

**DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF SELF-IDENTITY AMONG INTERNALLY  
DISPLACED PERSONS IN KENYA'S 2007/2008 POST ELECTION VIOLENCE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the self-identity of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) following Kenya's 2007 election-related violence. The study looked at how the attacks the IDPs suffered and life under displacement impacted on their self-identity in their cultural context and as nationals of Kenya and the discursive strategies they employed in the construction of these identities. The study was guided by Critical Discourse Analysis and Discourse Historical Approach which were complemented by Michael Foucault's theory of knowledge and power as well as Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, symbolic power and symbolic violence which provided insight in understanding the IDPs' identity. The research data was collected using interviews with open-ended questions from a sample of twenty-four respondents selected from 350,000 IDPs, through stratified sampling. The data was complemented by a review of six newspaper reports and opinions on the displaced persons and four memos and press statements from the IDPs. The research sample was selected from IDPs from different ethnic communities to capture a wide diversity of experiences. The findings revealed that IDPs have suffered an identity crisis in their cultural identity and gender roles feeling that they did not measure up to the expectations of their communities as a result of the displacement. They had also largely lost their national identity as Kenyans due to unmet expectations from the government and the community. The study found that the displaced persons used ethnic and political party labels as well as their difficult economic situation to define themselves and distinguish themselves from the other Kenyans. They also employed various topoi. The study brought to light the role of discourse in creating groups and therefore unifying and dividing communities. The self-identities of the IDPs indicated a need for economic restitution and psychological interventions to enable the displaced persons get over their traumatic experiences. It also indicated areas where discourse could be employed to promote a positive image of the IDPs. The research which was situated in the area of applied linguistics also advanced the study of language in use.