the zeal to participate in the Church's in and outreach programmes. The Manual's section amendment was, therefore, to assist in presenting the GC's Special Needs Department's most recent realignment programme to the universal Church's District Departments whose services had been misconstrued by some Union's congregations to be still under the Personal Ministries auspices.
10. Augment the Christian Record Services for the Blind (CRB) efforts by decentralizing publishing services and, by all possible means, increase audio-recorded material as a way of curtailing Braille-production expenses. This move was, along with visually challenged readers, also to be of benefit to the elderly whose sight was deteriorating with age. Furthermore, the Braille transcription and audio recording services decentralisation was to expand the literature collection for less English conversant visually challenged members as books in native languages were also be included to the library's swelling list. Again, this will also go a long way in spiritually enriching visually challenged Adventists and correspondingly increase their zeal and effectiveness in participating in Church programmes.

11. Review the Church Manual provisions or create relevant policies to include a well-defined budget that was to sustain the development and implementation of the above-cited recommendations. The budget was to incorporate, among other necessities, acquisition of Braille embossers and or professional studio sound recording equipment for meeting the above-stated requirement, imported special Braille paper for printed material to mention but a few items. These service provisions were to save the Church's image whose resource centres at Adventist schools were, in 2017, being financed by other non-Adventist donor organisations.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

The research findings of this study revealed that 75% of the participants have gone through the Adventist education. The future study will, therefore, have to establish whether this percentage portion is only representative of visually challenged Adventists or, rather, cuts across the congregation. If, on the other hand, the percentage only applies to visually challenged Church members, the research should, then, go on to explain the cause of the discrepancy.

### **Summary**

The research study was meant to establish hypothetical perception differences between Seventh-day Adventist Church sighted and visually challenged members of the South Zimbabwe and West Zimbabwe Conferences in South Zimbabwe Union. The differences were believed to have negatively affected the worship experience and programme participation for visually challenged Adventists in the Union. A sample of 20 participants was, therefore, drawn from the Conferences, each of which had ten informants to be interviewed during the research.

The findings showed that:

1. 60% of the participants had been Adventists for 20 years and above and 40% had their membership range between 2 and 19 years.
2. 75% of the participants had, at some point, received the Seventh-day Adventist education while the remaining 25% had not. This percentage difference graphically demonstrated the cardinal importance of establishing more Adventist school resource centres for visually challenged students.
3. 40% of the participants were actively involved in evangelism programmes while 15% were not participating in the Church's activities at all. 25% attributed their lack of participation to lack of Sabbath School and Voice of Prophecy literature.
4. The most unpleasant finding on spiritual armoury was that, only 15% (3 participants) had Bibles.
5. 65% of the participants have never had the opportunity for serving in any of the Church's Departments against 35% of those who, at one time, had been appointed for service.
6. The total Church membership for sighted Adventists was always seen to be increasing while that of the visually challenged remained constant.
7. The research overall attributed the differences between sighted and visually challenged Adventists to the latter's negative attitude which was rated at 80%, followed by 10% overprotection and 5% lack of knowledge.

### **Conclusion**

The research was meant to establish the cause of the assumed differences between sighted and visually challenged members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of the South Zimbabwe and West Zimbabwe Conferences in South Zimbabwe

Union. Twenty visually challenged participants from the Union's two Conferences were selected and interviewed.

The hypothesized differences between the Church's membership parties were subsequently affirmed through the research findings that revealed negative attitude, overprotection and lack of knowledge as the leading causes for the South Zimbabwe's Union Church's dichotomy between visually challenged and sighted Adventists.

### **Reaction**

Like all earthly establishments, our Church is, nonetheless, made up of erring individuals who might have not been conscious of the existence and effects of perception differences between sighted and visually challenged Church communities. On the other hand, the God we worship is He who graciously "overlooked the times of ignorance" (Acts 17:30) as a way of purifying us for eternity. While waiting for Christ's glorious return, we, as a Church, are to have been purged from all impurities and transformed into His likeness by His enabling power. In our weakness to demonstrate unconditional love for all, we must keep trusting in Him who gave us His son, knowing that "Christ is our pattern, the perfect and holy example that has been given us to follow. We can never equal the pattern, but we may imitate it and resemble it according to our ability." White ([1964] p. 265).

