

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH DATA-DRIVEN CHURCH MINISTRY: A CASE STUDY OF CHURCHES IN OROGUN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, NIGERIA

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Abstract: This paper examines the application of data-driven ministry in the churches of the Orogun Baptist Association, with the objective of enhancing community empowerment and outreach efficacy. The research uses historical and descriptive research methodologies, including oral interviews and secondary source analysis, to examine how demographic data, attendance patterns, and community needs assessments might be utilized to tailor modern church ministry initiatives. The research demonstrates that data-driven strategies enable churches to develop focused sermon series, establish specialized ministries for specific demographic groups, and optimize budget allocation for improved community impact. Nonetheless, problems include technological constraints, deficiencies in data literacy, and cultural reluctance within congregations are significant. The study underscores the need of methodical data gathering and analysis in adequately meeting the practical requirements of communities while achieving spiritual objectives. The paper concludes with pragmatic recommendations for Orogun Baptist churches to establish data collection systems, enhance data literacy among leadership, and forge partnerships with community organizations, advancing towards evidence-based ministry which addresses both spiritual and socioeconomic needs.

Keywords: Empowering Communities; Data-Driven; Church Ministry; Church; Orogun Baptist Association; Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Churches are often structured as a congregation of Christian adherents who convene to exalt and venerate God, engage in prayer, instruct and proclaim Biblical teachings to members, and conduct outreach and evangelistic endeavours (Rester, 2008). An understanding of the present transition beyond the modern period is greatly shaped by the church, and a perspective of the church's mission is renewed as a result of the church's profoundly societal dynamics and cultural ramifications (Gadasu, 2024). Christian churches are regarded as both spiritual and social entities by their adherents and the wider community. Church leaders frequently endorse missionary initiatives; yet, the spiritual emphasis of churches necessitates that they prioritize spiritual concerns in accordance with biblical teachings (Felder, 2011). Churches possess a social aim wherein members engage in serving the community's needs. Christians typically perceive it as their duty to demonstrate God's love and grace to others, and outreach programmes facilitate such interactions. Programmes that enhance a church's local congregation

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encompass Christian education, internal Bible studies, church-sanctioned daycare facilities, adult outreach initiatives for assistance, provision of space for complimentary support groups, and individualized spiritual mentorship programs (Houston, 2013). Community outreach projects encompass funding for homeless shelters, collaboration with local food banks, provision of youth programs and educational initiatives, Christian counseling options, among others.

The creation of a Business Intelligence (or Information) (BI) system for congregational use necessitates methodologies and tools that enable church leaders to extract data from current church resources (Felder, 2011). The BI systems will facilitate the planning, assessment, and modeling of congregational outreach initiatives. Business Intelligence is software that facilitates the analysis and administration of data obtained from existing church systems. Many Christian churches possess a rich history of excellent outreach initiatives; nonetheless, it is more prevalent for numerous current outreach activities to lack efficacy (Edwards, 2011). The necessity for new outreach initiatives and the assessment of existing programs is now imperative. Church leaders can utilize software and technologies to record, model, assess, and enhance outreach initiatives to fulfill objectives and attain desired outcomes. Business Intelligence software can be tailored for utilization by church congregations (Felder, 2011). Business Intelligence tools offer church leaders the potential to develop outreach initiatives that adequately address the emotional needs and demands of various communities and congregations.

The paper uses historical and descriptive methodologies to investigate how churches in Orogun Baptist Association can use data-driven ministry to empower their host communities. This includes involving oral interviews with pivotal individuals and congregations to ascertain their perspectives on the evolution of data-driven church ministries and how this impact on host communities empowerment. Secondary sources used comprise extant textbooks, journal articles, reports, and online resources pertinent to the data-driven church ministry. Given the diversity of its membership and their distinct spiritual, emotional, and social requirements, the church must implement data-driven methods in order to successfully carry out its purpose. Churches can provide a nuanced approach to ministry that meets the specific requirements of their membership by using statistics to customize their teachings and gospel preaching to appeal to the varied demographics within their flock. This paper explores how churches in the Orogun Baptist Association can use data-driven ministry to help their host communities.

