

The Impact of Leadership Dynamics on the Growth and Development of Home Cells: A Study of Perez Chapel International

Archbishop Charles Agyinasare

Perez University College, Ghana

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.910000733>

Received: 02 November 2025; Accepted: 10 November 2025; Published: 22 November 2025

ABSTRACT

Small groups are essential focal points for both qualitative and quantitative church growth in many mega Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Previous studies have examined the use of small groups for administration, growth, and sustainability, but have often focused on programmes, activities, or leader selection rather than on the dynamics of leader–member relationships within these groups. This paper explores the impact of leadership dynamics on the growth and development of home cell groups at Perez Chapel International’s Perez Dome in Accra, Ghana. Drawing on Transformational Leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) theory, Social Identity Theory, and Team Convergence of Mental Models, the study employs a convergent mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were collected from 124 home cell participants and 7 regional leaders using a newly developed Home Cell Growth Scale and the LMX-7, complemented by attendance records from 126 home cell groups over a one-year period. Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and thematically analysed. Reliability and factor analysis confirmed that the four growth dimensions (numerical, spiritual, welfare, and social) form a coherent and largely unidimensional construct. Results show that LMX is strongly associated with spiritual, social, and welfare growth, and moderately but significantly correlated with net numerical growth. Welfare and social growth emerged as the strongest predictors of actual numerical increase. Qualitative themes highlighted trust, open communication, personal care, community engagement, and the challenge of leadership burnout. The study concludes that high-quality leader–member relationships are crucial for spiritual and relational health in home cells and that welfare and social care are key pathways to numerical growth. It recommends intentional support systems, shared leadership structures, and improved data practices to sustain home cell growth while guarding against leadership burnout.

Keywords: Pentecostals and Charismatics; Perez Chapel International; home cells; leader–member exchange; transformational leadership; church growth; burnout.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity across Africa has brought renewed focus on how mega churches provide effective pastoral care and maintain close relational ties with members who attend services in large numbers (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, 2019). In response to the challenge of caring for growing congregations and addressing the existential, social, and spiritual needs of members, many churches have adopted home cell systems—small groups that meet in homes or neighbourhood spaces to provide fellowship, discipleship, and mutual support.

For Perez Chapel International, and specifically the Perez Dome congregation in Accra, home cells serve as an intentional strategy to “shrink the church to a manageable size” during the week while maintaining a large, centralized worshipping community on Sundays. This structure resonates with the model of the early church in Acts, where believers met in homes for breaking of bread, prayer, and teaching (Garrett, 1998), and aligns with global small-group strategies used for church planting and multiplication (Ott & Wilson, 2011).

While earlier studies in Ghana and elsewhere have examined the role of small groups in promoting community,

spiritual growth, and organizational development (Adubofour & Ofei Badu, 2019; Robinson, 2023), relatively less attention has been given to the quality of leader–member relationships within these groups and their impact on multi-dimensional growth outcomes. This is particularly important in Pentecostal and Charismatic contexts that emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit, transformational leadership, and intense pastoral involvement in members’ lives (Hohenstein & Jung, 2021; Yankyera, 2023).

This study addresses that gap by focusing on Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and other leadership dynamics within home cell groups at Perez Dome. It examines how strong or weak leader–member relationships influence four dimensions of home cell growth:

1. **Vertical (spiritual) growth** – discipleship, spiritual formation, and leadership development.
2. **Numerical growth** – changes in attendance and membership.
3. **Social growth** – interpersonal relationships, fellowship, and communal activities.
4. **Welfare growth** – practical care, support, and member welfare.

Four central research questions guide the study:

1. **RQ1:** What is the relationship between strong leader–member relationships and the growth of home cell groups in the Perez Dome?
2. **RQ2:** What is the relationship between the four growth dimensions (spiritual, numerical, social, and welfare) and net numerical growth?
3. **RQ3:** Which growth indicators are most influenced by leadership dynamics, particularly leader–member exchange?
4. **RQ4:** What strategies and challenges do leaders and members identify for sustaining strong leader–member relationships and supporting home cell group growth?

