ABSTRACT
Refugeehood either due to armed conflict or other forms of displacement is a traumatic condition especially when the refugees do not foresee an end to their displacement in the near future. Living away from one's ancestral land without family members has always been problematic to refugees. Refugees are supposed to be protected and assisted by the UNHCR and the host government in meeting their livelihoods. But this has never been the case with this category under investigation. Ethiopian refugees in Eastleigh, Nairobi started flocking the area in 1974 and the number keep on increasing every day. The study offers a scholarly approach to the question of Ethiopian refugees in Eastleigh, Nairobi, their challenges and coping mechanisms. In order to understand the issues of Ethiopian refugees in Eastleigh, Nairobi, the research sought to answer the following questions: what led to the establishment of Ethiopian refugees in Eastleigh, Nairobi, what were the challenges facing Ethiopian refugees in Eastleigh, Nairobi, and what were the coping mechanisms adopted by these refugees. The research started with unraveling the various causes of refugee movement from Ethiopia to live under protracted conditions in Nairobi, and further examined their challenges and coping mechanisms. The study utilized secondary data from books and reports, and primary data from in-depth interviews with experts and refugees in Eastleigh which filled gaps identified from secondary sources. The informants were randomly selected from the field in Eastleigh, Nairobi, using purposive sampling and snowballing method. Environmental and political factors pushed Ethiopians out of their country to various countries, including Kenya where they established themselves as refugees in Eastleigh, Nairobi. Religio-cultural orientation was the most challenging factor among the Ethiopian refugees in Nairobi. Finally Kinship ties were the most effective coping mechanisms among the Ethiopian refugees in Eastleigh, Nairobi. The research was
cast in the conceptual framework of the refugee challenges and coping mechanisms. The Ecological Systems Theory and Coping Theory were used in the study. The Ecological Systems Theory was used to show how environment and other actors coalesced to impact on refugee in different ways, while the researcher used Coping Theory to show the coping mechanisms adopted by this category in meeting their livelihoods and overcoming their daily impediments.