BRIEF BACKGROUND OF OROGUN AND OROGUN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Orogun is a clan in Urhoboland comprising twenty-three towns and villages. The Orogun people speak Urhobo and also Ukwani. Orogun clan is located in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria. Orogun clan shares a common boundary with kokori, Agbon clan, Isoko, Kwale (Ndokwa) and Abraka (Oral interview with Edi, 2025). The villages and towns in Orogun clan include: Otorho Orogun, Aragba, Imodje, Eboh, Ozuaka, Ugono, Orhomuru, Sanubi, Okuruno, Emonu, Ovara umusu, Ovara Umukpo, Erhobaru, Onyobru, Idjerhe, Obiogo, Ovwodokpokpo, Okoudiovwa,

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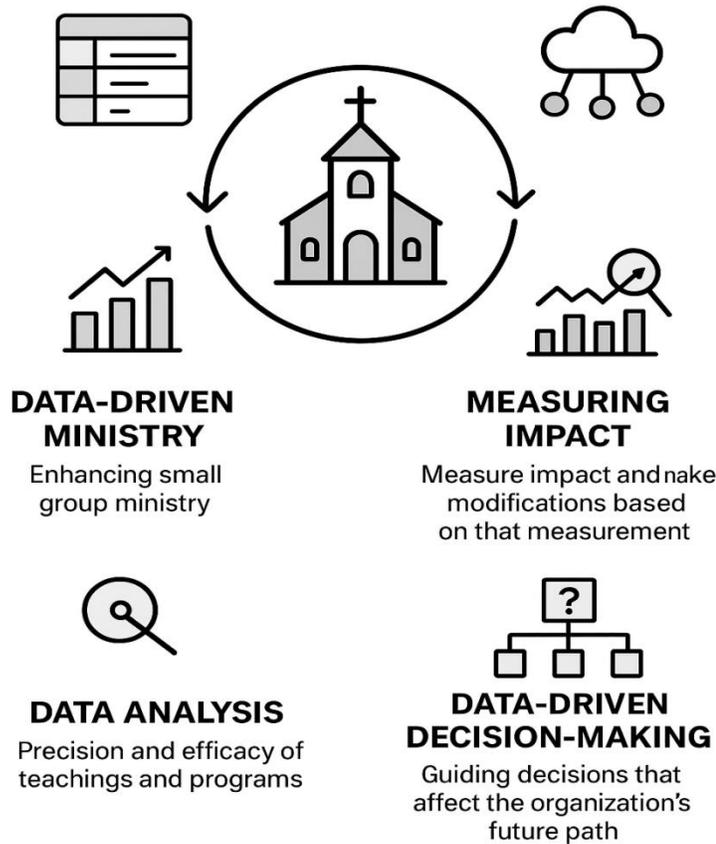
Okoujoro, Obodeti, Igbuku, Erhoike, and Okpe-orogun among others. The people of Orogun had their own culture before the coming of the Whiteman. They have their own system of traditional government and way of life as a community (Oral interview with Ighomuaye, 2025). The people are great farmers and have farm work as their main economic system. Their main products are yam and oil palm produce, cassava and rubber among others. Aside Christianity, the Orogun people practice their traditional religion. They worship one god/goddess called Elosiefe also known as Edjororiarha with a totem called "ogborigbo" (Iguana). According to Enaimoni (Oral interview, 2025), there are many churches from different Christian denominations in Orogun clan. These include Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Pentecostal churches, Baptist and others.