By addressing these questions, the paper contributes to both church growth literature and leadership studies in African Pentecostal and Charismatic contexts. It also offers practical recommendations for mega churches seeking to expand and sustain effective home cell systems without overburdening their leaders.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Transformational Leadership and Leader–Member Exchange (LMX)

Transformational leadership theory suggests that leaders inspire followers to transcend self-interest and pursue shared, higher-order goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2021). Transformational leaders motivate through:

1. **Idealized influence** – modelling values and vision.
2. **Inspirational motivation** – articulating a compelling future.
3. **Intellectual stimulation** – encouraging creativity and reflection.
4. **Individualized consideration** – attending to individual needs and development (Dinh et al., 2020).

In Pentecostal and Charismatic settings, transformational leadership is particularly salient, as leaders are expected to provide not only administrative oversight but also spiritual direction, pastoral care, and charismatic guidance (Kumar et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2022). This leadership style often manifests in close, emotionally charged relationships in which leaders are perceived as spiritual parents or mentors.

Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) theory complements transformational leadership by focusing specifically on the quality of dyadic relationships between leaders and followers (Dansereau et al., 1975; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). High-quality LMX relationships are characterized by trust, mutual respect, loyalty, and reciprocity, resulting in increased motivation, role expansion, and greater influence for followers (Schriesheim

et al., 2001). Low-quality exchanges, by contrast, are more transactional and restricted to formal role requirements.

LMX is particularly relevant to home cell ministry where leaders interact with members in small, intimate settings where relational dynamics strongly shape participation and engagement. In such contexts, strong LMX can facilitate:

1. Deeper spiritual engagement and discipleship (Wang et al., 2023).
2. Emotional support and resilience (Zhang et al., 2022).
3. Emergence of new leaders through mentoring and empowerment (Dulebohn et al., 2020).

However, high LMX can also contribute to leader overload and burnout when expectations for care and involvement are not matched with structural support (Liang et al., 2021).

Social Identity Theory and Team Convergence of Mental Models

Social Identity Theory (SIT) posits that individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups, leading to in-group favouritism and potential out-group bias (Turner & Reynolds, 2020). In home cell contexts, strong group identity can enhance:

1. Commitment and retention.
2. Willingness to serve and participate.
3. Supportive behaviours among members.

However, it can also create risks of exclusivity or fragmentation if cells become inward-looking or overly dependent on a single leader (Hogg, 2021).

Team Convergence of Mental Models refers to the extent to which team members share a common understanding of goals, roles, and processes (Manges et al., 2021). When leaders and members share convergent mental models, teams are more cohesive, coordinate better, and perform more effectively. Leadership styles that favour certain subgroups, however, can hinder convergence by reinforcing “in-group” and “out-group” distinctions (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

In a home cell system, convergent mental models and a shared sense of identity are crucial for achieving balanced spiritual, social, welfare, and numerical growth. Leaders must therefore cultivate inclusive identities and shared understandings that align with the broader church vision.

Church Growth Theory and Home Cell Ministry

Church Growth Theory combines attention to numerical expansion with spiritual depth and contextual relevance (Ott & Wilson, 2011; Robinson, 2023). It emphasizes:

1. Effective evangelism and follow-up.
2. Strong leadership and discipleship systems.
3. Contextualized ministry suited to local cultures.
4. Small groups as vehicles for pastoral care and multiplication.

Home cells function as microcosms of the church, where members experience pastoral care, mutual support, and opportunities for service (Hull, 2022; Wang et al., 2023). Growth is not only measured in numbers but also in spiritual maturity, social cohesion, and welfare support.

For this study, growth of home cell groups is defined as an intentional and systematic process of nurturing:

1. **Vertical (spiritual) growth** – spiritual maturity, discipleship, and leadership development.
2. **Numerical growth** – increased attendance and membership.
3. **Social growth** – deepening of fellowship, relationships, and communal life.
4. **Welfare growth** – support for members' practical and emotional needs.

This four-dimensional conceptualization informs both the instrument development and the subsequent analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a convergent mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the relationship between leadership dynamics and home cell growth at Perez Dome. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires and attendance records, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with home cell leaders and members.

