

Factors Influencing the Conversion to the Seventh-day Adventist Church: A Narrative Inquiry Study

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ABSTRACT

Conversion is a profound and transformative experience within the Christian faith, often marking a pivotal moment in an individual's spiritual journey. Despite extensive study, the intricacies of conversion remain a rich field for exploration. This research delves into the conversion experiences of seven Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) workers in church institutions located in Muak Lek, Thailand, during the period of 2023-2024. Using a narrative inquiry approach, the study aims to uncover the factors that contribute to their decision to convert to the SDA Church. The findings reveal that each participant's conversion story is unique, highlighting the diverse paths individuals take toward embracing their faith. However, several common themes emerged: First, five of the seven participants were introduced to the SDA Church through their attendance at SDA schools, underscoring the role of education in religious conversion. Second, six participants engaged in thorough Bible study sessions with SDA pastors, teachers, or friends before making their decision to join the church, indicating the importance of scriptural understanding in the conversion process. Lastly, all participants originated from non-Christian countries, suggesting that their conversions involved not only a shift in religious belief but also a significant cultural transition. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the conversion process and its influencing factors, particularly within the context of the SDA Church in Muak Lek, Thailand.

Keywords: Acculturation, Conversion, Syncretism, Transformation

INTRODUCTION

The study of religious conversion is a complex and fascinating topic, with various theories offering insight into the transformational experiences individuals undergo. Massimo Leone (2004) describes conversion as "the re-stabilization of the self," focusing on how individuals develop coherent religious beliefs that bring personal stability. William James (1911) adds that conversion unifies the self, leading to psychological stability, happiness, and moral transformation through religious ideals. Although the term "conversion" is often associated with Christianity, similar experiences are recognized in other religions, though they may use different terminology, such as "enlightenment" in Buddhism. What criteria qualify as representing conversion has been the subject of study to many scholars. It should be noted that there seems to be no standard definition of the word *conversion*. Like, contextualization (see Guirguis, 2020, pp. 165, 177), conversion is a slippery term, "no single definition of conversion is either desirable or possible" (Merrill, 1993, p. 154).

Despite the diversity in religious experiences, there is no single, standard definition of conversion, as it is a fluid and context-dependent term. Conversion is best understood as a significant change in direction, akin to a "U-turn," where an individual moves from a negative lifestyle to a positive one in alignment with Christ's teachings. This radical shift, described by theologian James Lesslie Newbigin (1909) represents a profound change in one's worldview and approach to life.

Conversion is a fundamental aspect of the Christian faith, encompassing intellectual, moral, or religious shifts that open new horizons for individuals (Coffey, 2022). Robert W. Hefner's (1993) intellectualist model emphasizes the active, reflective nature of human beings in the process of conversion, where individuals engage in understanding and reinterpreting symbols and meanings as circumstances evolve (Robin, 1971).

In Muak Lek, Thailand, a significant number of Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church workers are converts from various religious backgrounds. Despite the prevalence of these conversion experiences, their stories have not been systematically recorded or analyzed. This study seeks to fill that gap by exploring the conversion narratives of individuals who transitioned from non-SDA religious affiliations to becoming active members of the SDA Church while working at SDA institutions in Muak Lek during 2023-2024.

The central research question addresses the factors influencing non-SDA individuals to convert to the SDA Church. The study's findings are expected to enhance the SDA Church's evangelistic efforts in Muak Lek by providing a deeper understanding of the conversion process, which can serve as a guide for future outreach initiatives. The participants, who vary in age, gender, and cultural background, provide a diverse range of perspectives, making the research outcomes broadly applicable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of conversion has evolved significantly in theological and historical scholarship. Traditionally viewed as a sudden and radical change, recent studies suggest that conversion is often a gradual process, challenging the idea of a "totalizing experience" (Baer, 2014). Lewis R. Rambo (1993) emphasizes that while conversion can be triggered by specific events, it typically unfolds over time. Conversion can be either instantaneous, as seen in biblical figures like Matthew and Zacchaeus, or gradual, as exemplified by the Ethiopian eunuch. Understanding conversion requires examining it both personally and communally.