It takes a great deal of self-sacrifice to harmoniously live and co-labour with our fellowmen of this nature. In view of this challenge, White (1981) admonishes:

"Those who accept and obey one of His precepts because it is convenient to do so, while they reject another because its observance would require a sacrifice, lower the standard of right and by their example lead others to lightly regard the holy law of God" (p4).

“We are coming to a time when, more than ever before, we shall need to press together to labour unitedly” declares White (1958). “In union” she appends, “there is strength. In discord and disunion, there is only weakness” (pp. 73-74).



## APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A  
RESEARCH LETTER



**Adventist University of Africa**  
**Mbagathi 00503, Nairobi, Kenya**

**TO WHO THIS MAY CONCERN:**

**RE: INTRODUCTION LETTER FOR DATA COLLECTION - NGABAITE MUCHINGURI:**

This is to take this opportunity to introduce **Mr Ngabaite Muchinguri** to your organization for the purposes of data collection for academic purposes. Mr. Muchinguri is our MA in leadership student who has now reached a level of going to the field for data collection. As a masters' level student, one of the requirements of finalizing his studies at the Adventist University of Africa (AUA) is to write an academic research paper which is purely for academic purposes. His research topic is entitled: **“An Analysis of the Impact of Disability on the SDA Members with Visual Challenges.”**

It is, therefore, with this in view that AUA is requesting permission from your esteemed organization to allow him to conduct his research assignments within his area of interest.

The Adventist University of Africa will greatly appreciate any support and/or assistance accorded to our researcher in the light of the purposes stated above.

Thanking you in advance for your help in this regard.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Musa Nyakora", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Prof. Musa Nyakora, PhD.,  
**FULL PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR OF MA AND PHD IN LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS,**  
**ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA,**  
**P.O PRIVATE BAG MBAGATHI – ONG'ATA RONGAI TOWNSHIP,**  
**00503 NAIROBI –KENYA.**

APPENDIX B  
PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES

**Participant One**

- The first participant was 11 years in the Adventist Church and had attended an Adventist school.
- He was formerly Guta RaMwari.
- He said that, the differences were in uniform, Sabbath observance, Scriptural teachings in God, songs, and that former faith believed in evil forces and not in the presence of Satan. He said that he was rather too young to note other differences.
- He had participated in praying, singing, Bible study, camped once. He has been discouraged to camp because of some members' fears and lack of confidence in him. He had no Bible and no access to Sabbath School lessons.
- He had never been appointed for Church service.
- The Church had a negative attitude towards visually challenged members.
- He was the only blind member at the Church. He had been there for three years as a single blind member.
- The Church was to refrain from its negative attitude and this could be achievable through education and other informative programmes, he said.

## **Participant Two**

- The second interviewee was a lady who had been 17 years in the Adventist faith and had attended an Adventist school.
- She was once Methodist before being an Adventist.
- She said that the SDA had a sound Bible doctrine.
- She had participated in public prayers, singing (not choristering), and had contributed In Bible study lessons (not conducting the lesson), had been involved in witnessing (not preaching) and went for camping. She was a VOP-certificate holder and had no Bible but had not had any access to Sabbath School lessons.
- She described camp sites as being unfriendly environment for visually challenged campers because of dirty rest rooms and there was that lack of independence during camping.
- She had never been appointed for serving in Church departments.
- She attributed this to blind members' lack of representation in decision-making bodies and sighted members' negative attitude toward blind Church members.
- The 12 years of membership at the Church had passed with no other blind person being baptised.
- She cited the Church's lack of warmth as the major cause for visually challenged persons' reluctance in responding to the Advent message.
- She recommended that there be full participation by visually challenged Church members in order for them to grow spiritually. She also added that there be full representation for Adventists with special needs throughout the church's different institutional levels. She also

advised that sighted church members be taught on how best they can relate and work with visually challenged persons. One other concern she raised was that, pastors make an effort in paying visits to visually challenged members as they were the Church's most lowly esteemed.