The design allowed for:

1. Quantitative testing of hypothesised relationships between LMX and various growth dimensions.
2. Qualitative exploration of how leaders and members experience and interpret these relationships in practice.
3. Integration of findings to provide a richer, more nuanced understanding of home cell dynamics (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Setting and Context

Perez Chapel International, founded in 1987, has grown into one of Africa's significant Pentecostal ministries with over 500 branches in 24 countries and an estimated membership exceeding 220,000 (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2019; Perez Chapel International, 2014). The Perez Dome in Accra, with a seating capacity of approximately 14,000, serves as the flagship congregation and a key node for ministry initiatives, including the home cell system.

The home cell system at Perez Dome has been (re)launched in its current structured form within the last two years to strengthen pastoral care, discipleship, and membership retention across seven Regions: Bethel, Canaan, Eden, Goshen, Judah, Shiloh, and Zion. Each Region oversees a cluster of home cells meeting weekly in members' homes.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised:

1. **Home cell members** (attendees) at Perez Dome.
2. **Home cell regional leaders**, who coordinate groups within their Region.

A multi-stage sampling strategy was employed:

1. **Regional level:** All seven Regions of Perez Dome were included to ensure geographic and administrative coverage.
2. **Group level:** Attendance records were obtained from 126 home cell groups out of a total of 132, providing near-complete coverage for numerical growth analysis.
3. **Individual level:** A total of 124 home cell attendees completed the survey instruments, with representation from all seven Regions. Additionally, leaders from each Region provided LMX ratings and participated in follow-up discussions.

The sample thus represents a large cross-section of the Perez Dome home cell system while acknowledging some non-response at the group and individual levels.

Instruments

Three main instruments were used:

Home Cell Growth Scale (HCGS):

Developed for this study, the HCGS measures four dimensions of growth—Numerical, Vertical (spiritual), Social, and Welfare growth. Each dimension comprises three items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), giving a maximum of 15 points per dimension and 60 points **overall**. Items were generated from literature on church growth, small groups, and pastoral care (Adubofour & Ofei Badu, 2019; Hull, 2022; Robinson, 2023) and refined through expert review by clergy and academic practitioners.

Leader–Member Exchange Scale (LMX-7):

The LMX-7 developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) was used to assess the quality of leader–member relationships. The scale consists of seven items scored on a five-point scale, with total scores ranging from 7 to 35. Standard interpretive guidelines were applied: scores of 25 and above were classified as indicating strong LMX.

Attendance Records Template:

A structured template was used to collect baseline and current attendance figures for each home cell group. Baseline attendance was taken from end of June 2023, and current attendance from end of June 2024, allowing computation of net growth for each group.

In addition, a semi-structured interview guide was used to explore leaders' and members' experiences of trust, communication, welfare support, community engagement, and challenges such as burnout.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection took place between July 2024 and August 2024 in four steps:

1. **Permissions and briefing:** Approval was obtained from Perez Chapel leadership. Regional leaders were briefed on the purpose of the study and the requirements for participation.
2. **Survey administration:** Printed and/or electronic questionnaires were distributed to home cell members across the seven Regions, usually at home cell meetings or immediately after Sunday services. Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent.
3. **Attendance data compilation:** Regional leaders submitted attendance figures for each home cell group using the standardized template, providing baseline and current attendance for the one-year period.
4. **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected home cell leaders and members, chosen purposively to represent different Regions, group sizes, and perceived levels of growth or challenge. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and later transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis proceeded as follows:

1. **Descriptive statistics** (frequencies, means, standard deviations, skewness) were computed to profile respondents' demographic characteristics and growth scores.
2. **Reliability analysis** using **Cronbach's alpha** assessed internal consistency of the four growth dimensions.
3. **Principal Component Analysis (PCA)** examined the factor structure and unidimensionality of the HCGS.
4. **Independent-samples and paired-samples t-tests** assessed differences between leaders and members and across LMX categories.
5. **ANOVA** explored differences in growth indicators across Regions and LMX strength categories.
6. **Correlation analyses (Pearson and Spearman)** tested relationships between LMX scores, the four growth dimensions, and net numerical growth, addressing the core research questions.