A Baptist Association is a group of Baptist churches in a locality organized for the purpose carrying missionary work. Every association is under a Baptist Conference of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (Ajayi, 2014). The person who presides over the association is called a moderator. The present day Orogun Baptist Association was formerly called "Orogun Baptist Christian Council" that was formed in 1972 with five churches which was then under the Eku Baptist Association. In 2010 a motion was moved for Orogun Baptist Christian Council to be established as a full fletch Baptist association and in 2011 this dream was fulfilled when it was organized on 1st July, 2011 (Ununkete, Oral interview, 2025). After its establishment, more Baptist churches were planted. Presently, the total number of Baptist churches in Orogun Baptist Association is fourteen with twelve trained pastor and two lay leaders. The present Moderator of the Association is Rev Todo Joseph Enite.

IMPORTANT AND ROLE OF DATA IN CHURCH MINISTRY

Data comprises discrete or continuous values that communicate information, encompassing amount, quality, facts, statistics, and sequences of symbols. Data can be structured into formats such as tables and utilized as variables in computer operations (Francis, Laycock & Village, 2010). Data set examples encompass price indexes, unemployment rates, literacy rates, and census data. Data is gathered by methods such as measurement, observation, inquiry, or analysis, and is generally represented as numerical values or characters. Field data is obtained in an uncontrolled setting, whereas experimental data is produced in a regulated scientific experiment (Francis, Laycock & Village, 2010). Data is examined by methodologies such as computation, reasoning, discourse, presentation, visualization, or alternative types of post-analysis. Data insights or intelligence refer to thematically linked data provided within a pertinent context, while the aggregate of insights and intelligence accumulated over time is termed knowledge. Data is referred to as the new oil of the digital economy. Progress in computing technologies has resulted in the emergence of big data, characterized by vast quantities of information at the petabyte scale. Conventional data analysis techniques and computation struggle with extensive datasets, rendering machine learning and artificial intelligence methods more effective for applying analytical approaches to big data

(Harris, 2018). The word data-driven refers to an action predominantly influenced by data rather than other considerations.



Data-driven ministry has a number of benefits, one of which is the enhancement of small group ministry. Small groups that are customized to certain needs might be organized by churches in order to link members with individuals who have had experiences that are comparable to their own. The monitoring of data pertaining to participation and engagement can provide pastors with the ability to assess the health of these groups and change their plans effectively (Houston, 2013). Another important advantage of data-driven ministry is the ability to measure impact and make modifications based on that measurement. In order for churches to evaluate the efficacy of their teachings and programs, it is necessary for them to routinely gather and analyze data on attendance, involvement, and feedback. In situations where projects are not producing the anticipated results, statistics can assist in determining the underlying causes and guiding any necessary improvements.

Data analysis is essential for church leaders to efficiently achieve their corporate goals. Precise data science studies can elucidate issues within ministries and facilitate requisite modifications (Herbohn, 2002). This material can be utilized to support positions with the board of deacons and quell antagonistic leaders or members. The achievements of data-driven ministries can be communicated to the congregation, fostering support for such initiatives. Qualitative data, including testimonies, can

substantiate operational modifications but may be anecdotal and subjective. Quantitative data can inform decisions and offer percentage-based indicators for ministry expansion. Participation surveys can yield percentage-based metrics, although may not be appropriate for older generations (Herbohn, 2013). To obtain more detailed data, church leaders may employ time-use diary studies, survey adult classes, and facilitate conversational discussions. These methodologies can facilitate the identification of areas for enhancement and the formulation of data-driven growth strategies (McLean, 2010). In more advanced church ministries, surveys assessing participation rates across age demographics, group sizes, and locales can yield significant insights.