### **Participant Three**

- This man was 18 months in the Adventist faith and did not go to any Adventist school.
- He was of the Anglican faith.
- He had not participated in any of the Church's mentioned activities except only one camp.
- He attributed most of the challenges by visually challenged members to lack of warmth from the sighted community.
- He said that, attending camp had been a challenge for both of them since they (husband and wife) were visually challenged and were, therefore, to be led from one camping point to another from time to time.
- He said that the 18 months of membership had been too short for him to efficiently serve in the Church's departments.
- He had not attempted VOP and Master guide lessons.
- He had neither Bible nor Sabbath School lessons.
- Their Church was mainly composed of visually challenged members from an adjacent institution for persons with special needs and this, thus, made the church membership fluctuate from one level to another as students eventually graduate and permanently leave the place.

- Another concern by the participant was the church's habit of having visually challenged members be on their own during services and this, he said, did not reflect a true spirit of love.

#### **Participant Four**

- The fourth interviewee was espoused to the earlier recorded visually challenged participant.
  - She was 30 years in the Adventist faith and had received Adventist education.
  - She had earlier been of the Methodist faith.
  - She noted that the SDA considered members of all age categories and provided for their lessons accordingly which, nevertheless, was not done in her former faith.
  - She had participated in the Church's activities save for preaching and camping.
  - She had both VOP and Master guide certificates but no Bible and has not had access to Sabbath School lessons.
  - She once had been appointed for service.
  - She concurred with her sibling sister (the fifth participant) on that there were five visually challenged members for the past five years in their church.
  - She said that the Church was supposed to train sighted members on relating with their blind counterparts.

### **Participant Five**

- This lady was 30 years in the Adventist faith and had received Adventist education.
- She was of Methodist faith before being an Adventist.
- She said that she was still too young to notice any differences between the two faiths.
- Although her degree of participation had been high in that she had been involved in singing; Bible studies; camping; and witnessing, the participant (who was sister to the visually challenged husband's wife), however, concurred with her sister and brother on the timely experienced difficulty for being led to and from different camping points for services and nature calls.
- She had both VOP and Master guide certificates but no Bible and no access to Sabbath School lessons.
- She said that, there were five blind members in their church for the past five years.
- She said that the Church should desist from degrading special needs programmes since the Department's Conference designated days are actually allocated to other Departments.

### **Participant Six**

- This participant was 45 years in the Adventist faith and, at some point, went to an Adventist school.
- She had never been of any other faith although she sometime visited the Catholic church.

- She indicated that Catholics were rather more receptive and loving than Adventists as leading of blind members did not only come from that individual accompanying the visually challenged friend or relative but, that all church members voluntarily and individually took it upon themselves.
- She added by saying that in the Adventist church, isolation between blind and sighted members even took place during holy communion foot washing services when visually challenged members would always be on their own.
- She also indicated that, participation was only confined to praying and camping—the latter of which, usually depended on the availability of an accompanying friend.
- She did not attempt VOP and Master guide courses and had neither Bible nor access to Sabbath School lessons.
- She had never been appointed for any leadership positions.
- She said that all this was caused by the Church’s negative attitude.
- They were the only blind members in their Church although there are non-Adventists waiting for the gospel.
- There was no special needs department at their Church and They therefore were appealing for emphasis on the teachings of related lessons for the whole Church.

### **Participant Seven**

- This was a lady who had been 45 years in the Adventist Church and did receive Adventist education.
- She had been Adventist ever since her childhood.



- She concurred with her visually challenged neighbour on that, no one bothered to visit and read pamphlet lessons or Bible daily readings with them.
- She and her visually challenged neighbour depended on one sighted lady friend who had been of help in guiding them from one place to another during camping time. She did not do the two courses of VOP and Master Guide and has no Bible and Sabbath School lessons.
- She had never been appointed for any office.
- The two neighbouring ladies had been the only blind members in their Church.
- The participant said that there was no special needs department at their Church.
- The two visually challenged neighbours were therefore appealing for emphasis on the teachings of related lessons for the whole Church.

### **Participant Eight**

- This interviewee was 31 years in the Adventist Church and had received Adventist education.
- She was born and bred as an Adventist although she one time faltered to become a Zaoga member.
- She was however, sighted when she temporarily left the Adventist Church and could not note any differences.
- She had participated in the Church's all activities to even conference level.
- She had done the two courses of VOP and Master guide and has a Bible and Sabbath School lessons.

