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## PROLIFERATION OF NEW CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN MERU TOWN

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### ABSTRACT

This study was meant to investigate the factors leading to the rapid proliferation of new Christian religious movements (NCRMs) in Meru Town in Meru County. This was in consideration that NCRMs have continued to proliferate in the town albeit existence of mission founded churches. The overall question was ‘What causes their upsurge in an area that has well established churches?’ The study investigated the socio-political, psycho-religious and economic aspects that lead to the proliferation of the MCRMs in Meru town as well as their impact. It was informed by the Rational Choice Theory developed by Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge in 1987 which emphasize that religious systems are viewed as compensators and human beings are rational actors who make their best choices, calculating cost and benefits. Thus the NCRMs possibly act as compensators compensating for physical lack and the frustrated goals and the members are viewed as rational actors making choices to join NCRMs in view that their wants will be satisfied. It employed descriptive survey research design. Using purposive and simple random sampling technique, 340 respondents were sampled from a population of 4590 in 24 NCRMS in Meru town. The main findings were pastors’ claims of responding to God’s call, schism due to leadership wrangles, economic reasons and others lead to the proliferation of NCRMS in Meru.

**Keywords:** *Meru town, religious movements, New Christian Religious Movements, Proliferation, Church, followers.*

### INTRODUCTION

New Christian Religious Movements (NCRMs) in our society today are rapidly proliferating, a phenomenon that is exemplified by their predominance in the world as noted by Baker (1999). Christianity began in the first century as a Jewish Messianic movement in Israel within a community that practiced Judaism as its religion (Anderson, 2004). Soon it proliferated in areas around the Mediterranean, it went to Europe and then became the official religion of the Roman Empire after which it spread to the rest of Europe, Asia, and Africa and to all parts of other continents (Molloy, 2013). From the very early stage in

the development of Christianity, schisms began. It is observed by Barrett (1968) that divisions have been a rhythm in the church history such that Saint Paul identified four warring parties in the church in Corinth namely; Apollos, Peter's, Paul's, and Jesus' party in the first century and by the fourth century there were about eighty enumerated varieties (Moore, 2006). Baur (1990) cites more examples of continued schisms. For example, in AD 312 Christianity was divided into two; the Eastern and the Western churches and in AD 1054 a great schism occurred. The Western churches were divided into the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Church.

In the sixteenth century another major division occurred during the Reformation where the Roman Catholic Church was divided into Protestantism and Catholicism (Moore, 2006). As the wave of Protestantism grew in Europe, different protestant groups emerged such as Lutheranism, Calvinism, Church of England, the Anabaptists and others continued coming up (Anderson, 1984). These movements did not only divide but also proliferated because of the missionary nature of Christians. The protestant denominations further were introduced by the European Christian missionaries in Africa in the nineteenth century and spread to many parts of the continent but were not spared from the wave of dissidence (Nthamburi, 1991). As the denominations quickly spread in Africa they were counteracted by the founding of the African Indigenous/instituted Churches (AICs) in 1920s which attracted many followers who felt uncomfortable in the Missionary Churches due to their desire for political self expression and missionaries' neglect to acknowledge the African culture (Mugambi, 2010). This scenario therefore presented a doubled outlook of Christianity in Africa with missionary denominations on one hand and AICs on the other. This phenomenon of Christianity in Africa did not last long before a Revival Movement was introduced from England which seriously influenced the shape of the Church. Nkonge and Gechiko (2014) argue that the East African Revival Movement prepared the foundation for personal initiatives of evangelists like Dr. Billy Graham and T.L. Osborn who held rallies throughout East Africa in 1960s spreading Pentecostalism. Mugambi (2010) informs that Pentecostalism was introduced in Kenya by Billy Graham from America in 1968. From within Pentecostalism movement, charismatic preachers emerged opening up their own churches. They brought a new wave of Pentecostalism which consequently gave birth to this new form of Christianity (NCRMs) in the twenty first century which is rapidly proliferating in Africa. Therefore, NCRMs were studied due to their significance particularly with reference to Christianity in Africa. As asserted by Barrett (1968), the high quality of Christian faith found in much of the NCRMs in Africa demands that the rapid proliferation be given full weight in studies.

The NCRMs began to appear in Kenya between 1980s and 1990s where they found a rich soil in which to grow and flourish (Shorter and Njiru, 2001). They flourished as a result of being introduced in an already prepared ground by Pentecostalism which had a wave that touched the spiritual lives of the people from 1960s (Nkonge, 2013). Currently, there are a number of them in towns, cities and market places with some of their branches encroaching even in the villages.