Data-driven decision-making (DDDM) is an approach where data is used to guide decisions that affect an organization's future path (Harris, 2018). However, a number of issues, including stakeholder impact, query complexity, accessibility, and data quality, can make the process complicated. A DDDM process in a community development organization entails creating a question, gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing data, as well as interpreting the findings. Stakeholders, including local governments, funders, and members of the community, may be impacted by the choice. The procedure can, however, become convoluted and disorganized, creating a power disparity between decision-makers who have the means to gather, examine, and understand data and those who do not. This disparity is especially noticeable in communities of colour, as attitudes from the past and present affect investment levels (O'Connell, Madden & Davis-Faulkner, 2016). Due to a lack of resources for data collection, analysis, and interpretation, communities of color frequently encounter difficulties during the DDDM process. The burden of data accessibility in Atlanta's Westside neighborhoods makes it difficult for residents to heal from failed investments and raise issues of power.

TYPES OF DATA THAT CAN BE USED TO DRIVE CHURCH MINISTRY

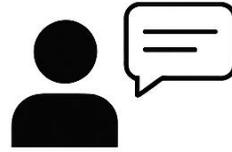
Churches possess data that can be turned into information that can be examined, just like businesses do. Knowing a church's past, present and future is not only beneficial, but also essential for planning. Churches are increasingly collecting data and statistics. Churches have a lot of promise when it comes to using databases to create their own narratives. Numbers like location and membership counsels can be examined and used to plan a ministry (Robinson, 2018). The importance of a crossroads can be determined by counting the number of automobiles that pass the church building (Robinson, 2018). Congregation-recognized metrics, such as worship attendees, members, and the proportion of attendees who give a percentage higher than x , can be used to evaluate church purchasing power. A picture of the congregation's community can be created by looking at neighborhood statistics like average income, car ownership, and demographics. Pastors have access to a vast amount of qualitative data in addition to quantitative data and information analysis.

Quantitative Data



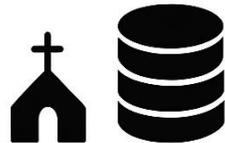
- Location
- Membership counts
- Worship attendance
- Demographics

Qualitative Data



- Congregational meetings
- Get-togethers
- Prayer vigils
- Congregation's aspirations
- Their goals for ministering

Compilation of Data



- Attendance
- Donating
- Groups and classes
- Outreach and service
- Virtual interactions
- Pastoral care contacts
- Recent developments

Survey Data



- Online survey technologies
Google Forms, Survey Monkey, Microsoft Forms
- Church leaders ask members to respond to questions about history of faith and personal lives

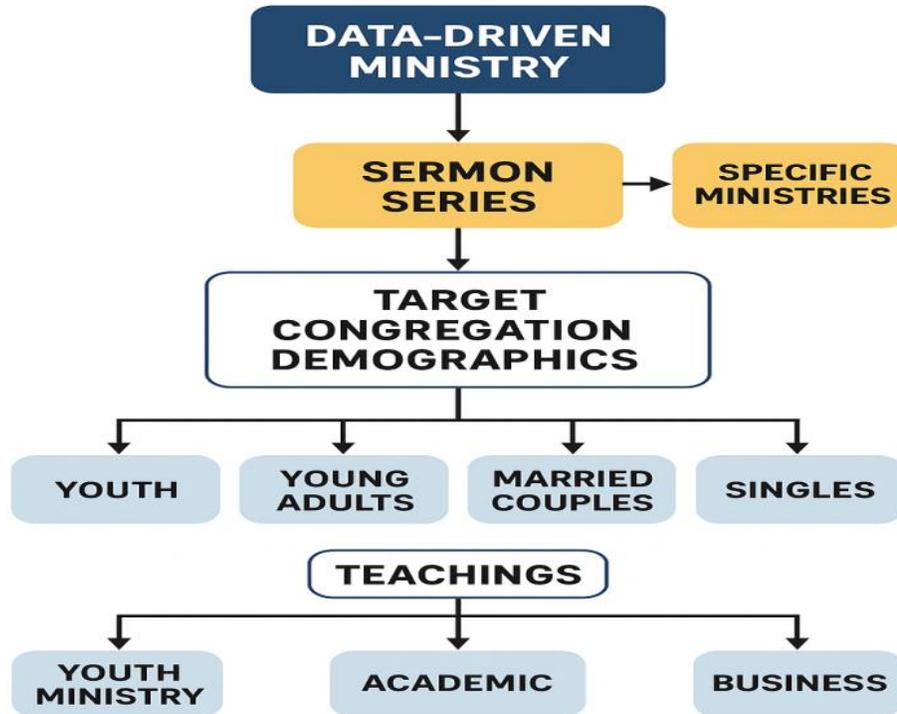
These qualitative data came from congregational meetings, get-togethers, or prayer vigils. The congregation's aspirations or their goals for ministering may be included in such qualitative data. Analysis of these qualitative data is also possible. Since many churches have long-standing polling and questionnaires, they can get input on a range of subjects. Qualitative data also includes customer feedback on other initiatives. None of them are too little or unimportant to document, such as when members express gratitude or dissatisfaction with programme spots, how they felt called or concerned by the pastor's call to ministry, or their hopes for the future (Felder, 2011). Churches can assess the success of their programmes and teachings, pinpoint the underlying issues, and direct required adjustments by routinely examining attendance, participation, and feedback statistics.