- She had experience in mobility and toilet hygiene challenges during camping time.
- She has been appointed for serving in a number of Departments, the most frequently served of which is the Personal Ministries.
- She said that, there were two blind Adventists and one had passed away.
- She desired that Church manual and Policy documents be made available in either Braille or audio.
- She also said that stigmatisation be eradicated as it hinders some from attending Church services. She even noted of an Adventist blind lady who had ceased to come to Church for fear of being stigmatised.
- She also pointed out that there be visually challenged pastors in the Church to represent Adventists in the same condition.

### **Participant Nine**

- This lady was 20 years in the Adventist Church and did not go to any Adventist school.
- She had never been of any other faith save that of the Adventist.
- Her challenge, as a visually challenged individual, was to have her presence noticed during presentations.
- Although her participation was somewhat limited, she was able to take part in praying, singing, Bible studies, witnessing, preaching and camping.
- She had not done VOP and Master Guide lessons and had no Bible and Sabbath School lessons.

- She, however, admitted that camping time had always been a difficult week for her.
- Besides being a prayer band committee member, she has never rendered service in any of the Church's Departments. The only time when she almost got the opportunity was when her name was proposed for heading some Department during the Church's annual nominations and could not make it on grounds of visual impairment, she said.
- She indicated that she had been the only blind Adventist at her Church.
- She attributed the reduced numbers for visually challenged Adventists to the general public's belief that the Adventist Church was not a spirit-filled congregation and, thus, could not heal the sick including persons with special needs. Her other reason was the Church lack of warmth and general negative attitude towards visual impairment by leadership.
- She suggested that Church service participation be extended to blind members as a way of allowing them to learn Department headship like all other sighted Adventists. This participation equity, she added, would enhance the addressing of needs for visually challenged members who, by holding relevant church positions, would be able to articulate their concerns to Church decision-making bodies.
- She expressed her desire for having an audio version for Sabbath school lessons as well as the Braille Bible.

### **Participant Ten**

- The next to be interviewed was 31 years in the Adventist Church and went to an Adventist school.

- She had never been a member of another faith although she had paid visits to churches of other faiths.
- Much of her worship experience has been gained from college congregations where there were no differences between visually challenged Church members and sighted individuals, she said.
- Because of her daily interaction with the sighted community at college, her participation in Church activities became more maximised than in community Churches. A great deal of hardships were experienced during camping and this has compelled her to attend services from home or only on Sabbath.
- She had not done VOP and Master Guide lessons and had neither Bible nor Sabbath School lessons.
- She had never been appointed for serving in the Church's Departments. She thought that the Church was overprotective and actually saw participation by visually challenged as overburdening them.
- She was the only blind Adventist at her Church and was of the opinion that, this was all as a result of the Church's lack of concern for strongly evangelising to blind persons who therefore became members to rather more welcoming denominations.
- She recommended that the Church be more hospitable to visually challenged persons whom she felt were rather sensitive to Church treatment of this nature.
- She also encouraged pastors to pay visits to visually challenged Church members for them to learn more about their needs and capabilities.

- She requested for the audio format of Sabbath school lessons, VOP discovery lessons and Braille Bible.

### **Participant Eleven**

- This participant was 46 years in the Adventist faith and had had her education from an Adventist school at some point of her learning.
- Having had been in another faith whilst still an infant, she could not detect any differences between visually challenged and sighted members of her earlier faith and that of Adventists.
- The need for participation by visually challenged members was only emphasized immediately after special needs awareness programmes and would again gradually wane to its normal level of intolerance.
- She shared the same sentiment in experiencing camping challenges just as other blind Adventists.
- She had not done VOP and Master Guide lessons.
- She said that she had had access to Sabbath School lessons but had no Bible.
- She had never been appointed for any office in the Church. She felt that, a larger chunk of the Church membership was for young adults whom she thought were rather too proud to fully concern themselves with disability-related issues.
- She indicated that there were three visually challenged Church members. A handful others might have dropped their membership because of the Church's lack of hospitability.