Meru Town being one of the towns in Kenya has not been left out. According to the report by Kithinji (2014) who is the organizing secretary of the group that brings all pastors from different Christian movements together in Meru, there are a total of 469 churches in Meru County and among them 109 churches are in Meru Town with 24 churches being NCRMs. He informs that the NCRMs are being born in Meru Town now and then. Baur (1990) denotes, that the fragmentation and subsequent proliferation of NCRMs fosters a big problem to Christianity and seems like it is unending process. This therefore raises an urgent concern because there are already established mainline churches in this area. The reasons as to why the NCRMs start and flourish in such an area already dominated by other churches necessitated this study so as to investigate the reasons behind their proliferation.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Meru Town is an area dominated by many denominations, especially the mainline churches, yet NCRMS continue to flourish in the area. This raises a concern that needs to be investigated through a systematic study such as this.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The following objectives guided the study:

- i. To investigate the socio-political factors that lead to proliferation of NCRMs in Meru Town.
- ii. To find out the psycho-religious factors that lead to proliferation of NCRMs in Meru Town.
- iii. To investigate the economic aspects that cause the proliferation of NCRMs in Meru Town
- iv. To investigate the impact of NCRMs in Meru Town.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Understanding New Christian Religious Movements**

Initially the NCRMs were referred to, using different terms such as cults and sects but these terms were found to have derogatory and pejorative connotations hence the adaptation of neutral terms like new religions, new religious movements, alternative religions or fridge religions (Nyaudi, 2004). The phrase NCRMs is often used in professional literature, although scholars argue that it has deficiencies. The term 'Christian' is used in NCRMs because members are bound by the biblical principles and claim to be believers and followers of the teachings of Jesus Christ (Gichaga et al., 2009). NCRMs are started by individuals who have left other Christian denominations or when the entire movement break from the existing churches (Nyaudi, 2004). The NCRMs in African qualify to be referred to as 'new' because they have been introduced to people who are already Christian followers or in areas that have well established churches. In this study NCRMs qualified to be referred to as new for they have come up recently in the area and after a short time they stand out to be visible and prominent.

### **New Christian Religious Movements in Africa**

The rising and proliferation of NCRMs in Africa is a new phenomenon that has been experienced since 1970s and escalated by early 1980s (Shorter and Njiru 2001). Nyaudi (2004) observes that their phenomenon in Africa is difficult to understand because there are multiple factors that contribute to their occurrence although he denotes that they are best viewed as a form of religious transformation. Baur (2009) claims that they are best comparable to the African Indigenous Churches that emerged since 1920s in Africa. It is important to note that initially, Africa was widely dominated by the category of Christianity that was brought by the missionaries in the nineteenth century ( Nthamburi, 1982), and this kind of Christianity was soon challenged by the Africans who established their own churches otherwise referred to as African Indigenous Churches (AICs). Gifford (2001) argues that the AICs began by denouncing the mainline churches as not being Christian and therefore, they formed their own churches. This aspect is observed in the NCRMs in our society today by Shorter and Njiru (2001) who argue that these movements dissociate themselves with the existing churches where some use names like ministries and movements instead of church. However not all movements in Meru town have derogatory connotation about the term church. Some call themselves a 'church' while others use names like Ministries, Christian centre, fellowship or mission.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was informed by the Rational Choice theory (RCT) developed by Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge in 1987 in an attempt to explain factors leading to the proliferation of the NCRMs and their impacts in Meru Town, Meru County. According to Stark and Bainbridge, religious systems are viewed as "compensators" and human beings as 'rational actors making their best choices, calculating cost and benefits. This theory highlights four models of formation of new religious movements;

- i) The psychopathological model show that religions come up during a period of severe stress in the life of a founder who suffers from psychological problems and resolve them through the founding of the religion. The development of religion is for them a form of self therapy or self medication.

- ii) The entrepreneurial model reveals that founders of religion act like entrepreneurs developing new products (religions) to sell to their new consumers that is, to convert people to. According to this model most founders of new religions already have experience in several religious groups before they began their own. They fake ideas from pre- existing religions and try to improve on them to popularize themselves.
- iii) Social model shows that religions are founded by means of social implosions. Members of the religious groups spend less and less time with people outside each other within it. The level of affection and emotion bonding between members outside the group diminish. According to this model when implosion take place the group will naturally develop a new theology and rituals to accompany it.
- iv) The normal revelation model shows that religions are founded when the founder interprets ordinary natural phenomena as supernatural; ascribing his or her creativity in inventing the religion to that of the deity.

Therefore, this study used this theory to find out whether the NCRMs are proliferating to compensate for frustrations and lack; spiritual, physical, social, psychological and economical that either the founders or the members experience. They investigated whether the founders of NCRMs act as rational actors who open up new movements to satisfy their wants and whether they developed the NCRMs as a form of self therapy to be cured of their frustrations and psychological stress that they encountered. In addition the study used these views to investigate whether the movements were established as an act of entrepreneurship where the founders converted people to and whether they borrowed their ideas to improve on them to make them more popular and whether their popularity was enhanced by their ability to claim to have more power capable of solving people's problems and providing answers to the powerless and the exploited. It was to find out whether through their advancement they develop new theology and rituals to accompany their practices.