Compiling data from members and the neighborhoods surrounding them, keeping records on attendance, donating, groups and classes, outreach and service, virtual interactions, pastoral care contacts, recent developments, and personal statistics

are all areas in which Christian communities excel. Using online survey technologies such as Google Forms, Survey Monkey, Microsoft Forms, and other similar applications, congregations are able to strengthen their data collection activities. The leaders of the church ask members of the congregation to respond to a variety of questions concerning their history of faith and their personal lives (Santos, 2007). It is possible that they will request that members develop web-based or emailed questionnaires for each of their church ministry teams in order to discuss areas of personal and congregational strength. There are some churches that invite other clergy members and adult members of the congregation to fill out surveys in order to assist in determining the necessary adjustments that are required to improve spiritual wellness, organizational effectiveness, ministry possibilities, or relationships (Harris, 2018).

IDENTIFYING AREAS OF MINISTRY TO BE DATA-DRIVEN

By adopting a methodology that is driven by statistics, pastors and other leaders in the church can make certain that the teachings and preaching they provide are not only spiritually enlightening but also practically applicable to the lives of the people who attend their congregations within the church community (Santos, 2018). The use of data-driven ministry can be an effective method for pastors to build sermon series that are specifically tailored to the audience and that resonate with them. Through the examination of demographic data and the identification of recurring topics or difficulties, pastors are able to develop sermon series that are tailored to the needs of various congregations within the church. Topics such as "Faith in the Workplace" for business professionals and "Navigating College Life" for students and young people are examples of areas that could fall under this category. The evaluation of the success of teachings can be aided by data on attendance and engagement, which enables pastors to plan the creation of future content in accordance with the findings (Yankson, 2011). In addition, data can serve as a guide for the development of specific ministries and activities that are tailored to meet the varied requirements of the congregation. As an illustration, a church that has a significant number of young families might establish a ministry that is centered on parenting. This ministry would include resources, support groups, and workshops for parents who are raising their children in a Christian environment. Furthermore, according to the statistics, it is possible to determine whether or not there is a requirement for ministries that promote job development, financial management, mental health, or social justice.



Insights that are produced by data can be utilized to adjust the teachings of a church to the various demographic groupings that are present within a congregation. Youth, young adults, married couples, singles, business owners, members of the academic community, and retirees are all included in these categories. The creation of precise demographic profiles that offer significant insights into the composition of the congregation can be accomplished by churches through the collection of data on age, marital status, occupation, and educational background. In order to develop instruction that is both focused and relevant, it is essential to do data analysis in order to gain an understanding of the requirements and preferences of the students. Teachings that address specific concerns, such as identity and purpose, can be developed with the assistance of data in the context of youth ministry programmes. Data can serve as a guide for academics and intellectuals when it comes to delivering sermons that investigate intricate theological themes and the junction of religion and reason. Teachings that address specific challenges, such as integrating religion with market pressures, ethical decision-making, and resource stewardship, can be developed with the use of statistics for business professionals and entrepreneurs that are interested in developing such teachings (Ottuh, Ogar, Okoi, & Ajimase, 2023). When it comes to married couples, data can provide light on common hurdles, such as difficulties in communication, stress related to finances, or concerns around parenting.