Theologians and historians have categorized conversion into four types: acculturation, adhesion (hybridity), syncretism, and transformation. Acculturation involves adopting aspects of a new culture or religion while retaining elements of the original one, potentially leading to full assimilation. Adhesion, or hybridity, occurs when individuals maintain their previous beliefs and practices while incorporating elements of a new faith, leading to a blend rather than a full conversion. Syncretism refers to the merging of old and new religious beliefs to form a new synthesis, often resulting in significant changes to the original tenets of the religions involved. Finally, transformation describes a complete replacement of the old beliefs with the new, often resulting in a profound change in the convert's identity and practices.

Each type of conversion reflects a different process and outcome, highlighting the complexity and diversity of religious change. Conversion is not merely a change in beliefs but involves a deep transformation of identity, lifestyle, and worldview, often mediated through

language and cultural practices. Understanding these different processes is crucial for a comprehensive analysis of religious conversion across different contexts and historical periods.

The understanding of religious conversion has undergone significant changes in recent theological and historical scholarship. Traditionally, conversion was perceived as a sudden and radical change—a moment of profound transformation that occurs instantaneously in a person's life. This view, prevalent for centuries, led many theologians and historians to question the authenticity and depth of such conversions, often referring to them as "totalizing experiences" that might oversimplify the complex nature of religious change (Baer, 2014). However, contemporary scholars, such as Lewis R. Rambo, argue that conversion is more accurately described as a gradual process that unfolds over time. According to Rambo (1993), while conversion can indeed be triggered by specific events or crises, it typically involves a prolonged journey of spiritual, intellectual, and emotional transformation. This shift in understanding recognizes the nuanced and multifaceted nature of conversion, which varies significantly from one individual to another.

It is important to acknowledge that there is no singular or correct pathway to conversion. Some individuals experience what can be described as an instantaneous conversion, marked by a decisive moment of change. Biblical examples include Matthew the tax collector and Zacchaeus, both of whom experienced sudden calls to repentance and immediately responded by altering the course of their lives (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27; Luke 19:5). On the other hand, other conversions are more prolonged and gradual, such as the Ethiopian eunuch's journey to understanding and accepting the Christian faith, which involved a process of learning and discernment (Acts 8:25-38). This dual understanding of conversion—both as a personal, immediate experience and as a communal, evolving process—allows for a more comprehensive exploration of how individuals come to embrace a new faith.

The Categories of Conversion

To further analyze the diverse experiences of conversion, theologians and historians have classified conversion into four distinct categories: acculturation, adhesion (hybridity), syncretism, and transformation. Each category offers a different lens through which to view the complex process of religious change.

Acculturation

The concept of acculturation was first introduced by the American explorer and geologist John Wesley Powell (1834–1902), and it has since become a foundational idea in understanding cultural and religious change. Acculturation refers to the process by which individuals or groups adopt the values, practices, and beliefs of a new culture while retaining elements of their original culture (Rudmin et al., 2017). This process often begins in infancy, as individuals learn and internalize the values of the society in which they are raised. However, acculturation also occurs later in life, particularly in contexts where individuals are exposed to and interact with a new cultural or religious environment. In the context of religious conversion, acculturation can lead to various outcomes, ranging from subtle changes in lifestyle to complete assimilation into the new religion. When acculturation is taken to its extreme, it results in the complete abandonment of the original culture and the full adoption of the new one. However, more often, individuals experience a spectrum of changes, such as integration,

separation, marginalization, or transformation, as they navigate the complexities of adopting a new faith while retaining aspects of their previous beliefs and practices. From an anthropological perspective, conversion through acculturation involves not only a change in religious beliefs but also significant shifts in lifestyle, diet, clothing, daily routines, and religious observances. This process can gradually weaken the individual's attachment to their old religion as they embrace the practices and values of their new faith.