The theory was employed to establish whether the numerical increase in the NCRMs in Meru is as a result of members making rational choices to join the movements hoping to be cured of their frustrated goals in life, diseases, financial problems, family issues and joblessness. It investigated whether the NCRMs had proper invented packages that ensured that members like them and keep on following them to have their practical human needs that are not being met in the society satisfied and hence help them cope with new problems and to act as a catalyst for religious change. The views acted as lens to cast light on the reasons that leads to people joining NCRMs and reasons why there is the proliferation of NCRMs in Meru Town.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study employed the descriptive survey research design. Meru Town is the Headquarters of Meru County with a population of 240,900 according to the 2009 population census. The Town region covers areas including Kaaga, Gitoro, and Kambakia to the North of Meru town, Kinoru, Giantune, Kiamiriru and Irinda to the West, Gakoromone to the East and Gitimbine to the South. The target population was 4590 members in 24 NCRMs in Meru Town (Kithinji 2014). The researchers purposively sampled the movements and picked members randomly so as to collect the required information with respect to the objectives of the study. Kathuri and Pals (1993) and Fisher et al. (1983), recommend that from a population of 4590, a sample size of 354 respondents feasible. From the 24 NCRMs in Meru Town, a sample size of 340 respondents was randomly selected including 314 members and 20 pastors and 20 movements lay leaders. 314 members and 20 pastors were to fill questionnaires, while 20 movements lay leaders were to be interviewed orally. 14 respondents (church members) did not return their questionnaires, and thus the researchers worked with a figure of 340. There was also observation method employed where the researchers visited six movements: Jesus House of Praise, Kambakia Christian Centre, Arise and Shine, Jesus Exaltation Centre, Word Healing Ministry, Compassion Church of Christ and Word of Faith Ministry purposively selected to obtain information about the actual activities done.

## **RESULTS**

## Background Characteristics of the Respondents

The number of respondents who participated in this study was 340 (95.5%) as 14 (4.5%) did not return their questionnaires or they declined to be interviewed. The study revealed that females 254(74.7%) are more than males 86 (25.3%) which indicated gender disparity in the churches. The aspect of women being the majority in the church is expounded by Simmons and Walter (1998) who denote that women are naturally more subservient than men. They therefore easily get enticed to join the movements. Shorter and Njiru (2001) on the other hand denote two aspects that make NCRMs be overly patronized by women. They claim that these movements promise success, prosperity, power, healing, and ideas which women often need and therefore they get attracted to them easily. They claim that women are most commonly disadvantaged unlike men and so women find these movements appearing as compensation to their disadvantaged position in the society.

The study also revealed that the population of the young people aged between 15 and 25 years 101(29.7%) was lower than the population of people above 25 years 239 (70.3%). This aspect is observed by Mathai (2014) and she attributes it to the fact that most of the young people within this age (15-25years) are either in boarding schools, colleges or busy developing their careers. That is why most of the time they will not be present in the churches a trend that neither the parents nor the church leaders have control about. It is therefore evident in this membership sample that most of church attendants are adults.

The researchers also sought to find out the names and duration of operation of the movements. Among the twenty four churches sampled, 20 (83%) leaders of the movements allowed the researchers to carry out the research in their movement while 4 (17%) churches declined. This is because they feared the kind of study being done and were suspicious of any exposure of their movements following the debates in Kenya touching the upcoming churches. The table below 4 shows the names of movements, the approximate number of population, duration of operation and the sample size for this study.

The data revealed that most of the movements are given names that points to their vision and mission. Those that major on healing have names like life Restoration Ministry, God's Favour Miracles Ministry and Word Healing Ministry, those that major on evangelism have equally familiar names to it like Gospel Outreach Ministry, Christian Mission Fellowship, Neno Evangelism and Arise and Shine Ministry. There some founders as well who have based the name of their movements to an aspect in the bible like the Burning Bush ministry, Word of Faith, New Birth Covenant Church and the Compassion Church of Christ. Those that are prophetically oriented are given names like revelation church. In a nutshell all the names that are given to all the movements have been individually coined by the founders. This deviates from the historical trend of planting churches in Africa by the missionaries who named their churches by the missionary group that they represented; like the Methodist churches, Catholics churches, Anglican churches and the Presbyterian churches just to give an example. Out of all the names given by these movements, only 6 (30%), that are known by the name church. All others are referred to as ministries. This confirms the argument of Shorter and Njiru (2001) that the upcoming NCRMs hesitate from being referred to as churches to distinguish them from the already existing churches in a bid to look unique and depict originality.

