

The Effects of *Khat* Consumption on Family Relationships in Kamukunji Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract- There are debates whether *Khat* is a contributor to divorce and family break ups and social disorder like crimes and theft. This is corroborated by constant media highlights. For example, Mungai (1983) *Khat* consumption retards development and prosperity of both the individual and his nation. It makes one sleepy at odd times when others are working. It makes one weak hence less resistance to diseases. *Khat* chewers will care less about family, nutrition and health but spend many hours chewing and looking for the substance. Thus, this study aimed at examining the effects of *Khat* consumption on family relationships in Kamukunji constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. Guided by the Structural Functionalism Theory and Conflict Theory, the study reviewed a number of existing literature relating to the problem of family relationships associated with *Khat* consumption. The study was conducted in Kamukunji Constituency of Nairobi County. The Somali community is the dominant tribe in the larger part of the suburb. This study applied exploratory and descriptive survey research designs with a mixed method approach. This study targeted the entire *Khat* consumers' households and retail traders in Kamukunji constituency. The sample consisted of 335 main consumers who used questionnaires, 5 key informants, 19 FGDs and 70 retailers (used questionnaires) selected through ward-clustering and then snowball sampling. Piloting was conducted in Kibra constituency using 30 consumers' households and 10 retail traders. Validity was examined by aligning the questionnaire with the Structural Functionalism and Conflict Theory. Reliability statistic of was assessed through obtaining a Cronbach alpha of 0.914. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS - Version 20) was used for both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study applied the three analytical types of Univariate, bivariate and multivariate analysis. Qualitative data were analyzed through the process of coding where common themes were identified and examined in relation to the context, meaning and circumstances. The study found that whereas the consumption of *Khat* has been perceived to be associated with men's low levels of sexual interest and libido, in the study area, it is noted among the majority of the respondents, especially men that their interest in sex increased with consumption of *Khat*. However, there was an interesting difference where more women observed that *Khat* consumption diminishes sexual interest. Most of the *Khat* users had a history of *Khat* use in their family and the social economic

implication associated with *Khat* use in Kamukunji Constituency is comparable to other studies carried out in other parts of the world. There is urgent need to create awareness on *Khat* consumption and available treatment and rehabilitation services for those who are willing to reform and that schools and religious institutions can be excellent avenues for information dissemination.

Index Terms- *Khat*, *Khat* consumption, Family relationships, Structural Functionalism, Social Conflict

I. INTRODUCTION

The consumption of mood enhancing substances has been documented from ancient times. Drugs and alcohol has had an influence on both cultures and civilization processes throughout history of humanity. This is not only limited to African but also the Sumerians, the Greeks, the Romans, the British and even the Chinese (Gately, 2008). Archaeological and documentary evidence describe the ancient use of the substances, ranging from the use of opium in ancient Greece, harmful in West Indies, cannabis in Western china, nutmeg in ancient India, cocoa leaf among the Mayan cultures, and psilocybin across North Africa, among others. For a quite number of decades and centuries, the world population has been fermenting grains and fruits to produce alcoholic drinks. In fact, the known earliest evidence of humans engaging in brewing alcohol are shown by the residues in pottery jars found in northern China that are thought to have been produced between 7000 and 6600 B.C. (Gateley, 2008).

Khat (*Catha edulis*) is an ever green plant grown by grafting and cultivated as a bush or small trees. It grows at an altitude of 1500-2500 meters above the sea level under optimal conditions requiring 10 years to attain maturity. According to Anderson and Carrier (2009), it is a hardy crop which grows in arid areas up to ten meters tall under normal circumstances and grows up to five meters in non-equatorial regions.

The origin of *Khat* is not known and has raised various arguments. Many believe that its origin can be traced in parts of Ethiopia, which was later on spread by the immigrants across East Africa and Yemen. Others hold that Yemen was its initial origins before spreading to nearby countries. Whether Ethiopia or

Yemen, *Khat* proliferated and spread to other countries like Kenya, Somalia, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania, Arabia, Congo, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa. It is also cultivated in Afghanistan and Turkistan. In ancient times chewing of *Khat* was used as an anti-depressant and was associated with leisure activities due to its loquacious nature after consumption while inducing vivid debate. Botanically *Khat* was first identified by Forskal in 1762 in Yemen who categorized it as a plant belonging to the Spinosa Family. Currently it is classified under the family Celastraceae (Adualem, 2002).