Adhesion (Hybridity)

Adhesion, also known as hybridity, refers to the phenomenon where individuals or groups adopt new religious beliefs and practices alongside their existing ones. This form of conversion is characterized by a blend of old and new beliefs, where converts do not fully abandon their previous faith but instead incorporate elements of the new religion into their existing spiritual framework (Baer, 2014). Adhesion is often seen as a transitional stage in the conversion process, where individuals may outwardly embrace a new religion while retaining private adherence to some aspects of their former faith. This dual allegiance can lead to a gradual shift in religious identity over time, as the new beliefs and practices become more deeply integrated into the individual's life. However, adhesion can also result in tension or conflict, particularly when the new religion's teachings are in direct opposition to the convert's previous beliefs. In some cases, adhesion may lead to a complete conversion to the new faith, while in others, it may cause the individual to eventually abandon the new religion and return to their original beliefs. Theologians and historians who study adhesion emphasize the importance of recognizing the fluidity and complexity of the conversion process. They argue that conversion should not be understood as a singular event but rather as a dynamic and ongoing journey that may involve multiple stages of change (Baer, 2014). This perspective challenges the traditional view of conversion as a one-time, definitive act of faith and instead highlights the possibility of "multiple conversions" throughout an individual's life. The notion of adhesion is distinct from syncretism, as it does not involve the merging of old and new beliefs into a cohesive whole but rather the coexistence of two separate belief systems.

Syncretism

Syncretism occurs when individuals merge elements of their old and new religions to create a new, hybrid faith. This process involves the blending of beliefs, practices, and rituals from different religious traditions, resulting in a synthesis that incorporates aspects of both the old and new faiths. Syncretism has both objective and subjective dimensions: objectively, it refers to the merging of beliefs, while subjectively, it involves the evaluation of this blending from the perspective of one of the religions involved (Droogers, 2011). In some religious contexts, syncretism is viewed negatively, as it may be seen as diluting or compromising the purity of the original faith. However, in other contexts, syncretism is recognized as a natural and inevitable outcome of religious and cultural interaction. Historically, syncretism has been common in regions where multiple religious traditions coexist, such as Africa and Asia. In these contexts, individuals often navigate between different value systems, incorporating elements from various religions into their daily lives. Conversion to Christianity, for example, has often involved a long process of syncretic adaptation, where new converts gradually integrate Christian beliefs with their existing cultural and religious practices. This process can

take centuries, as seen in the gradual transformation of African and Asian societies through the spread of Christianity.

Transformation

Transformation represents the most thorough form of conversion, where the individual or group completely abandons their old beliefs and practices and fully embraces the new faith. This process involves a profound change in identity and worldview, often accompanied by a strong sense of personal and spiritual renewal. Transformation can be understood as a form of metamorphosis, where the convert undergoes a gradual yet complete change in their beliefs, values, and way of life. The concept of transformation is closely related to the Greek word "metamorphoo," which is used in the New Testament to describe a significant change in appearance or character (Romans 12:1). This idea of transformation as a gradual and thorough process is also reflected in the biological concept of metamorphosis, where an organism undergoes a complete change in form and function, such as a tadpole transforming into a frog. In the context of religious conversion, transformation involves a similar process of radical change, where the convert not only adopts new beliefs but also undergoes a deep internal shift that affects every aspect of their life. During the Reformation Era, conversion was often understood in terms of transformation, with new converts striving to imitate Christ in every aspect of their lives. This involved a complete rejection of their previous beliefs and practices, which were seen as wrong, and the adoption of a new way of life that was considered right. Converts who undergo transformation are often filled with a strong sense of mission and evangelistic zeal, as they seek to share their newfound faith with others.

The role of language in conversion, particularly in the context of transformation, is significant. Clifford Staples and Armand L. Mauss propose that conversion should be viewed as a process of self-transformation, achieved primarily through language (Staples & Mauss, 1987). Language serves as a critical tool in helping converts articulate and internalize their new beliefs, allowing them to navigate the complexities of their spiritual journey. Susan F. Harding further emphasizes that conversion involves acquiring a specific religious language or dialect, which plays a crucial role in shaping the convert's identity and sense of self (Harding, 2000). Through language, converts can engage with the religious teachings of their new faith, reinterpret their past experiences, and integrate their new beliefs into their lives. This process of linguistic and ideological transformation is central to the overall experience of conversion, as it enables individuals to fully embrace their new religious identity and participate in the life of their new faith community.