**Table 1: Sampled movements, their member population, sample size and duration of operation**

Name of the movement	Approximate number of population	Number of members who acted as respondents	Duration of operation in years
1.Gospel Outreach Ministry	275	25	6
2.Revelation Church	45	5	1
3.Christian Foundation Fellowship	90	12	4
4.New Birth Covenant Church	25	8	1
5.Christian Mission Fellowship	135	20	2
6.Great Gospel Evangelistic Mission	130	14	3

7.Christian Worshippers Church	60	10	2
8.Christian Celebration Gospel Church	85	10	1
9.Burning Bush ministry	90	10	3
10.Sanctuary of Worship Ministries	80	10	2
11.Gods favour miracles ministry	20	5	1
12.Jesus House of Praise	685	70	4
13.Life Restoration Ministry	95	12	2
14.Neno Evangelism Ministry	90	10	2
15.Word of Faith Ministry	90	10	2
16.World Healing Evangelistic Ministry	300	40	4
17.Kambakia Christian Centre	130	12	15
18.Compassion Church Of Christ	300	30	2
19.Word Healing Ministry	200	20	2
20.Arise and Shine Ministry	70	7	1
Total	2995	340	

The data reveals that most movements are of recent origin yet they have attracted members. About 13 (65%) were founded between 1-2 years whereas 7 (35%) were founded in a period above three years. It is also observed that even those of recent origin have attracted a large following of members.

### Founding and Proliferation of NCRMs

The researchers inquired if the pastors were the original founders of the movements. 19 (95%) confirmed that they were the founders and only 1 (5%) who was attached to the branch by the founder of the main mother church. This affirmed that movements are being founded by individual personalities. When asked how they began, 2 (10%) responded that they began it all alone, 16 (80%) said they began it with their family members while 2 (10%) said they began with their friends. These results shows that majority of these movements are started by the founders with their family members after which other members join. This shows that majority 16(80%) of NCRMs are family churches and these family members are the ones who have the greatest affiliation to them. In addition, 20 pastors responded that their movements were began in rented buildings or tents and only 6 had settled in a place of their own by the time of this study.

When asked why they started their movements, 5 (25%) pastors said that they were compelled by their desire to spread the gospel of Christ to the people. 4 (20%) pastors confessed that they had broken away from their previous churches as a result of leadership wrangles which forced them out and ended up starting their own movements. 11 (55%) admitted that their reasons were multiple in that they were called by God to preach the gospel of Christ in an autonomous set up and cannot deny the fact that being pastors is what they do for their living and therefore it is their source of employment although not the main reason for opening up their movements. Therefore majority of the pastors are opening up churches after what they refer to as the call by God to preach the gospel. Asked what they did before they became pastors, 18 (90%) responded that they were self employed whereby they involved in occupations like farming, small scale businesses and casuals. 2 (10%) confirmed that they were government employees, a role they double tasked with continuing to be pastors even after opening their movements.

These results reveal that a large percentage of the pastors did not have secure jobs a factor that could be a driving force to start up movements. Shorter and Njiru (2001) confirm that a number of pastors are self ordained after having faced difficulties of harsh economic times and unemployment; they have ended up in founding movements that are fast rewarding.