According to Beckerleg (2009), *Khat* is the main contributor to divorce and family break ups and social disorder like crimes and theft. This is corroborated by constant media highlights. For example, Mungai (1983) *Khat* consumption retards development and prosperity of both the individual and his nation. It makes one sleepy at odd times when others are working. It makes one weak hence less resistance to diseases. *Khat* chewers will care less about family, nutrition and health but spend many hours chewing and looking for the substance.

According to Beckerleg (2010), majority of *Khat* consumers in East Africa are of the Somali, Ethiopia origin and the Swahili Communities. He further posits that the attitude of people to *Khat* consumption varied in relation to the degree and amount of consumption. These studies found out that majority of respondents had dissenting attitude to its heavy use whereas it may have a demurring social and health effect on the chewer and entire family life. The population of Somalis within the city of Nairobi is the highest within Kamukunji Constituency. However, population data quantifying the levels of *Khat* use is varied. The only reliable published evidence of *Khat* use in Somalia is a study conducted in Hargeisa, which found that 31.3% of the population use *Khat* on a weekly basis (Beckerleg, 2010).

Apparently, the number of people who use *Khat* is no longer a concern, but the consumption pattern amongst users. This study assumed that the pattern of use is the key determinant of how big the impact of *Khat* has on a user and family relationship. While *Khat* is not a physically addictive substance, psychological addiction has been reported among the abusers where chewing grows into a habit that some users find develop challenges that relate to their family members. Thus, this study was carried out with the objective to examine the effects of *Khat* consumption on family relationships in Kamukunji constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Stefan and Mathew (2005), *Khat* chewers on daily basis are estimated to constitute 10 million people worldwide. Majority of these are in Eastern Africa and Arabian Peninsula. Fitzerguard and Housley (2009) described *Khat* as a cool drug which is viewed as a sign of defiance in Embu and Mbere districts while among the Somalis it is an element of bondage and socialization that brings together comrades in a session known as *Fadhiga dens*. They further, illustrates that there is substantial evidence suggesting many negative consequences on *Khat* misuse, including violence within marital life, time wastage and misuse of household resources, and the social relationships that go beyond the family. This is supported by Kassim et al. (2011) in a study conducted in London, who found that the socio-

economic impacts of *Khat* consumption are manifold, including crime increase to the extreme extent. The study further found that *Khat* consumption destabilizes the marriage institution and social life of the entire community. Murray (1984) postulates that the study on family life is generally a foundation for policy formulation of a society aiming at strengthening family health and stability such that any change to the positive achievement of the society impacts negatively on the marital and household life that may resulting deep division and conflict over the invading behavior.

Khat consumption is said to have effects on ones' libido. Using 214 male respondents, Hakim (2002) in a study carried out at Ghandi Memorial Women Hospital in Ethiopia between 1992 and 1995 found that *Khat* has negative consequences on the sexual performances of the consumers. He reports that there was a depressed overall sexual potency especially on *Khat* consumers compared to non *Khat* consumers. This view is corroborated by Mwenda, et al (2003), who found that *Khat* usage lowers libido in human and may also lead to sexual impotence following long term use. They concluded that chewing has negative impacts on human reproductive health although the precise mechanism affecting reproductive physiology was not elucidated. Halbach (1972) illustrates that chronic consumption of *Khat* leads to spermatozoa deficiency and impotence at a later stage. Aden, et al. (2006) explicates that, in regard to men chewers, long term usage leads to constriction of blood vessels supplying blood to the reproductive tract causing inhibited urine flow and inability to attain or sustain an erection. In addition, they further state that in women who chew *Khat*, drying of the lining of the reproductive tract leading to pain and blistering during sexual intercourse is common. Chewing *Khat* during pregnancy leads to reduced birth weight a sign of infant mortality. Jibril and Yussuf (2012), in their study in Norway state that, *Khat* is a factor inducing conflict in marital relationships and source of protracted disagreement leading to divorce. These inhibit conflicts and aggressions caused by the chewer after consumption and disputes due to its various negative implications on the marital relation. In Kenya data on impact of *Khat* on marital relationships was lacking hence knowledge gap that calls for investigation.

In relation to the problem of family relationships, the Structural Functionalism Theory assumes that a working society is always stable and organized. The stability of the society has essential characteristics basically pegged on societal consensus. Under this context, it is said that all the members of the society acknowledge and appreciate the common set of believes, values and behavior. From this background, a society is having elements that are inter-related and function together which forms a system-like stricture. The structure is the key concern and driver of stability attributes and hence the solidarity of the society. Structural functionalism considers this social structure and its organization superior and more beneficial than the individual. This relates to the aspects spelt out in the top down theory that postulates that persons come into society and then shaped by the social environment exposed to them through socialization and interactions with various existing institutions including the family, education, media and religion (Shoham et.al, 2015). In contrast, conflict theory states that conflicts arise due to competition for limited resources.

