

**SOCIAL DYNAMICS AND THE GROWTH OF NEW RELIGIOUS
MOVEMENTS: CASE OF REPENTANCE AND HOLINESS CHURCH IN UASHN
GISHU COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Throughout history society has seen the rise and proliferation of new religious and spiritual groups. One of the new religious groups that emerged in Kenya in recent years is Repentance and Holiness Church. The rapid increase in the membership of this group in Kenya has attracted little attention of many scholars who have not documented their rise and spread. Very little has been documented on the origin, growth and the doctrines of the church. The main purpose of the study was to determine the influence of social dynamics on the growth of Repentance and Holiness Church in Kenya. The study specifically sought to determine the influence of education, socio-economic, gender and pastoral weak points in mainstream churches that lead to the growth of New Religious Movements. The study was informed by Stark and Bainbridge theory. According to this theory humans seek what they perceive to be a reward and avoid what they consider to be a cost. People are attracted to New Religious Movement because it provides compensation for lack of reward. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The study targeted an estimated population of about 50000 followers drawn from 47 congregations of the Church. The study used simple random to select 225 respondents from 20 congregations. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine a reliability index. Quantitative data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, which was frequencies, mean, standard deviation. Data was presented in form of tables and charts. The study established that social dynamics greatly influenced the growth of Repentance and Holiness Church. The researcher found out that discrimination based on level of education, economic class and gender played a very big role on respondents exiting their former churches and joining Repentance and Holiness Church. Sense of identity and churches not meeting the need of members are the major pastoral weak points that let respondents leave their former churches and joined Repentance and Holiness Church. The study recommended that churches should avoid discrimination based on gender education and economic class. The mainstream churches should strengthen their pastoral role.