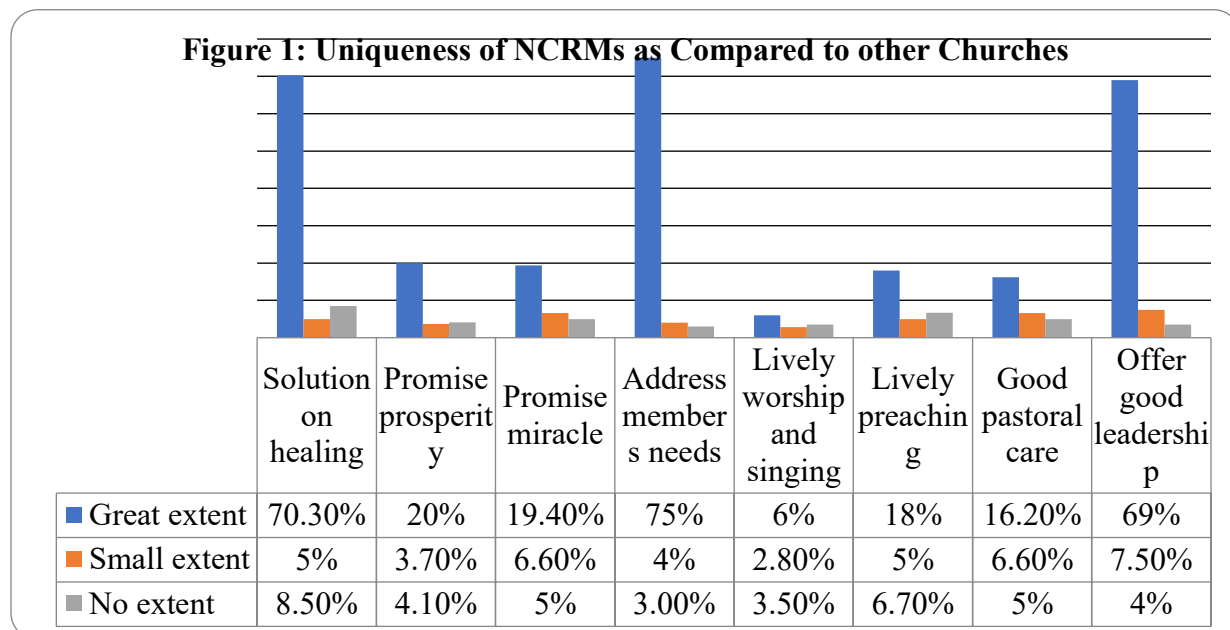
The level of education for pastors was sought. The results revealed that 4 (20%) had acquired a KCPE certificate, 8 (40%) had a KCSE certificate, 6 (30%) had a diploma certificate 1 (5%) a degree and 1 (5%)

masters degree certificate. This indicated that many of respondent pastors had low education level and they could not compete favourably in modern society where high level of education is being recognised.

The researchers sought to know whether the Pastors had any other work besides being pastors. 3 (15%) said they operate small businesses. 4 (20%) do farming 2 (10%) are government employed and 11 (55%) are full time pastors. This shows that majority of Pastors have no other engagement apart from their work as pastors. 9 (45%) have other engagement to add up to their ministerial work. According to Kinoti O.I (2016), the Pastors ought to be in the fore front to set an example to their members on matters of hard work and entrepreneurship. He is for the opinion that the clergy ought to be more innovative and do extra work besides working as pastors. Therefore the pastors should rethink about the activities they can engage in to improve their economic life.

The researchers also investigated the churches that the pastors and members of NCRMs attended before they joined NCRMs. The findings revealed that majority of members joining NCRMs come from other churches. More members had left the Catholic Church 128 (40%) as compared to the Protestant 112 (35%), the Pentecostal churches 40 (12.5%) and non church goers 40 (12.5%). When asked when they left their previous church, 176 (55%) affirmed that they left less than one year ago while 144 (45%) said they left more than one year ago. However these results reveal that members are leaving other Churches to join NCRMs and a greater percentage moved in less than one year ago which means that the act of moving is still on. However 40(12.5%) which is a relatively small percentage had joined the movements as first generation lot meaning that they were not in any other church before. This is an indicator that NCRMs in a way, they are carrying out the work of evangelism and leading to conversion of new believers to Christ.

The researchers also sought to investigate what made the NCRMs unique as compared to the previous churches attended by the members and movement leaders that in turn attracted them. The responses are analysed in the figure below.



The respondents highlighted that to a great extent the movements' offers solution on healing (70.3%), they address members needs (75%) and offer good leadership (69%). To a very great extent they promise prosperity (72.2%), promise miracles (69%), offer lively worship and singing (87.5%), have lively preaching (70.3%) and have good pastoral care (72.2%). When asked if they are now satisfied 315 (98.4%)

said yes they are while only 5 (1.6%) said they are not. These responses provide a basis for understanding this phenomenon of rampant mushrooming of NCRMs. They have the ability to embrace modernity which is appealing to most people in the present generation and also satisfy the spiritual needs of their members. The other churches in Kenya need to rethink more on their methods of evangelization so that they can address the needs of their followers and maintain their relevance in the society today.

### **Socio-Political Factors that Lead to Proliferation of NCRMs**

The researchers inquired from the respondents the kind of social functions that were found in their movements. Majority (98.4%) responded that their movements held religious functions/gatherings. Burial ceremonies (97.5%) and visit to the less fortunate (94.4%) also had high percentages which means that many members concur that they are the most recurrent activities that are found in their movements. Other functions carried out are wedding ceremonies (70%), funds drive (76.6%) and seminars, workshops and trainings (66.8%). New born ceremonies had the least frequency (48.8%) which means, even though it is found in some of the movements, it is not very common.

The respondents were asked whether they were attracted to the movements by the social functions and activities offered, 299 (93.4%) said yes while 21 (6.6%) said no, indicating that majority were drawn by these celebrations. The movement pastors also confirmed by 20 (100%) that the social activities carried out have great impact in drawing new members to them. However when pastors were asked whether they ever witnessed members being dissatisfied with how social activities are done, Majority 15 (75%) attested to the fact that some members had left their movement when their social needs were not met. 5 (25%) said that there are no members who had left due to their unmet social needs. However when the social activities and all functions are well planned and carried out, they become helpful and make members feel at home when relating with the brethren in their movements.

