

This is a phenomenological study of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts that distinguishes between ethnicity and ethnocentrism. Since independence, there has been witnessed an emerging trend and a new pattern in ethnic uprising in the political scene such that ethnic conflict in Kenya is becoming strongly latent and that is why the study looks at these questions phenomenologically. The study demonstrates how scholars have confused ethnicity with ethnocentrism and have concentrated much on the "why" and "how" of ethnicity and have often ignored the "what" of ethnicity, which has led to settling without success in resolving and managing ethnic conflicts. It assumes that until the root causes of a conflict are comprehended and mastered, such conflicts cannot be resolved. As such, the root cause of ethnic conflicts can only be comprehended if the foundation of ethnicity is first established phenomenologically.

The study therefore highlights the history of phenomenology and applies its method to ethnicity, ethnocentrism and conflict in independent Kenya. It explores the phenomenon of ethnicity as a maker of identity thereby distinguishing between ethnicity and ethnocentrism. It also evaluates the various methods and processes of conflict management and assumes that confusing ethnicity with ethnocentrism has created serious problems of clarity in social discourse. It also assumes that ethno-politics is central to the country's ethnic conflicts and that ethnocentric attitudes are the main causes of interethnic violence. These assumptions are validated by the key findings which demonstrate the pervasive nature of ethnocentrism in Kenya.

The study explores, Heidegger's phenomenology, which circumscribes ontological transcendence and epistemological transcendence where one goes beyond popular beliefs so as to have a better understanding of a phenomenon. The study hinges upon ontological transcendence but for purposes of understanding the phenomenological method, Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's theories will be considered. To operationalize the latter, the study explores various theories including non philosophical ones on ethnicity. Heidegger's characteristics of Being and Hobbes's theory of human nature are used to address the question of human existence.

In using Heidegger's ontological transcendence, this work makes a contribution in demonstrating the need for developing a supra-ethnic consciousness based on the transcendence motivation where humans rise beyond ethnocentrism by developing a national consciousness. As such, the ontological perspective has enabled the study to argue on the need to go beyond conventional conflict management strategies so that conflict transformation agendas which employ a phenomenological model can be applied for suitable peace processes.