Qualitative analysis employed **thematic analysis**:

1. Interview transcripts were read repeatedly, and initial codes were derived inductively (e.g., trust, openness, welfare support, community events, burnout, logistics).
2. Codes were grouped into broader themes: trust and open communication; personal care and welfare support; community engagement; leadership burden and burnout.
3. Themes were then compared and integrated with quantitative findings to identify areas of convergence, divergence, and explanatory depth.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and beneficence. Participation was voluntary, with respondents free to withdraw at any time. No identifying information was collected in the survey instruments, and all results are reported in aggregate. Permission for data collection was obtained from church leadership, and feedback of key findings was planned to support leadership training and home cell strengthening.

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

A total of **124 home cell attendees** completed the survey. Respondents were drawn from seven Regions: Bethel, Canaan, Eden, Goshen, Judah, Shiloh, and Zion. Although the Perez Dome home cell system comprises 132 groups, attendance and perception data were available for 126 groups, indicating some nonresponse at the group level.

Age. Of the 114 respondents who reported their age, the range was 18 to 71 years, with more than two-thirds (76/114) aged 21–40 years, confirming that the home cell system is sustained by a predominantly youthful cohort.

Gender. Seventy-six respondents (61%) were female and 48 (39%) male, reflecting the common pattern of higher female participation in church activities.

Regional distribution. 123 respondents indicated their home cell Region. The Region with the highest number of respondents was Eden ($n = 35$), while Bethel ($n = 5$) had the fewest. Other Regions (Canaan, Goshen, Judah, Shiloh, Zion) were more evenly represented.

Instrument Development and Validation: Growth of Home Cell Groups

The Home Cell Growth Scale measured four indicators—Numerical, Vertical (spiritual), Welfare, and Social growth—each with three items scored on a five-point Likert scale (maximum 15 points per indicator, 60 points overall).

Reliability

Reliability analysis showed strong internal consistency among the four growth indicators:

1. Cronbach's alpha = 0.839, indicating good reliability.
2. Item-total statistics demonstrated that removing any dimension would reduce the alpha, confirming that numerical, spiritual, social, and welfare growth each contributed meaningfully to the overall construct.

Factor Structure

Principal Component Analysis further validated the structure:

1. Communalities ranged from 0.570 (Numerical Growth) to 0.759 (Social Growth).
2. A single factor emerged with an eigenvalue of 2.699, explaining 67.48% of the variance.
3. Loadings for all four indicators were high (0.755–0.871), suggesting a unidimensional scale capturing “overall growth” while allowing for sub-analysis of the four component dimensions.

Profiles of Home Cell Growth

Descriptive statistics for the growth dimensions are summarized as follows:

1. **Overall growth mean** = 47.23/60 (78.72%), $SD = 7.61$.
2. **Vertical (Spiritual) Growth:** $M = 12.58$, $SD = 2.32$.
3. **Welfare Growth:** $M = 12.26$, $SD = 2.38$.
4. **Social Growth:** $M = 11.46$, $SD = 2.33$.
5. **Numerical Growth (perceptual):** $M = 10.93$, $SD = 2.25$.

All four indicators were **negatively skewed**, indicating relatively fewer low-growth cells and more groups reporting moderate to high levels of growth.

At the **Regional level**, Judah ($M = 51.08$) and Bethel ($M = 50.40$) recorded the highest overall growth scores, while Zion recorded the lowest ($M = 44.43$). However, ANOVA showed that these differences were **not statistically significant** at the 5% level ($p = 0.344$), suggesting broadly similar growth perceptions across Regions.

Objective Numerical Growth (Attendance-Based)

Attendance records from **June 2023 to June 2024** yielded the following:

1. Total attendance across 126 home cell groups increased from **519 to 581**, representing a **net gain of 62 attendees**.
2. Regional patterns were mixed:

○	Judah:	+31	○
	Eden:	+27	○
	Canaan:	+21	○
	Zion:	+6	○

Bethel: +2 ○
Goshen: -14 ○
Shiloh: -11

These results indicate that while some Regions experienced clear numerical growth, others struggled with attendance declines, attributed by leaders to factors such as relocation of members, accessibility of meeting venues, and variability in leadership practices.

A comparison of perceptual numerical growth (survey scores) with objective net growth (attendance) across Regions revealed no significant relationship:

Pearson's $r = -0.091$, $p = 0.846$

This suggests that Regions which *perceive* high numerical growth are not always the ones with the greatest **actual increase in attendance**, highlighting the importance of triangulating subjective perceptions with objective data.