The researchers enquired from members of NCRMs whether the movement were founded as a result of leadership wrangles in the previous church attended by the pastor. The results were as follows; 160 (50%) responded yes, 96 (30%) said no, while 64 (20%) said they had no opinion. This revealed an aspect of breakaway as the majority of respondents affirmed that their movements founders had differed in leadership before getting away to form their own. These findings are inconsistent with the responses of movement founders whose responses indicated that only 4 (20%) had attested to this fact. The findings are clear that leadership differences have played a role in starting of NCRMs.

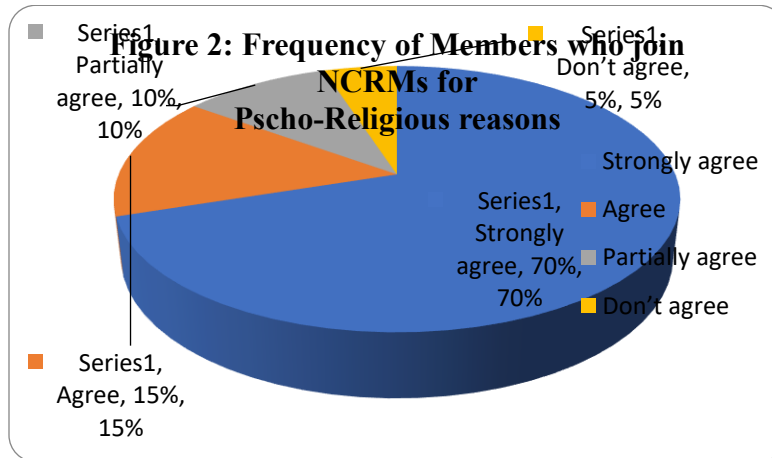
The researchers sought to establish whether there were members who had left the movement to form their own. 6 (30%) said yes while 14 (70%) said no. Those who said yes were asked how many members had formed their church and in their responses only a small number of churches 6 (30%) had experienced the moving out of members with an intention of forming their own. However any element of moving out is significant to this study because it is crucial in understanding whether the emerging pastors could have come from NCRMs. The researchers inquired from the six pastors who had members leaving to form a church whether they opened a brand of their kind. Only 1 (17%) said yes while the rest 5 (83%) said they formed independent movements. This means that eleven movement have been formed emanating from one county. If this is at a rate of one year, from one county headquarter and we have forty seven then by the end of one year there will be 517 NCRMs and by five years time they will be 2585 movements. This would record a high rate of proliferation. When pastors were asked why they had left their movements, majority 8(40%) of the Pastors responded that they had left their former movement in quest for leadership. 7 (35%) had left due to personal differences and only 5(25%) had desired to be independent. This revealed that leadership was an issue behind the founding of NCRMs.

The researchers sought to find out from the members whether they were satisfied with the leadership provided in their movements. 256 (85%) responded that they were not satisfied while 44 (15%) said they were satisfied. This implies that the majority of the members are not satisfied with the leadership provide

in NCRMs. Bundi (2016) one of the respondents who said he was not satisfied argued that the Movement founders rarely did they involve their followers in matters of leadership. Like the argument of Gitonga (2011), the founders are the managers who are not accountable to anyone else. The researchers sought to find out from the members of NCRMs whether there was any political influence that led to starting up of NCRMs. Nobody said yes, 260 (81.2%) said no, 60 (18.8%) responded they were not aware. Majority of the respondents felt that NCRMs were not founded for political reasons.

**Psycho-Religious Factors that Lead to Proliferation of NCRMs**

The researchers asked the pastors whether there are members who joined their movements due to psycho-religious reasons.



Majority responded that they strongly agree (70%) that members join their movements due to psycho religious reasons. 15% said that they agree, 10% responded that they partially agree while only 5% said they don't agree. According to Stark and Bainbridge (1987) opening of NCRMs is curative to the thoughts and lives of the founders from difficult moments of life experienced. This means that the followers of NCRMs are pious to them as they offer a remedy to their problems. They act as therapy to their issues in life.

The researchers sought to find out whether movements were started in obedience to the call to preach the gospel. 214 (66.9%) responded that they strongly agree, 69 (21.4%) said that they agree, 25 (7.8%) said they partially agree and 12 (3.9%) responded that they do not agree. According to these responses majority of the respondents (66.9%) are in agreement that their movement founders started their movements so as to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ that brings physical, emotional and spiritual healing.