The literature provides five different theories or models of religious conversion, each offering a unique perspective on how individuals experience and undergo spiritual transformation. Each of these theories offers a different lens through which to understand the multifaceted nature of religious conversion, reflecting the diversity of spiritual experiences across cultures and individuals.

Vertical Conversion Theory

Vertical conversion is prevalent across various religions and is characterized by a profound internal transformation. This theory suggests that an individual undergoes a significant spiritual awakening, where a "second ego" emerges, leading to a new life and a fresh

moral outlook. The conversion is driven by the discovery of higher truths or universal values, often accompanied by a critical reassessment of past beliefs. This model emphasizes a direct connection with a higher power and is often marked by a sudden and dramatic change, as exemplified by the conversion of the apostle Paul in the Bible.

Processual Conversion Theory

Processual conversion is a gradual, three-stage process involving encounter, initiation, and commitment. It is most commonly discussed among Chinese converts. The process begins with gaining basic knowledge of a new religion, followed by deeper involvement during the initiation stage, and culminates in full commitment to the faith. This theory views conversion as a continuous journey that transforms a person's religious identity over time. A biblical example of this model is the conversion of Lydia in the book of Acts, where her spiritual transformation occurred gradually.

Interactionist/Horizontal Conversion Theory

Interactionist or horizontal conversion occurs through social interactions and relationships. This model emphasizes the role of social networks and personal connections in the conversion process. It is based on seven factors, including experiencing tensions, seeking solutions, and forming emotional bonds with converts. Conversion in this model is less about sudden spiritual revelations and more about gradual integration into a new religious community through relational dynamics. Examples from the Bible include Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, whose conversions were facilitated through personal encounters with Jesus.

Forced Conversion Theory

Forced conversion is often associated with brainwashing or coercion, but the theory presented here suggests that it involves personal relationships and social interactions rather than purely psychological manipulation. Conversion in this context occurs within a framework of repeated social interactions, where the convert voluntarily participates in their own transformation. While forced conversion is generally seen as an aberration, it is noteworthy that even in Islam, forced conversion is not permissible, as indicated by the Qur'an. This model lacks strong biblical examples, as it contradicts the principle of free will.

Lifestyle Conversion Theory

Lifestyle conversion involves adopting the practices and behaviors associated with a new religion. This model highlights the sociocultural aspects of conversion, where the convert gradually integrates into the lifestyle of the new faith, including changes in diet, attire, social interactions, and other practices. Conversion under this model is not only a change in beliefs but also a shift in cultural and social identity. Biblical examples include Rahab and Ruth, who both adopted the Hebrew faith and its associated lifestyle, demonstrating a complete transformation in their way of life.

In conclusion, the study of conversion reveals a complex and multifaceted process that can take many forms, ranging from acculturation and adhesion to syncretism and transformation. Each of these categories highlights different aspects of the conversion experience, whether it involves gradual adaptation, the blending of beliefs, or a complete transformation of identity. Understanding these diverse processes is essential for a

comprehensive analysis of religious conversion, as it allows for a deeper appreciation of the ways in which individuals navigate the challenges and opportunities of embracing a new faith. Whether viewed as a sudden, radical change or as a gradual, ongoing journey, conversion remains a central and defining experience in the lives of many believers across different religious traditions and historical periods.

METHODS

This study takes a qualitative approach using a narrative inquiry methodology. The participants for the study are active workers in the SDA institutions in Muak Lek, Thailand, during 2022-2023, who were non-SDA before but at a point in their lives converted to the SDA faith. To obtain an adequate sample, a list was constructed of all individuals who fit the category. Each prospective participant was asked if he or she can be part of the study. Those who consented to be participants in the study signed a consent form and were given the schedule of the interviews.