- She suggested that the Church be trained in working and relating with visually challenged members and in language use of terms like “blind and crippled.”
- She also proposed the need for conducting open forums during which disability-related issues could be discussed and future directions be mapped out.

**Participant Twelve.**

- This participant was 11 years in the Adventist faith and she did not have opportunity for attending Adventist schools.
- Although she had been an Adventist since her youth, she had however had an opportunity to pay visits to other faiths.
- In other faiths, visually challenged people were regarded as overburdened, troubled and, thus, in need of immediate spiritual liberation, she said.
- She participated in praying, singing and Bible studies while avoiding being burdensome to others by not attending witnessing activities.
- She was economically dependent and could not, thus, make decisions during her parents/guardians absence. This subsequently made her camping opportunities very minimal although the Church had often extended its invitation to her.
- She had not done VOP and Master Guide lessons and had neither the Bible nor the Sabbath School lessons.
- Her first appointment for Department headship came in 2018 after 11 years of membership.

- She was then the only blind member at her Church and was, however, not aware of the fact on whether there are any within her vicinity.
- She recommended that convenience rooms and water tapes for drinking be easily accessed by visually challenged members and that the building adjustments be reflected in Church construction plans.
- However, as most of visually challenged members come from less privileged families, she proposed that the Church render financial assistance for school and college tuition as a way of empowering them for future economic independence.
- She requested for Master guide lessons and a Braille Bible.

**Participant Thirteen**

- This was a young man who was eight years in the Adventist faith and did have Adventist education.
- He was in the Brethren of Faith and was too young to take note of differences between visually challenged and sighted persons of two faiths.
- He had less participation challenges although he expressed hardships that were similar to other blind members in camping.
- He had not done any of the VOP and Master Guide courses and had neither Bible nor Sabbath School lessons.
- He had not been appointed for serving in the Church Departments.
- He was the only blind member at his Church.
- He attributed the low membership to the Church's lack of intentionality in evangelising to blind community residents.

- He recommended that service participation be as spontaneously conducted as it is with sighted members.
- Awareness on special needs was to be on printed literature to an extent of having one publication being regarded as a book of the year, he suggested.
- Again, the Church's engagement of a visually challenged personnel at any institutional level would be statement enough for the congregants to seriously regard the special needs department with profound intentionality.

#### **Participant Fourteen**

- This participant was 19 years in Adventism and went to an Adventist school.
- Having had been in another faith while young, he could not detect any differences between visually challenged and sighted people.
- During his visits to other faiths, he noticed that visually challenged had seats reserved for them during worship services and that, Blind persons were also viewed as demon-possessed.
- Like other blind persons who had been students before, he experienced more challenges in community Churches than colleges/universities.
- He had only done VOP lessons but had neither Bible nor Sabbath School lessons.
- He had never served in any Church department although he is not certain on whether this was caused by his lack of interest in Church activities or the fellow sighted members' negative attitude.



- He was the only blind member at his church and the other was late then.
- The participant recommended that the Church be trained on relating and working with visually challenged members and on avoiding the use of derogative terms as “blind or crippled” which somewhat infuriate the physically affected Church members.
- He also proposed that special needs programmes be not only conducted from local District Churches but rather, they be made to cascade from the Church’s higher institutions so that they be more forceful and practical to all Church members.

### **Participant Fifteen**

- This interviewee had been with the Adventist Church for 29 years and went to an Adventist school.
- Having participated in African Traditional religion before being an Adventist, he noticed that, visually challenged persons were deliberately quarantined from their able-bodied counterparts during certain rituals and traces of the same practice could still be felt even in the Church.
- The participant indicated that, while sighted members seem to be embarrassed by blindness during witnessing, he, himself, had less challenges in participating in the Church’s other activities.
- While camp sites’ big rocks and thorny shrubs are, under normal circumstances, attractive for the sighted fraternity, the participant noted that, the same environment poses danger to visually challenged campers.