Kiogora O.I (2016) of Jesus House of Praise claims that the preachers in the NCRMs are instruments of God to revive the gospel of Christ that has since been either watered or taken for granted in this generation. She unveiled with due respect and without sounding critical to any church that before the coming of Revival Movements and Pentecostal Charismatic preachers, many churches especially the mainstream church had turned to routine worship centres. They had failed to impart on the lives of people in this generation where so many problems that require church address existed. She therefore claims that Jesus Christ came in through NCRMs to rekindle the fire of the Holy Spirit and continue his work on earth as he expects it to be done. Therefore according to her proliferation of NCRMs is inevitable. According to Anderson (2004), the mainstream churches had relaxed in their duty and they were being woken up by the upsurge of NCRMs. The church is to blame for whatever is happening to it today.

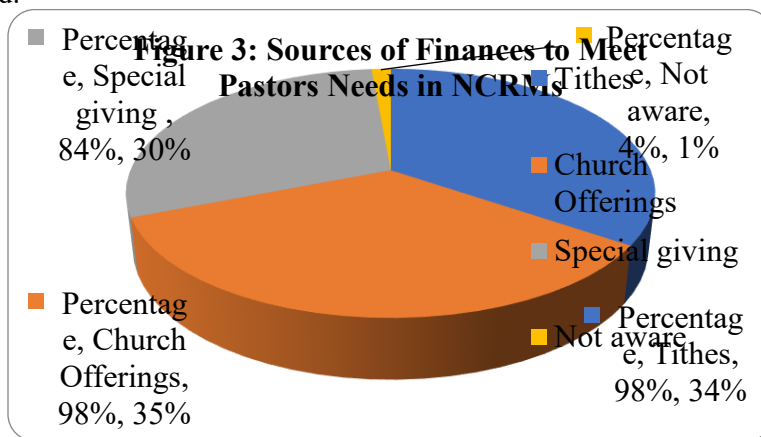
**Economic Factors that Lead to Proliferation of NCRMs**

The researchers asked members whether being a pastor is both a vocation and an occupation. 52 (16.2%) said that they strongly agree, 225 (70.3%) said they agree while 16 (5%) said they partially agree and 27 (8.5%) said they do not agree. Majority are for the opinion that Pastors' role is a calling and as well it is a form of employment. Jane Ntinyari a member of Burning Bush Ministries asserted that it is next to impossible to get any one today who will volunteer as a pastor or even a preacher. In the guise of a call there is a kind reward in form of appreciation, fare, fuel and lunch. Those who are full Pastors are heavily paid by their Congregations. Shorter and Njiru (2001), Nkonge and Maina (2014) and Nyaudi (2004) inform that most of the NCRMs founders live very expensive lives, with big mansions or high cost rental houses and sleek cars. This is a confirmation that besides ministerial work a pastor would in addition be equated to any other employee in the society.

The pastors were asked if they have members who are not employed. 20 (100%) confirmed that some of them are jobless. An important question to ask is whether joblessness was a force attracting members to NCRMs? This was confirmed in an observation done on 19<sup>th</sup> of July in Word Healing Evangelistic Ministry a movement founded by Prophet Olembo and has a large congregation of about 350 consistent followers. The researchers saw very many people who were called to be prayed for so that they can get a job or promotion. At a closet meeting some were requested to see the prophet for a word of prophecy that was revealed to the prophet concerning what they should do to acquire jobs and promotion. Therefore, unemployment is a great need that would make the jobless to join NCRMs where they are promised prayers that can help them acquire a job.

When asked if there are members who left their movements and opened up churches to seek for employment, none said yes while 20 (100%) said no. 6 (30%) agree that members left their movements to form their own for other reason like leadership wrangles, personality differences and spiritual maturity and desire for independence but for it to be a form of employment was not known to them. However, Shorter and Njiru (2001), Nkonge and Maina (2014) and Nyaudi (2004) attribute the high rate of unemployment and underemployment to opening up of movements. They describe it as a booming business. This was confirmed from the members' responses. They were asked whether they were aware of members who had left their movement to start their own as a source of employment or income. 133 (42%) responded yes, 103 (32%) said no, and only 84 (26%) responded that they were not aware. Majority of the NCRMs members were for the opinion that there are those NCRMs founders who start their movement to earn in come from it.

Both the members and the pastors were asked how the financial needs of the pastor are met. The following ways were identified.



These responses show that the movement pastors are paid from the contributions made by their members. Majority (99%) responded that the financial needs of pastors are catered for with the contributions made in

the form of tithes and offerings. 30% respondents said that there are special giving sessions that are organised to cater for their pastors salary. Only 1% responds were not aware how the financial needs of their pastors were met. The benefits of meeting ones needs would therefore make jobless people to start their own movement so that they earn their living (Mwongera 2013).