III. METHODS

The study was conducted in Kamukunji Constituency of Nairobi County. The Somali community is the dominant tribe in the larger part of the suburb. According to the Nairobi county office, one month in 2012, Kamukunji was the contributor of approximately 25% of the City County's taxes. The commercial activities in the estate includes Khat trade, night lodges, shopping malls, small stalls, among others. This study applied exploratory and descriptive survey research designs. This is a mixed method model which gives room for a concurrent application of both qualitative and quantitative strands during a research process (Creswell and Plano, 2011). Descriptive survey design was employed to gather adapt on the current status of the subject matter- Khat consumption and trade described "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions stated. The blend of the descriptive survey and exploratory designs was also informed by the need to facilitate the operations of the investigation into better and efficient coherence with compact entity.

This research targeted the entire Khat consumers' households and retail traders in Kamukunji constituency. The study also involved five (5) ward administrators who were the Key Informants (KI1, KI2, KI3, KI4 and KI5) and four (4) elders, four (4) religious leaders, three (3) women & three (3) youth representatives and five (5) county administrators. Since it was difficult to get a complete official list of Khat chewers in Kamukunji (sampling frame) and due to cost and accessibility challenges, this study selected a subset of 335 main consumers, 5 key informants, 19 FGDs and 70 retailers as respondents from the entire Khat consumers and retail traders in the region through snowball sampling. The use of snowball sampling in quantitative technique is premised in Coleman (1958).

To calculate the required sample size for Khat consumers, this study proposed a 95% confidence on the population proportion which corresponds to 5% level of significance. Cochran (1953) formulae was used, which requires the standard error to be computed by dividing the confidence interval by 1.96 (The value which corresponds to the area under the normal distribution). Thus the standard error obtained was $5/1.96 = 2.55$. Since there were no previous data on the population of Khat consumers in Kamukunji, the study assumed the proportion to be 50% since other things being equal. The sample size obtained was 385. To factor in for the non-response, this study inflated the sample size by 10%, yielding 424.

The sample was distributed proportionately into the five wards in Kamukunji. Thus the ward with high population had a bigger portion of the sample. The distribution was based on 2009 census of which Pumwani ward had 17% of the population, Eastleigh North 20.41%, Eastleigh South 31.26%, Airbase 20.36% and California 10.24%. For qualitative data a purposive sampling technique was used where 5 key informants were interviewed and three focus group discussions were conducted on 19 individuals. Three focus group discussions were conducted, where opinion leaders who included religious leaders, scholars, administrators, women representatives, youth and elders participated. A structured interview with open ended questions on socio-economic aspects of Khat consumption and trade within the region was administered to these opinion leaders.

Piloting was conducted in Kibra constituency, located in Southland area of Nairobi where the questionnaires were

administered to 30 consumers' households and 10 retail traders. The study was done by aligning the questionnaire with the main theories of this study namely Structural Functionalism and Conflict Theory as well as the study objectives. Like items with internal consistency were put together to define various variables. The researcher listed all questions relating to the study and submitted them to the supervisors to assess for validity of the questions.

Family relationship measured in terms of physical insults, verbal insults, use of threats, violence outside, violence within, threatens to leave and keeps on blaming reported a reliability statistic of 0.914 where Cronbach alpha greater than 0.9 is an excellent Internal consistency.

The researcher applied for a research permit to collect data from the National Council of Science and Technology. The questionnaires were hand-delivered, and completed promptly. Thirty trained research assistants were used of which the questionnaires were filled while the researcher waited, thereby providing clarification where necessary. Interview tool or instrument was administered on the five ward chiefs who constitutes the key informants to the study. They were assembled at Sub-county commissioner's board room and the interview guide supplied to them where questions were orally advanced to them in a chronological order. On the other hand, three focus group discussions on the 19 FGDS grouped in the order of six and another six and seven individuals were carried out on different occasions.

To analyze to the quantitative data, the researcher engaged, at first, instance, in data preparation stages. The stage involved examination of raw data after collection through carefully scrutiny while simultaneously carrying out data cleaning and editing. The responses were assigned number codes for easy entry to the data base and keyed in electronically. The coding involved organizing data into limited categories in relation to appropriate research objectives. Then the data was presented in a systematic organized unity and order that enabled its easy and objective interpretations which in turn enhanced it to be subjected to a smooth statistical treatment.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS - Version 20) was used for both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study applied the three analytical types of Univariate, bivariate and multivariate analysis in a sequence manner of data categorization to standardize the accuracy and validity of the analysis processes to the qualitative data. Qualitative data were analyzed through the process of coding where common themes were identified and examined in relation to the context, meaning and circumstances.