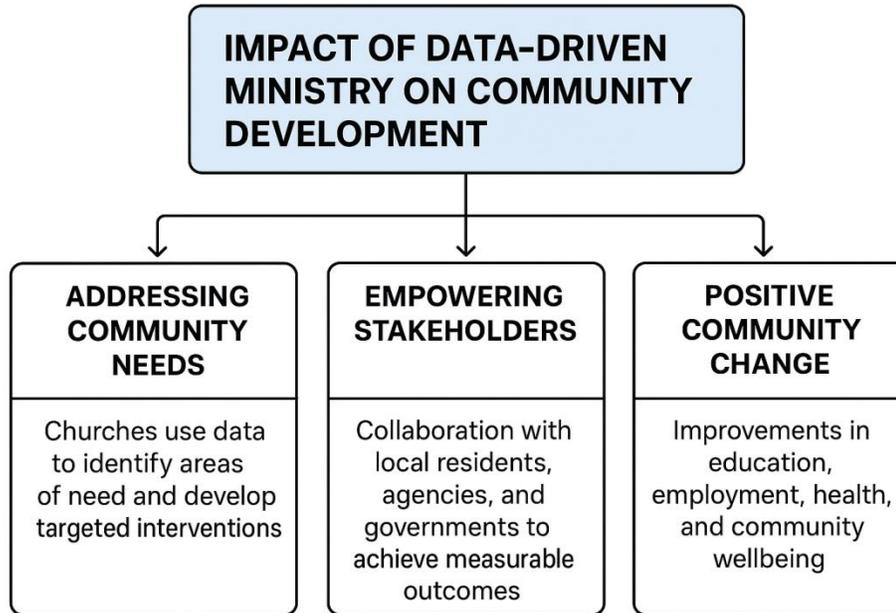
CHALLENGES OF DATA-DRIVEN MINISTRY

Data can elucidate tendencies and address inquiries; however, it does not furnish comprehensive answers. For churches, comprehending the backdrop is essential, encompassing denominational policies that affect mobility, costs, volatility, and government regulations. This comprehension of data frequently entails examining its dynamics. The process of making decisions in churches based on data offers a number of problems, including the collecting and storage of data, cultural and organizational impediments, and technological limits. There may be challenges associated with the collection and maintenance of accurate records due to limited resources and technological infrastructure (Hand, 2018). One of the most important things that can be done is to overcome resistance and cultivate a culture of data literacy and responsibility. It may also be challenging to properly utilize data-driven decision making in churches that are smaller or less tech-savvy because access to advanced analytics tools may be limited in these congregations.

Data-driven church ministry can be impeded by restricted data availability, challenges in interpreting complex datasets, insufficient staff expertise, an absence of a data-centric culture, and inadequate technological infrastructure within the reach of the church. Addressing these difficulties necessitates church leadership dedication, adequate resources, and personnel training to facilitate informed decision-making grounded in precise analysis.

IMPACT OF DATA-DRIVEN MINISTRY ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In this paper, the term “church data-driven ministry” was defined as a quantitative assessment of how one or more areas of need might be effectively addressed by a church or churches through the utilization of community data. According to reports, there are multiple areas of need in communities (Hand, 2018). The approaches used by a number of churches to meet those requirements through the utilization of data were detailed and discussed. A presentation was made that included preliminary findings as well as suggestions for additional investigation. In the same way that any other ministry does, this one requires leadership and vision. It is possible that a single conversational experience might start a good cycle of caring for other people, regardless of how powerful the negative cycle of poverty is. This could be accomplished by efforts that are both humble and persistent. It is possible for a number of other ministries and churches to be empowered to join in and prayerfully address a specific need that has been identified by a caring community if there is a church that is already established and thriving to begin with.