A **paired-samples t-test** comparing growth scores from the perspectives of leaders and members showed:

1. Mean difference = -1.6575 (members slightly more optimistic).
2. **$t(6) = -1.279$, $p = 0.248$.**

Thus, there is no statistically significant difference between leaders' and members' perceptions of overall growth.

LMX Distribution and Its Relationship with Growth

LMX-7 scores ranged from **low to high**, with a maximum possible score of 35. Using the standard cut-off of **25 points**, LMX scores were categorised into:

Low LMX: < 25 • **High LMX (strong):** ≥ 25

The **overall mean LMX score** was **28.5/35** (81.43%), indicating generally strong leader–member relationships across the home cell system.

Regional mean LMX scores ranged from **27.63 (Eden)** to **30.17 (Judah)**, but ANOVA revealed **no significant differences across Regions** ($p = 0.888$), suggesting that relational quality is relatively homogenous.

When the four growth dimensions were compared between low and high LMX groups:

1. There was **no significant difference** in overall growth, numerical growth, welfare growth, or social growth at the 5% level.
2. **Vertical (spiritual) growth** was significantly higher among those with **high LMX** ($F = 7.234$, $p = 0.008$).
3. At the 10% level, **social growth** was also higher in high-LMX groups ($p = 0.100$).

Pairwise correlations showed:

1. LMX and **Vertical (Spiritual) Growth**: $r = 0.361$, $p < 0.001$.
2. LMX and **Social Growth**: $r = 0.356$, $p < 0.001$.
3. LMX and **Welfare Growth**: $r = 0.219$, $p = 0.014$.
4. LMX and **Perceptual Numerical Growth**: not significant.

However, when LMX was correlated with **objective net growth** (attendance change):

1. **Pearson's $r = 0.325$, $p < 0.001$**
2. **Spearman's $\rho = 0.329$, $p < 0.001$**

This indicates a **moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship** between LMX and net numerical growth, suggesting that strong leader–member exchange contributes indirectly but measurably to attendance increases over time.

Interrelationships Among Growth Dimensions

Correlation analysis between the four growth dimensions and net numerical growth yielded:

1. **Welfare Growth and Net Growth:** $r = 0.399$, $p = 0.001$.
2. **Social Growth and Net Growth:** $r = 0.230$, $p = 0.067$ (marginal at 10%).
3. **Spiritual Growth and Net Growth:** $r = 0.014$, $p = 0.912$ (ns).

This indicates that:

1. **Welfare growth** is the **strongest and most significant predictor** of actual numerical growth.
2. **Social growth** also contributes positively, though less strongly.
3. **Spiritual growth**, while central to the purpose of home cells, does not show a direct linear relationship with numerical growth within the one-year frame of this study.

Correlations among the growth dimensions themselves showed:

1. Numerical Growth (perceptual) correlated most strongly with **Spiritual Growth ($r = 0.534$)** and **Social Growth ($r = 0.496$)**, followed by **Welfare Growth ($r = 0.494$)** (all $p < 0.001$).
2. **Spiritual Growth** correlated strongly with **Social Growth ($r = 0.642$)** and **Welfare Growth ($r = 0.527$)**.
3. The strongest correlation observed was between **Welfare Growth and Social Growth ($r = 0.693$, $p < 0.001$)**.

These findings suggest that as home cells deepen spiritual engagement, they tend also to strengthen social and welfare dimensions, and that social and welfare growth are tightly interlinked, likely because many needs being met are relational as much as material.

Qualitative Themes

Thematic analysis of interviews produced four main themes:

1. Trust and Open Communication

Participants frequently emphasized that transparent, honest communication and trust were foundational to effective leadership. Leaders who shared information, explained decisions, and entrusted members with responsibilities were seen as more successful in fostering engagement. “When leaders are open with us, we feel more connected and willing to take on more responsibilities. It’s easier to trust someone who shares openly.”

2. Personal Care and Welfare Support

Leaders’ involvement in members’ personal lives—attending weddings, funerals, hospital visits, and family crises—significantly strengthened loyalty and group cohesion.