There were seven individuals who participated in the study. They were interviewed at least three times. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

A narrative type of interview is a means of revealing human relations, reflections, and development. Interpersonal, institutional, and intra-personal interactions are revealed in narratives. The insights that can be drawn from narratives will deepen our understanding of the dynamic processes occurring systematically in our daily lives (Daiute, 2014). The data gathered was analyzed using plot analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Factors affecting the participants' conversion to the SDA faith.

Participant 1: *I was encouraged by Christian friends and the dormitory dean who led morning and evening worship[s]. At church every Saturday, I heard the name of Jesus again and learned that Jesus Christ was the one who brought hope. He came to save me and give [gave] me hope and love if I believe[d] in him [Him].*

Analysis: Based on the given paragraph, the conversion theory that can be identified is the Cognitive/Affective Conversion Theory. The individual's conversion experience is influenced by cognitive factors such as learning about Jesus Christ, his role in bringing hope, and the importance of belief in him. Additionally, affective factors play a role as the individual is encouraged by Christian friends and the dormitory dean who lead worship, creating an emotional and supportive environment for the conversion process.

Finding

Participant 2: *By the time this marriage proposal came, then the bothering factor came about [another bothering factor came about]. Then [~~Then~~][Someone] someone said, oh, that groom, he [~~he~~] is an Adventist. That is how I came to know what an Adventist is [That was the first time I heard of Adventists]. You know, people who worship on Saturday, not Sunday. So, my father was like...Of course [,] my father knew about it [Sabbath worship] because [in] my father's native place there is [was] an Adventist school in which my husband, childhood friends*

and others were working. But he was not sure about it. We just know [knew] there is [was] a Seventh-day Adventist school. So, my father was a little bit worried about it. 'Am I sending my child into another religion? [So, my father was a bit worried if he was sending his child into another faith]. That is [was] the concerning factor, but later some other friends helped him to understand. No, no, no, they are not different religion. [No, they do not follow a different religion], they still follow [the teachings of] Bible. It's not different [from our beliefs], but they worship on Saturday [and you] You do it on Sunday, they have separate day, but ultimately the book they follow is the Holy Bible itself. They believe in the father [Father], Son and the Holy Spirit [and everything]. So that is how his friends help [helped] him to [to] understand. It [was] not a separate religion, it's [was] still Christianity but [a] different denomination. So, no worries and on top of that, he got the assurance that the groom was a very good person. [the groom was of good character].

My family accepted the marriage proposal, and that Adventists had the same religious beliefs. I mean we were OK, so we proceeded forward and then got married. And then later, right after marriage, we went to _____. But during that period, we got some chance to talk about it. He told me that even Jesus Christ, he followed Sabbath even in his death, and I was like how? Like you know, He was resurrected on the 3rd day.

As I said, this is the strongest point when he said that Jesus kept Sabbath even in his death, then the strongest one registered in my mind. (My family accepted the marriage proposal, and that Adventists had the same religious beliefs as the religion the family was following. Everyone in the family agreed to the marriage proposal and the marriage ceremony was conducted. After the marriage the couple travelled to _____ and while travelling we got the chance to talk about the SDA religion. He told me that even Jesus Christ followed keeping the Sabbath even in His death. I asked him, 'how?'. He explained, 'like you know, Jesus was resurrected on the 3rd day. Hearing this I said this view was the strongest point to convince me that our religious beliefs were similar.).

Analysis: This falls under the Processual Conversion, where the person experienced three stages, namely, encounter, initiation, and commitment.

The individual's conversion process involves a cognitive evaluation and understanding of the beliefs and practices of Seventh-day Adventists. The individual's father initially had concerns and reservations about the Adventist faith, considering it as potentially a different religion. However, through discussions with friends and gaining knowledge about Adventism, the individual's father came to realize that Adventism is a different denomination within Christianity, and they still follow the Holy Bible and believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The individual's acceptance of Adventism and eventual marriage to an Adventist was influenced by the intellectual understanding of the Sabbath, particularly the belief that even Jesus observed the Sabbath, including during His death and subsequent resurrection. The intellectual aspects of understanding and reasoning played a significant role in the individual's decision to embrace Adventism.