Other ministries and agencies, like as educational, civic, and governmental organizations, may emerge in areas where there is a church that is caring. A constructive collaboration amongst a wide range of stakeholders is required in order to address the kind of complicated and adaptable community problem that is being discussed here. Whenever there is a working atmosphere that is conducive to collaboration and thoughtful facilitation, extraordinary things have the potential to take place. There are already examples of successful approaches of resolving complicated and adaptable community issues, which have been thoroughly documented elsewhere. On the other hand, it seems that this particular project is the only extant church ministry that prioritizes collaboration, outcomes, and data-based approaches.

There is a great deal of hope and prayer that this will be the seed that begins a larger church movement that is motivated by outcomes in order to love those who are in need in a more efficient manner. Through the empowerment of residents, agencies, churches, and governments to collaborate around specific, measurable outcomes that have the potential to reduce poverty, improve education, employment, and health, and transform communities and lives (Houston, 2013); this ministry has the potential to bring about tremendous, long-term, positive change in communities. With the help of the police and schools, the level of violence and conduct in schools has decreased. Locals have been given the authority to establish business corridors, which have resulted in the creation of hundreds of jobs and millions of dollars in tax income. As a result of community health centers, access to medical care has been enhanced, and the costs of medical treatment have decreased. Job readiness and employment have both improved as a result of skill training programs, which have resulted in a 75 percent reduction in unemployment. During this time, churches have been providing volunteers and essential resources in order to address the needs that have been identified through the use of community data.

Data gathering has the potential to be used in church ministry, according to the findings of the study; nevertheless, ministry leaders and members of the congregation frequently face challenges when attempting to enhance or alter church practices owing to the lack of tangible resources. The fact that the outputs of the data are not interpreted draws attention to the potential of data for strengthening congregational empowerment. When it comes to the development of systems for religious learning and accountability, organizational learning is absolutely necessary (Ottuh, Idjakpo, & Uviekovo, 2022). It is possible to learn discussions and frame congregational memory, culture, capacities, and resources through the process of understanding and analyzing data contexts. It has also been noticed that there is a correlation between social capital and trust in the church community. It is important for church communities to record, access, and evaluate information regarding previous congregational engagement in order to offer dependable inputs for a variety of church operating procedures. Religious education is a significant opportunity for congregational empowerment, as it enables the congregation to build trust in the data outputs and the learning capability of the church. Validity may be established for the procedural format that incorporates comprehension of quality prior to interpretation and articulation into actionable inputs (Hand, 2018). Another finding of the study was that participants' spiritual, social, and cognitive well-being improved as a result of their participation in religious education.

THE WAY FORWARD FOR CHURCHES IN OROGUN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Data-driven decision-making within the church context entails utilizing data and analytics to guide strategic planning, resource distribution, and operational administration. It involves gathering pertinent information about the congregation, assessing trends and patterns, and utilizing the insights obtained to make informed decisions that match with the church's goal and objectives. By utilizing information analytics, church administrators can acquire a more profound comprehension of their congregation's demographics, interests, and requirements. This allows them to create more focused and efficient outreach initiatives, events, and ministries. Enhanced resource allocation through insights based on data enable church managers to deploy resources more effectively, whether in budgeting for programs and initiatives or maximizing staffing and volunteer efforts. By means of data analysis, church management can discern new trends and forecast evolving needs amongst the congregation. This enables them to proactively resolve issues and customize their services to more effectively fulfill both the spiritual and practical requirements of their members. By grounding decisions on actual data rather than preconceptions or feelings, church administrators can optimize processes, reduce waste, and amplify the impact of their initiatives.