“Our leader came to my son’s wedding. That level of care makes me feel like I belong. It’s not just a group, it’s family.”

These accounts resonate strongly with the quantitative finding that welfare growth is the strongest predictor of net numerical growth.

3. Community Engagement and Social Cohesion

Leaders described organizing evangelism, family fun days, sports, health screenings, and community service projects. These activities were experienced as deepening fellowship and enhancing the church’s public witness.

“The events we organize, like the health screenings and community service, help us bond as a group and also show the community that we care. It brings us closer to each other and to those around us.”

4. Leadership Burden and Burnout

Many leaders reported feeling overwhelmed by the combination of personal, family, work, and ministry responsibilities. Members themselves recognized signs of fatigue in their leaders:

“Our leader goes above and beyond to support us, but sometimes I worry it’s too much... you can tell it’s wearing them out.”

Burnout was linked to high emotional labour, travel and logistics demands, and the expectation to be present at multiple events. Suggestions emerging from interviews included sharing responsibilities, improving transport support, and creating forums for leaders to learn from and encourage one another.

4.8 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Overall, quantitative and qualitative findings converged on the conclusion that strong leader–member relationships are crucial for spiritual, social, and welfare growth, and indirectly support numerical growth. Both data strands highlight the importance of:

1. **Trust and open communication** for spiritual and social engagement.
2. **Personal care and welfare support** for retention and recruitment.
3. **Community engagement activities** for social cohesion and public witness.

A notable divergence appears around numerical growth: while qualitative narratives suggest that strong LMX and welfare support naturally lead to increased attendance, the quantitative picture shows that LMX is most directly related to spiritual, social, and welfare dimensions, with numerical growth mediated primarily through welfare and social care and moderated by external factors such as relocation and venue accessibility.

Both sets of findings also underscore the **risk of leadership burnout** in high-LMX environments where demands on leaders are not structurally managed, echoing broader leadership literature on emotional labour and strain in ministry contexts (Liang et al., 2021; Rogelberg et al., 2022).

DISCUSSION

This study set out to explore how leadership dynamics—particularly leader–member exchange—shape the growth and development of home cell groups at Perez Dome. Several key insights emerge.

LMX as a Driver of Spiritual, Social, and Welfare Growth

First, the consistently **high LMX scores** and their strong relationships with spiritual, social, and welfare growth indicate that **relational leadership is at the heart of effective home cell ministry**. Leaders who build trusting, respectful, and supportive relationships with members foster environments where:

1. Spiritual practices such as prayer, Bible study, and discipleship are taken seriously.
2. Members feel safe, known, and valued, leading to robust social cohesion.
3. Practical and emotional needs are identified and addressed in community.

These findings align with prior research demonstrating that high-quality LMX enhances commitment, engagement, and group functioning (Avolio et al., 2021; Miao et al., 2019). In a Pentecostal/Charismatic context, such relational leadership resonates with both transformational leadership and servant leadership paradigms, which emphasise empowerment, personal care, and shared mission (Kumar et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2022).

Welfare and Social Growth as Pathways to Numerical Growth

Second, the results reveal that welfare and social growth are the strongest predictors of objective numerical growth. While spiritual growth strongly correlates with welfare and social dimensions, it is welfare support—leaders' presence in crises and care for members' everyday needs—that most directly relates to net attendance increase.

This suggests that people join and stay in home cells not only because they are spiritually fed, but because they experience practical care and relational belonging. The close connection between welfare and social growth ($r = 0.693$) underlines that many welfare needs are relational as well as material, echoing claims that pastoral care and community formation are crucial to sustainable church growth (Rowley, 2022; Brown & Jackson, 2020).

Perception vs Reality in Numerical Growth

Third, the lack of correlation between perceived numerical growth and objective attendance records points to a complex relationship between experience and measurement. Members in relationally strong groups may feel they are “growing,” even when numbers are stable, while some numerically growing groups may not perceive themselves as successful if spiritual or social dynamics are strained.

This gap is consistent with literature showing that subjective assessments of leadership impact can diverge from objective indicators of performance (Jiang et al., 2021; Zacher & Rudolph, 2019). It underscores the importance for church leaders to triangulate perceptions with reliable data and to celebrate forms of growth that may not be immediately visible in attendance figures.