- He had done VOP lessons and had a Bible.
- He had enjoyed the spiritual privilege of serving in the Church's numerous departments and eldership too.
- The participant also observed that, There were other blind members in the Church, most of whom had dropped their membership because of the Church's negative attitude towards them.
- He recommended that there be a Church policy safeguarding the interests and outlining the general treatment for members with visual challenges by sighted church members.
- He added that, the Special Needs Department be alienated from the Personal Ministries to be a stand-alone Department for its concerns and needs to be fully represented in the Church's decision-making committees in the different institution's levels and at the General Conference sessions.
- He also pointed out that there be a specific budget allocation for the mitigation of needs by members with visual challenges.

### **Participant Sixteen**

- The man was 30 years in the Adventist Church and had the Adventist education.
- He was neither born in an Adventist family nor was he once a member of another faith.
- He has managed to surmount participation challenges by being fully engaged in all of the Church activities including literature evangelism.
- He once served in the Youth Department as was a Pathfinder counsellor.

- The interviewee, however, admitted being victim of camp site's hostile environment which has militated against his desire for being an asset to his family despite the physical condition.
- He had a Double Major degree in Theology and Education but had not been absorbed in the Ministry although he was then teaching at an Adventist Senior school.
- He attempted both VOP and Master guide courses but had neither Bible nor any access to Sabbath School lessons.
- He was also one of the handful few who had had the opportunity in serving in the Church's several Departments.
- He attributed the Church's ill-treatment for visually challenged members to overprotection and extra courteousness.
- He advised blind members to be aggressive and purposeful in their interaction with the sighted community.
- He recommended that Church leadership be equally respectful for visually challenged members' calling just as they would with that of the sighted members.
- While advice has its place, visually challenged members should, however, freely and fully exercise their freedom of career choice without Church leadership's negative intervention, he said.

### **Participant Seventeen**

- This interviewee was 31 years in the Adventist Church and went to an Adventist school.
- He was born and bred in Adventism although his father's initial inclination towards African Religion Traditions sometimes diluted

their Christian lifestyle. One notable difference between African religious traditions and Adventism is that visually challenged family members were often regarded as scapegoats during rituals, he said. The participant's membership in the Adventist church had made him to realise that visually challenged members were regarded as objects of pity.

- Despite the negative attitude problems, he had however been able to fully participate in praying, singing and Bible studies and witnessing. Camping was also a big challenge for him.
- His membership as a qualified none employed has.
- The participant was also one of the two who were degree-holders in Theology but had not been engaged in the ministry. At some point, he said that, he almost got tempted into being engaged by a non-Adventist faith denomination who pledged to offer a very attractive package.
- He did Master guide and has both the Bible and Sabbath School lessons.
- The 31 years of membership had seen him being appointed as an interest coordinator, family life committee member and Special Needs associate director.
- He recommended that the Church was to refrain from viewing visually challenged members as pity objects but, rather, take advantage of technological developments which, he said, enhanced their engagement and full participation in Church activities and ministerial services just as equally as their sighted counterparts.

### **Participant Eighteen**

- Being a retired gospel minister, this participant was 73 years in the Adventist faith and had had an opportunity to receive Adventist education.
- He had been in the faith since birth.
- His 13 years of sightlessness had made him to notice the existence of two Church camps; one advocating for visually challenged members' capabilities and the other for the opposite.
- The inception of blindness had left his participation confined to praying, singing, Bible study and less of evangelism and camping. He, however, confessed that the physical condition had been instrumental in assisting him to see God miraculously working in his life.
- He had done VOP and Master Guide lessons (probably during the days when he was still sighted) but had no Bible and Sabbath School lessons.
- He had never been appointed for serving in the Church Departments since the onset of his blindness.
- He was the only blind member at his Church and there were no visually challenged persons in his immediate community.
- He recommended that the Church was to fully surrender itself to God for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit who, in turn, was going to iron out the existing differences in His holy way.

### **Participant Nineteen**

- The man was 18 years in the Adventist Church and did not go to any Adventist school.

- He had not been baptised but went to a Dutch Reformed missionary school.
- He had participated in praying, singing, Bible studies, evangelism (through social media), and camping.
- He did not attempt any of the VOP and Master Guide lessons and had neither Bible nor Sabbath School lessons.
- He had not been appointed for serving in the Church Departments.
- He was the only one who was blind at his Church.
- The Church seemed to be having negative attitude towards the category of the visually challenged persons.
- He proposed that the Church make an effort in granting visually challenged members full recognition as Adventists. He also recommended that the Church render financial assistance as a way of empowering visually challenged members who normally were from less privileged families.

