

Factors associated with declining attendance to school-based programs (work-line and worship) amongst second-year students at Sonoma Adventist College

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Introduction

- The Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church operates the second largest education network in the world, all having one mission and purpose: redemption through education.¹
- Adventist education is designed to promote the harmonious development of the physical, mental, and spiritual dimension of the student.²
- Worship and work-line are at the core of all school programs to promote spiritual development, industry, and self reliance.
- Observations over the years reveal a trend of diminishing interest and participation on the part of students in the area of worship and work-line in Adventist schools.
- Understanding the declining students' attendance to these programs and factors associated will pave way for improved students' participation.

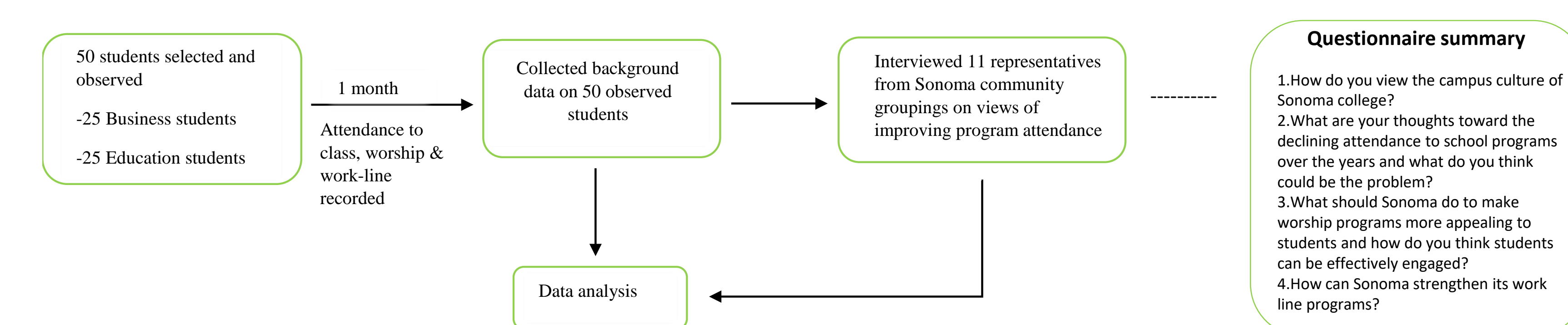
Aim

This study aims to:

- Investigate factors contributing to decline in students' attendance to worship and work line programs at Sonoma Adventist College.
- Propose ways to improve participation to these faith-based programs.

Methods

- An action research approach using mixed methods was undertaken.
- A total of 50 second-year SDA students (25 each from School of Business and Education) were observed.
- Weekly attendance to class, worship and work line was observed and recorded.
- Participants' denominational background and viewpoints on importance of school-based programs were documented.
- Eleven representatives from Sonoma community groupings (church, husbands/fathers, wives/mothers, Adventist/non-Adventist male and female students, academic/ancillary staff, college admin, staff children) were interviewed on their perspectives on how worship and work-line can be made appealing to students.



Results

Table 1. Background Characteristics of Study Participants

	N=18
Gender (F)	13 (72%)
(M)	5 (28%)
Self-sponsored Business students	12 (67%)
Government-sponsored Education students	6 (33%)
Attended SDA Schools	13 (72%)
Baptized SDA	10 (56%)
In SDA Fellowship	18(100)
Accept the Christian Worldview	18 (100)
Accept Religious view on Origin	18 (100%)
Sonoma complements personal dream	13 (72%)
Sonoma was first Choice	9 (50%)
Would not prefer other place to Sonoma	11 (61%)
Never allow for a work exemption fee option	15 (83%)
Sonoma's worship program should not relax despite enrollment of non-SDA's	10 (56%)
Pre-eminence of worship	17 (94%)
Importance of Work-line	12(67%)
Compulsory class attendance	9 (50%)