Participant 3: *So, there was this pastor. He started inviting us to an Adventist church and he started giving us Bible studies. That was in my grade 11. He told me, like, there's*

something called baptism. And I was little surprised. What is baptism? So, we went to _____ church because he has to show us how baptism happens. I saw some of the people getting immersed in water and that's how I realized this is what baptism is. And I was very fascinated with [with] knowing that only by getting immersed in water did people changed [change] their religion and I was not serious about Hinduism. Because by grade 11, I realized that all the gods that my grandmother worshipped, she had many, we had a [separate] room separate that was a temple room, I realized those gods are [were] not real. They are [were] all made by human beings. This is how I learned and in grade 11, slowly and gradually, my pastor told me, Ok, so this is your turn. You have to make your decision. So, I decided to get baptized.

Analysis: This falls under the Interactionist/Horizontal Conversion Theory, which tells the reader that it occurs at a horizontal level, meaning the experience is based on relations and active interaction with individuals with whom one lives. The person first experienced tension with idol worship, which he/she named untrue gods, made of human hands. Second, he/she had confronted religious challenges, third, the person became a religious seeker, fourth, the person experienced a turning point in his/her life. Another is an affective bond is developed, finally, the person now is active and dependable.

The individual's journey involves encounters with a pastor who invites them to an Adventist church and provides Bible studies. The experience of witnessing baptism and seeing people immerse in water becomes a significant moment of realization for the individual. They become fascinated by the idea that through baptism, people can change their religion. The individual's growing skepticism towards Hinduism and their realization that the gods worshiped by their grandmother are human made indicate a process of personal transformation and a shift in religious beliefs. The decision to get baptized reflects a personal choice and commitment to the new faith.

Participant 4: I didn't show my interest (in Christianity) at first. I thought that if I converted, my mother and my other relatives would be mad at me. I insisted on praying to Mary, Virgin Mary and other saints. But then later I had a feeling like [I realized] what the Adventists believe might be true because when we pray, I remember the time I was in high school when we prayed, we have [had] to confess to the priest. We had to go and confess our sins to the priest, but then I started to think that the Bible says that Jesus is the mediator. You can confess your sin directly to God. You don't have to find somebody else to become your mediator.

There are pastors who played important roles in my life as well as other teachers here at _____. They supported me and helped me to understand the Bible. I was convinced. That's why I was baptized.

Analysis: Based on the provided paragraph, the conversion theory that seems to be reflected is the theory of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that individuals experience discomfort or tension when they hold conflicting beliefs or attitudes. In the paragraph, the individual initially held beliefs and practices associated with praying to Mary and other saints, but later started questioning those beliefs when confronted with the idea that

confessing sins directly to God is supported by the Bible. This internal conflict and the resolution of aligning their beliefs with the new information is consistent with the cognitive dissonance theory. The individual's decision to be baptized indicates a shift in their beliefs and practices as a result of resolving cognitive dissonance.

Participant 5: I was collecting the garbage one day, and I saw a book in the trash. I got this book. I cleaned it up and it was in Arabic: the Ministry of Healing by Ellen G. White. I said I've never heard of this author before and what is this, Ministry of Healing? So, I started to read this book. There are many biblical bases for being vegetarian that helped me more, so I said, can you please give me Bible studies and he welcomed the idea.

I was able to go through all kinds of doctrines, kind of. But the most important was about Christ and his birth, death and resurrection was clear to me.

So, in my view that time, I was like oh, they are like Pentecostals or Evangelicals, there is not much difference. Only later on when you study the Adventist [beliefs] and you get to know it's unique, it's different. Atonement is different.

I just started doing personal readings and asking the principal so many questions and friends [I just started doing personal readings and asking the principal and friends so many questions]. I decided I would like to get baptized into the Adventism.