### **Participant Twenty**

- This man was 19 years in the Adventist Church and had no Adventist education background.
- He had never been a member of any other faith than that of the Adventists although he had paid them visits.
- The faith differences were in that, visually challenged persons were viewed as diseased patients in need of immediate cure in his former faith whereas Adventists perceived them as pity objects.
- His participation was confined to praying, Bible studies, camping and less of evangelism.

- He was a Master guide certificate-holder but had no Bible and no Sabbath School lessons.
- He said that, the reasons for resistance were attitude. He also occurred with other participants that camp sites were not user friendly at all.
- He had never been appointed to serve in the Church's Departments.
- The Church seemed to have a negative attitude towards visually challenged members.
- He was then the only visually challenged member at his church. He attributed this to the Church's lack of warmth towards visually challenged members.
- He recommended that the Church encourage visually challenged members to fully participate in order to help them to voice out their needs and portrays the gospel's universality. He also proposed that they be trained as most of them are ignorant on special needs issues and concerns. He also pointed out on the need for putting policies in place for directing on treatment and general participation by visually challenged members. Such documents will help in striking a balance for both visually challenged who need to try to accept themselves for what they already are and for the sighted Adventists to accept them as they are.

## APPENDIX C

### RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- a. How old is your membership in the Adventist Church?
- b. Were you a Christian of another faith before becoming an Adventist?
- c. If your answer is yes, what marked contrasts or similarities might you have observed in the relationship between visually challenged and sighted Church members of your former and the current faiths?
- d. Have you, during your membership, had an opportunity to participate in any; some or all of the Church's public praying, singing, Bible study, evangelism and/or camping activities?
- e. If your answer is partially or absolutely no, what do you think could have been the cause of the Church's reluctance or apathy?
- f. Have you, during your membership, had an opportunity of being appointed to serve in one or more Church departments?
- g. If your answer is yes, indicate whether it was once or more frequent?
- h. If more frequent, indicate whether it was limited or unlimited to the same office?
- i. If no, what do you think could have been the Church's reason(s) for going that extreme?
- j. Is/are there any visually challenged Adventists in your Church?
- k. From your observation, has the number been increasing, decreasing or steady?
- l. If the number has been decreasing or steady, what do you think could have been the reason for either way?



- m. As a visually challenged Adventist, what improvement(s) would you suggest for the Church to make to have your membership and that of others in your condition be more fulfilled?

APPENDIX D

CHURCH CLERKS' QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name of the conference.....
2. Name of the district.....
3. Name of the Church .....
4. Population for visually challenged persons and total Church membership in  
2013.....
5. Population for visually challenged persons and total Church membership in  
2014.....
6. Population for visually challenged persons and total Church membership in  
2015.....
7. Population for visually challenged persons and total Church membership in  
2016.....
8. Population for visually challenged persons and total Church membership in  
2017.....

## REFERENCES

- Abang, B. T. (1986). *Handbook of special education: Teaching the visually handicapped*. Ibadan, Nigeria: University Press.
- Barnes, A. (2006). Barnes' notes, Electronic database [Biblesoft]. Retrieved from <http://www.biblesoft.com/>
- Berthold, L. (1981). *Blindness and blind people*. New York, NY: American Foundation for the Blind.
- Bogdan, R. (1986). *The sociology of special education*. New York, NY: Pergamon Press.
- British Blind Sport. (2014). *Overcoming barrier participation by visually challenged persons*. Warwickshire, United Kingdom: MacGregor A.
- Cauuffman, J. M., & Hallahan, D. (1992). *Deinstitutionalization and mainstreaming exceptional children*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Chakuchichi, D. D., Chimedza, R. M., Chiinze, M. M., Kaputi, T. M. (2003). *Module SPED 302*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Ultek Press.
- Clarke, A. (2006). *Biblesoft electronic database*. Retrieved from [www.preteristarchive.com/Books/1810\\_clarke\\_commentary.html](http://www.preteristarchive.com/Books/1810_clarke_commentary.html)
- Deffinbaugh, L. R. (1998). *Leviticus: Sacrifice and sanctification*. Texas City, TX: Biblical Studies Press.
- Dobree, H. & Eric Bolter. (1982). *Blindness and visual handicap*. New York, NY: New Oxford University Press.
- Duquette, J. (2013). *Factors influencing work participation for persons with visual impairment*. Longueuil, Canada: Louis-Braille Institute.
- Encarta (2008). Retrieved from <http://dodonet.e-monsite.com/pages/logiciel/microsoft-encarta-premium-2008.html>
- Fausset, J., & Brown. (2006). Commentary, Electronic database [Biblesoft]. Retrieved from [www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/jamieson-fausset-brown/](http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/jamieson-fausset-brown/)
- Golafshani, N. (1995). *Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto.