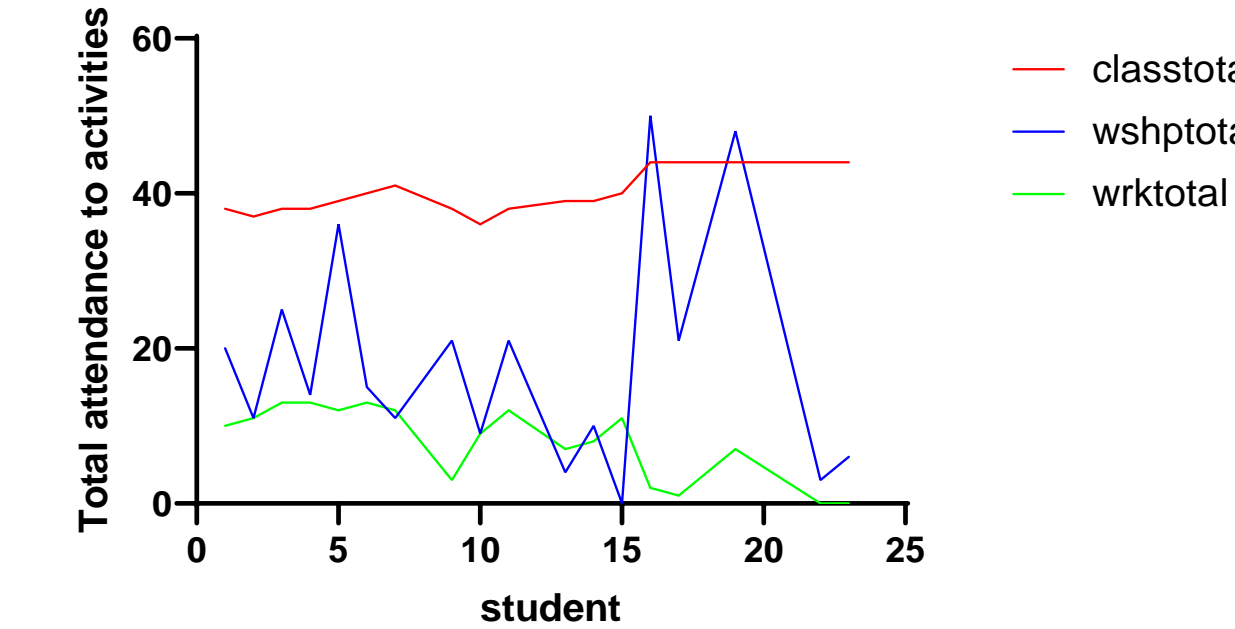


Figure 1. Students' total attendance to school based programs. Class attendance is higher than work-line and worship.

Table 2. Factors associated with attendance to school-based programs; class, worship and work-line.

	Class Attendance	Worship Attendance	Work line Attendance
	Coefficient [95% CI]	Coefficient [95% CI]	Coefficient [95% CI]
	p value	p value	p value
Sponsor	5.35[3.48-7.22] p<0.001	1.38[-12.91-15.7] p=0.84	-7.66[-14.69-(-0.64)] p=0.03
Attended SDA schools	0.02[-1.73-1.77] p=0.98	-18.36[-31.7-(-5.0)] p=0.01	-1.04[-7.61-5.52] p=0.74
Baptized SDA	-0.18[-1.74-1.38] p=0.81	3.64[-8.28-15.6] p=0.53	0.31[-5.55-6.17] p=0.91
In SDA fellowship	-0.03[-2.07-2.01] p=0.97	22.98[7.43-38.52] p=0.01	-3.65[-11.29-3.99] p=0.33
Sonoma complemented personal dream	0.43[-1.03-1.90] p=0.54	-1.01[-12.2-10.19] p=0.85	1.96[-3.55-7.46] p=0.46
Sonoma first choice	-0.18[-1.80-1.43] p=0.81	-9.97[-22.3-2.39] p=0.11	1.05[-5.03-7.12] p=0.72
Gender	0.09[-1.70-1.87] p=0.91	-6.28[-19.9-7.35] p=0.34	0.09[-6.62-6.79] p=1.00