Analysis: This one falls under the lifestyle conversion theory. Also, the conversion theory that can be identified is the Cognitive/Affiliative Conversion Theory. The individual's conversion experience is primarily influenced by cognitive factors, such as discovering and reading the book "Ministry of Healing" by Ellen G. White. The individual engages in personal readings, Bible studies, and discussions with friends and the principal to gain knowledge and understanding of Adventist beliefs and doctrines. The individual's decision to embrace Adventism is driven by a cognitive process of learning and discovering unique aspects of the Adventist faith, such as the understanding of atonement. The affiliation with the Adventist Church is based on a cognitive evaluation of beliefs and a personal desire to be baptized into Adventism.

Finding

Participant 6: I heard about God when I was studying, and I took some classes about Jesus, about religion. And then I observed the people here. I saw that the people here were very different. The teachers were very kind compared to those in my country. I mean, the teachers in my country were kind, but they did not really care about the students. Here some teachers even invited the students to go to their house[s], to have meals with them. So, it impressed me.

There was something that happened to me, like I forgot a book in the cafeteria. It was an expensive book. I was very scared at that time, and it was a Friday. I could not go to the cafeteria to check. So, I tried to pray. I said to God to please help me to get back the books.

If you help me find those books, I will start to believe in you. Something like that. And I will try to keep the Sabbath. Then the next day I found it. It was still there in the cafeteria. If it was in my country, in 5 minutes everything will [would] be gone! You cannot leave anything around like without care. Even if you carry things people can steal it from you. So, it was a surprise. And I felt it was a miracle. Just a small thing but it made me start to believe.

Analysis: The theory that includes honesty in the process of conversion is often referred to as the “Sincerity Theory” or the “Authenticity Theory.” According to this perspective, honesty plays a crucial role in the conversion process, emphasizing the genuine and sincere commitment of individuals to their new religious beliefs or practices.

Participant 7: *What we call usually in my mind, when I recognized Jesus or the Christians, in my mind is the Christian is to love to others [In my mind what we usually refer to or think of Christians or followers of Jesus is that they love all]. Yes, the one thing that I heard about Christians and another one was kindness. [Another thing that I had heard about Christians was that they were kind]. When I came to ____ I actually saw it in our faculty.*

When I stayed in the dormitory, they have [had] the worship every morning and evening. On Sabbath afternoons we have (had) Bible classes.

My wife, when she came for the first year of the study, she was also a _____. I think she was studying here, maybe in the second year, she got baptized. She was also influenced by the environment and friends [who] were Christians. She also took Bible studies on Sabbath afternoons.

Analysis: This falls under the Interactionist/Horizontal Conversion Theory. The individual's conversion experience is influenced by witnessing the love, kindness, and positive behavior displayed by Christians. The presence of daily worship and Bible classes in the dormitory creates an environment conducive to spiritual growth and exploration. Additionally, the influence of friends who are Christians and the opportunity to engage in Bible studies on Sabbath afternoons contribute to the individual's decision to embrace Christianity. The emphasis on relationships, community, and the positive impact of social interactions aligns with the Relational/Social Conversion Theory.

Other Findings.

1. Five of the seven participants came to know about the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church by attending an SDA school.
2. Six participants had a thorough Bible study with SDA pastors, teachers, and friends before conversion to SDA church.
3. All participants come from non-Christian countries.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATIONS

This study can conclude that there is not one unique factor that influences the conversion to the Seventh-day Adventist church. The study recommends mission focus in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools since five of the seven participants came to know about the SDA church by attending one. Six of the seven participants in the study had a thorough Bible study with SDA pastors, teachers, and friends before they decided to become SDAs.

The findings of this study will benefit the evangelistic campaign of the SDA church, particularly in Muak Lek, Thailand. The conversion theory drawn from the study can be used as a guide map when planning and conducting an evangelistic effort.

The participants of the study are workers in the SDA institutions in Muak Lek, Thailand. They come from different countries of origin and converted to SDA from a different religion/philosophy. There are men and women participants and there is a wide range in their ages. This makes the research output far-reaching and varied.

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