The pastors were asked whether there are economic empowerment programs for their members so that everyone can be in a position to meet the movement requirements. 9 (45%) said yes while 11 (55%) said no. This indicated that majority of the movements did not have ways of curving unemployment and financial hardship of their members. The findings earlier had shown that all movements 20 (100%) have jobless members yet some of these movements had not come up with ways of assisting them.

Paradoxically none of the members is exempted from movements' contributions. An article posted on Sunday Nation on 31<sup>st</sup>, August 2008 reveals that movement followers are so obliged to make contributions to an extent of acquiring bank and society loans to 'plant seed' for bumper harvest. The NCRMs can learn from a strategy employed in Kambakia Christian Centre to empower the ladies in the movement. As informed by Gaceri O.I (2016), ladies in the movement are organised in groups of ten members where they do table banking every Sunday. The ministry has also established a SACCO where these ladies are required to make their savings and they can access loans at a fair interest rate. She further informed that the movement leadership was planning to extend the strategy to all members and call it kingdom banking so as to empower all of them. When such empowerment measures are put in place then the NCRMs members would be in a position to meet their needs and consequently be able to make movements contributions

### **The Impact of NCRMs in Meru Town**

Pastors were asked whether their movements had any impact in the society. 20 (100%) said they had impacted in the society in a great way. The most recurrent point raised was that the movements had achieved in preaching Christ (90%) in the localities they were in. Some confessed that some members who joined their movements had not been in any other church before. Other areas of impact identified were support of education (55%), empowerment of women (35%), support of youth ministry (45%) and helping the needy (85%) in the society. Although the women are the majority in NCRMs (Table 2), there is minimal support (35%) given to them so as to be empowered. Also movement contribution to the ministry of men was left silent in all movements. To find out how NCRMs impacted on men did not come up clearly in these findings. As proposed by Mathai (2012) in her Thesis, serious systematic research regarding men and faith as well as address to men issues need to be done as a matter of urgency.

The pastors were asked if they were doing anything to address the social evils in the society. 19 (95%) said yes. 1 (5%) said no. The current most common evils identified include corruption (90%), land grabbing and embezzlement of public funds (60%), rape (30%), homosexuality (65%) and abortion (95%). Corruption and abortion were the most recurrent evils addressed. Irresponsible sexual behaviours like rape (30%) and homosexuality (65%) were also addressed in various movements. Pastors condemn such acts when they identify them and educate their congregation about the dangers of such evils in the society. They teach the effects of such evils that will not only affect the society but also the working of the movements. 1 (5%) that said they had not done anything much gave their excuse of having opened their movements in a recent date and therefore they were still on their formation stage.

When asked whether there is any effect of coming up of NCRMs on Christianity, all the pastors 20 (100%) responded that it enhanced the spread of the gospel. As many as the movements, the more the chances are, of many people being reached with the gospel. The pastors therefore praised the move of opening many movements. However, Kinoti (2016) castigated the element of competition among the Movements that implicated negatively on Christianity. He therefore advocate for modesty preaching, opening and expansion of movements. He puts a reminder to all pastors that they preach one Christ for one reason; to draw as many

to Christ so as to inherit the kingdom of God. He says they are all doing the same thing though in a different place.

Nkonge and Muguna (2014) state that the NCRMs negatively affect the mainline churches by drawing members from them and leading to the decline of membership. This in turn affected the mission of the churches involved. This study also established this effect where majority of those members in NCRMs had come from other churches particularly the mainline churches depriving them of the membership.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The movements are uniquely founded. They are given unique names and started in simple structures. They are either a result of individual formation or breakaway from other movements. Majority of the founders have low education and many of their members come from the already existing churches, particularly the mainline churches.

From the findings the following recommendations are made:

- (i) To curb actions of rogue movement founders the government should continue and intensify the agenda of putting checks and controls to all churches.
- (ii) The Christian church organisation body should be formed to govern all matters of the church with all churches inclusive.
- (iii) The body should also facilitate formation of ecumenical activities and religious dialogue between NCRMs and older churches so as to deal with any pejorative connotation that may hinder Christian unity.
- (iv) The churches should rethink their mission to deal with the problem of members hopping from one church to another an aspect that may cause frustration and confusion to the believers.
- (v) A research should be carried out on leadership styles in NCRMs to be able to understand them and curb the monopoly of leadership that engineers breakaways of the churches.
- (vi) Pastor appraisal mechanism that will monitor their performance to be developed.
- (vii) Pastors to create job opportunities and any other empowerment program for their members.
- (viii) To curtail the problem of being led astray especially the young people, the government education system should allow Christian religious education be made compulsory in primary and secondary schools and a core unit on comparative religions to be taught in institutions of higher learning.

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