Through the process of becoming a community and mission-focused church, chances to build programs that are driven by data and that support transformative ministry is presented. Specifically, this entails engaging people in meaningful ways and making use of the gifts that each individual member of the church possesses. Through

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the process of designing ministries based on the needs, interests, and giftedness of the community, the ministry is transformed into something that the community owns. When it comes to this, the level of engagement that the SOLID model provides is absolutely essential, as it is the congregation that plays a key role in the development and evaluation of the program. The congregation is responsible for the development and maintenance of the process, and ministry teams are utilized to achieve this.

Evangelism-driven churches might benefit from data analysis at the neighborhood level since it can assist them in identifying chances for growing family ministries, which is especially important in today's hectic world. However, determining whether family ministry tactics will have an effect on local communities can be difficult. However, this process can be eased by addressing three problem areas: knowledge of the existing culture, knowledge of the congregation, and understanding of the needs and interests of local families. It is possible to develop the church growth model by first evaluating its short-term, didactic, and theological models, and then concentrating on developing a comprehensive model for local churches through this process. Utilizing information technology allows for a better understanding of congregations, the spiritual strengthening of those congregations, and the mobilization of those congregations for effective ministry, which includes extending the church family, equipping saints, as well as ministering to the community.

The churches could collaborate with the highly regarded organizations that are already operating in many communities to address a variety of community-level issues. This would allow the churches to have the greatest possible impact on any given situation. The subsequent stage is essential, and it consists of just being aware of where to look and how to portray one to obtain information from such companies. Each city may have a unique appearance, while others may have a very similar appearance; nonetheless, regardless of the size of the church or the town, there are organizations that have been established and/or data that is accessible to begin working on the issues that are present within that community. Churches can utilize this information to have a better understanding of the issues that are currently plaguing their communities, to learn what constitutes pot luck, and to start.

To successfully execute data-driven decision-making within a church context, administrators must prioritize investments in data infrastructure, staff and volunteer training and education, and the cultivation of a culture receptive to data-driven methodologies. This will provide a resilient data infrastructure, improve data literacy competencies, and foster a culture of achievement, recognizing successes and emphasizing the beneficial effects of data-driven decisions. Small churches can still leverage data-driven decision-making by initiating modestly, concentrating on low-cost or complimentary data management tools, and utilizing the expertise of volunteers or community partners. It is essential to focus data collecting and analysis in domains that will significantly influence the church's mission and aims.

CONCLUSION

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Utilizing statistics or data to gain an understanding of the demographics of the congregation is necessary for the church to accommodate the varied requirements of its members in the community. Because of this, they are able to modify their teachings and ministries to cater to the specific need of various groups, including young people, academics, business owners, married couples, and single people without children within their host communities. Ministers in their churches are given the abilities to preach the gospel in ways that are both relevant and impactful when they make decisions based on data. The church is able to achieve its purpose of producing disciples and transforming lives in a society that is always changing because it embraces data, which empowers it to design ministries that are both effective and individualized, fostering spiritual growth and also addressing their life practical needs. Data-driven decision-making offers significant potential for church administrators aiming to optimize resource management and enhance service to their congregations. By adopting data analytics and fostering a culture of innovation as well as adaptability, churches can confidently and purposefully navigate the complexities of the contemporary world.

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Oral Interviews

S/No.	Name	Sex	Age	Status	Place	Date
1	O. J. Ighomuaye	M	51	Pastor	Orogun	15/3/2025
2	Clement Edi	M	46	Church member	Aragba	10/3/2025
3	Nelson Enaimoni	M	37	Teacher	Otorho	7/4/2025
4	Deneler Ununkete	F	58	Businessman	Ugono	14/4/2025

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5	Anthony Ogbodo	M	29	Businessman	Ovara	11/5/2025
6	Christian Umukoro	M	35	Teacher	Ozuaka	1/5/2025
7	Patience Opute	F	50	Civil servant	Orogun	21/4/2025

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