Leadership Burnout as a Structural Challenge

Fourth, the qualitative theme of burnout raises a critical warning. The same relational intensity that drives spiritual and welfare growth can, without safeguards, become a structural risk. Leaders who are constantly “on call” for members' spiritual and personal needs, in addition to family and work responsibilities, are vulnerable to exhaustion, emotional depletion, and eventual withdrawal—threatening the sustainability of home cell ministry (Liang et al., 2021; Rogelberg et al., 2022).

This dynamic mirrors larger patterns in Pentecostal and Charismatic ministry, where high expectations of availability and spiritual performance often clash with limited support structures. As Hogg (2021) and Hackman & Walton (2020) note, groups heavily dependent on a single leader's charisma are particularly

vulnerable if that leader burns out or steps aside. The findings from Perez Dome therefore support viewing burnout not merely as a personal failing but as a **systemic issue** requiring organizational solutions.

Implications for Pentecostal/Charismatic Church Growth in Africa

Finally, the study contributes to broader discussions on African Pentecostal/Charismatic church growth. It shows that:

1. Home cell systems can provide a powerful mechanism for deepening discipleship, strengthening community, and meeting welfare needs.
2. Leadership dynamics in such systems must balance relational closeness with structural support and shared responsibility, especially in mega church contexts.
3. Growth strategies must intentionally integrate spiritual depth, relational care, and organizational sustainability rather than prioritizing numerical expansion alone.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that leadership dynamics, especially leader–member exchange, are central to the growth and development of home cells at Perez Dome. High-quality leader–member relationships significantly enhance spiritual, social, and welfare growth, and are moderately but meaningfully related to net numerical growth. The most powerful predictors of numerical increase are welfare and social growth, confirming that people are drawn to, and remain in, groups where they experience practical support and relational belonging.

At the same time, the study highlights the vulnerability of leaders to burnout in highly relational, high-expectation environments, and the potential divergence between perceived and actual numerical growth. Sustainable home cell ministry thus requires both relationally strong leaders and supportive structures that protect their well-being and enable shared leadership.

Practical Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for Perez Chapel International and similar Pentecostal/Charismatic churches:

Strengthen Leadership Support and Development

1. Provide ongoing training in relational leadership, emotional intelligence, and boundarysetting.
2. Create peer support groups or clusters where home cell leaders can share experiences, pray together, and learn from one another.
3. Offer periodic retreats and refreshers focused on spiritual renewal and stress management.

Promote Shared and Distributed Leadership

1. Encourage home cells to identify and develop assistant leaders, welfare coordinators, or youth representatives who can share responsibilities.
2. Gradually introduce team-based leadership models to reduce over-dependence on a single individual and to create leadership pipelines.

Integrate Welfare and Social Ministries into Home Cell Strategy

1. Design home cell programmes that intentionally combine **Bible study and prayer** with **fellowship meals, visits, and community service projects**.

2. Recognize and support **welfare ministries** (visitation, small benevolence, practical helps) as essential to both **member retention** and **numerical growth**.

Protect Leader Well-Being and Limit Burnout

1. Clarify expectations regarding attendance at events, visitations, and crisis responses, ensuring they are **realistic and shared** among team members.
2. Implement **rest schedules** or rotational systems so that leaders have predictable periods of reduced responsibility.
3. Encourage leaders to practice **self-care** as a form of stewardship, not selfishness.

Improve Data Systems and Feedback Loops

- a. Standardize and simplify attendance reporting and train leaders in basic record-keeping.
- b. Use data not to shame struggling groups, but to target support, mentorship, and resources where needed.
- c. Regularly share feedback reports with Regions and home cell leaders so they can see both perceptual and actual growth trends

Further Research and Longitudinal Tracking

1. Extend the study longitudinally to examine how leadership interventions over several years influence LMX, welfare/social growth, and sustained numerical change.
2. Explore the impact of youth-specific home cells, online or hybrid cells, and contextual factors such as urban mobility on home cell dynamics.

By integrating these recommendations, Perez Chapel International and other similar churches can deepen the spiritual and relational life of their home cells, sustain leader health, and enhance long-term church growth that is both numerically and qualitatively robust.

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