- Henry's, M. (2006). Commentary on the whole Bible, PC study Bible electronic database [Biblesoft]. Retrieved from [www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/](http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/)
- Hick, P. et al. (2009). *Psychology for inclusive education*. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Jose, R. T. (1985). *Understanding low vision*. New York, NY: American Foundation for the Blind.
- Lord, W. (1991). *Parent point of view: What is the least restrictive environment for a deaf child?* Grand Rapids, MI: Statewide Newsletter.
- Lowenfeld, B. (1975). *The changing status of the blind*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Pijl, J. S., & Cor J. W. Meijer. (1997). *Inclusive education-A global agenda*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Saunders, B. et al. (2017). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality and Quantity*, 52(4): 1893–1907.
- Shuttleworth, V. (2000). *Leadership skills in educational management*. Britain: Bell and Bain.
- Srivastava, S. (2011). *Education for visually impaired children*. New Delhi: Sonali.
- Thoms, C. (2012). *SDA GC special needs ministries manual*. Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
- Tooze, D. (1981). *Independent training for visually handicapped children*. Baltimore, MD: University Park Press.
- Urdan's, C. T. (2010). *Statistics in plain English* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Walton, H. J. et al. (2000). *IVP Bible background Old Testament commentary*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Welsh, R. L. (1980). *Foundations of orientation and mobility*. New York, NY: American Foundation for the Blind.
- Werner, D. (1999). *Disabled village children*. Berkeley, CA: Hesperian Foundation.
- White, E. G. (1941). *Christ's object lessons*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald.
- White, E. G. (1947). *Testimonies to the church vol. 3*. Washington DC: The Trustees of the E. G. White Publications.
- White, E. G. (1958). *Selected messages book 2*. Washington, DC: Review & Herald.

- White, E. G. (1964). *That I may know him*. Washington, DC: Review & Herald.
- White, E. G. (1970). *Acts of the apostles*. California, CA: White Estate.
- White, E. G. (1981). *The sanctified life*. Washington, DC: Review & Herald.
- White, George F. (2014). *White people with disabilities in Christian community*. Michigan, MI: York College Press.
- Wiersbe W. (2004). Expository outlines on the Old Testament, Biblesoft electronic database. Retrieved from <http://www.biblesoft.com/>
- Wolfensberger, W. (1972). *The principle of normalization in human services*. Toronto, Canada: National Institute of Mental Retardation.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

No. 16B MSQ Cell: 263 774 375 394

Solusi 263 713 611 993

P. O. Solusi

**BULAWAYO** Cell: ngabaite0845@gmail.com

### **Personal Details**

**Name:** Ngabaite Muchinguri

**Marital Status:** Married

**Spouse Name:** Samkeliso Muchinguri

**No. Children:** 3

**Date of Birth:** 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1964

**National ID:** 08-459414P75

**Spoken Languages:** Shona, English, Ndebele

### **Academic Details**

- Working towards a Master's degree majoring in Leadership with Adventist University of Africa.
- A holder of BA Theology from Solusi University and also a graduate from Bulawayo Polytechnic who graduated with Higher National diploma in Business Studies.
- Holds a Further Education teacher's certificate.

### **Work Experience**

Worked at Council for the Blind as a Training and Rehabilitation Officer for ten years.