P value in bold means significant

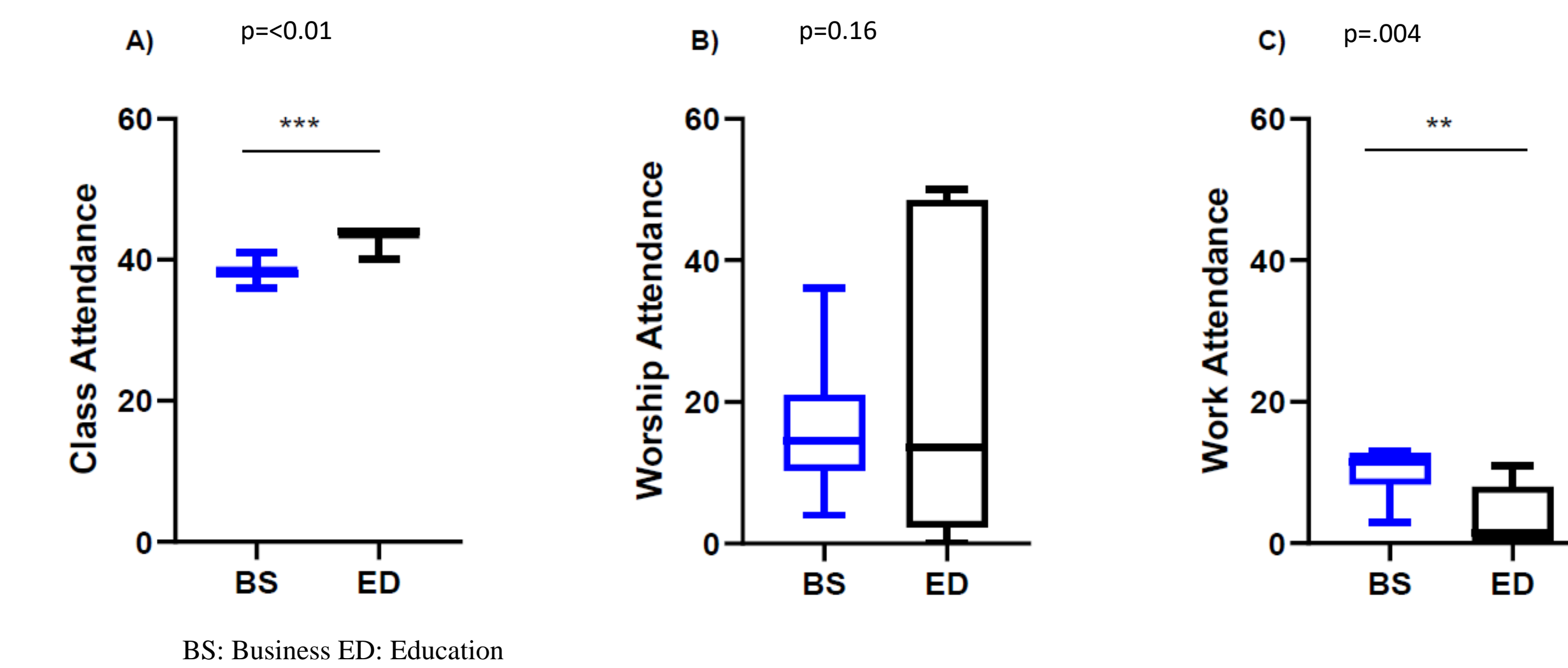


Figure 2. Comparison of median attendance to school based programs; A) Class attendance, B) Worship attendance, C) Work line attendance. Box plots show distribution of total attendance. There is a significant difference in the median attendance to class (p<0.01) and work line (p=0.004) between students in the business and education discipline. Class attendance is high in education students while work line attendance is high in business students. There was no significant difference in median attendance to worship between both discipline (p=0.16). Note: * = significant.

Summary Responses to Interview questions:

- All 11 representatives advocated for Adventist ethos and beliefs as foundation for campus culture.
- 80% expressed a worrying concern towards declining attendance towards school programs.
- Most said Sonoma college was not fulfilling its evangelistic mission successfully because a larger percentage of Sonoma college is not involved in evangelism.
- All participants proposed for improved in reach and outreach program plans that involves everyone of which the following are examples; building projects, farming etc.
- There is need for an overall, underlying spiritual master plan that can begin addressing these issues.

Discussion and Conclusions

- Sponsorship was significantly associated with class and work-line attendance. Sponsored students were 5 times more likely to attend class and 8 times more likely not to attend work-line.
- The median attendance to class was significantly higher amongst sponsored students.
- Attendance to worship and work-line was higher in self-sponsored students but this was only significant for work-line attendance and not worship.
- Students who were members of SDA fellowship were highly likely to attend worship. However, for students having attended SDA schools previously, they were also less likely to attend worship.
- Improvements to attendance can be addressed through a Spiritual Master plan.
- Students are more likely to engage in spiritual practices that will result in deepening their sense of spirituality to a greater degree if their campus environment is perceived to be supportive of their needs and interests.^{3,4}
- Faculty members, peers, and campus cultures are key factors as an institution's environmental press to encourage or discourage spiritual practices and participation in other activities that are linked with character development.⁵

Study Limitations

- The shorter time frame for data collection allowed for only a smaller sample size to be observed.
- The majority of students did not have complete data.

References

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