IV. RESULTS

The concern about the Khat consumers' spouses was investigated the results presented using figure 1

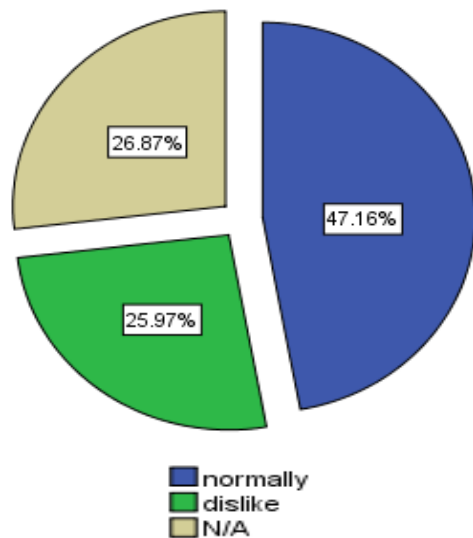


Figure 1: Distribution of spouses' attitude towards Khat consumption

Most of the *Khat* consumers (47.16%) believed that their spouses were comfortable with their behavior, while a sizable number were not comfortable with the question. *Khat* consumption was found to weaken sexual performance while to some respondents *Khat* enhanced hallucination and led to masturbation hence a significant number of divorce cases. More than half of the respondents claimed that *Khat* consumption affected their sleep. The Survey response per gender reported that eight out of ten males preferred regulation as compared to 75% of the females who advocated for regulation while others preferred outlawing. Three out of ten *Khat* consumers surveyed earned between 2000-5000 Kenya shillings per month and those who earned above 20,000 were two in every ten consumers with the difference being quite significant. The study found a significant association between marital status and monthly income.

Khat consumers who were single had a much more stable family relationships compared to married and divorcee while the females *Khat* consumers had a weaker family relationships compared to the males. The younger consumers had a stronger family relationships compared to their older counterparts while employed consumers had more stable family relationships compared to unemployed and those who earned more had more stable relationship compared to those who earned less. The explanatory variables which had a negative effect on household economy were: number of hours spent on *Khat* per day, number of years one has been consuming *Khat*, gender, age and marital status. There was significant association between income and marital status and that *Khat* consumption in Kamukunji Constituency did not differentiate the consumers' level of income and marital status.

Most of the *Khat* retail traders were aged 40 years and below and were married with more than one child. *Khat* retail trade was found to be more lucrative with two thirds of the males who sell *Khat*, consumed it compared to partly thirty percent of females who retail at the same time consume. Most retailers consume for leisure, to reduce stress and minimize boredom and to attract customers. Majority of the *Khat* traders were not involved in other forms of trade business since they found *Khat* retail to be lucrative.

It was found that *Khat* enhances togetherness even though it is linked with environmental untidiness, family breakdown and financial constraints. There was mixed results on the impact of *Khat* consumption on sexual performance as shown in Figure 2.

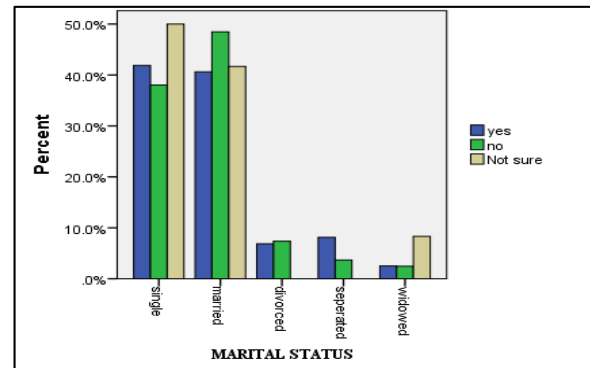


Figure 2: Marital status and sexual performance of Khat consumers

The claim that *Khat* enhances sexual performance is still divided as some support and others oppose. This is corroborated by the qualitative results from FGDs where some reported that *Khat* consumption affect sexual performance while others were of the contrary.

The study of family life is generally a foundation for policy formulation aiming at strengthening family stability. The family constitutes the backbone of every society hence the pattern of use is a determinant on the impact of *Khat* consumption on the family life.

V. CONCLUSION

With regard to spousal relations, a major finding of this study is that whereas the consumption of *Khat* has been perceived to be associated with men's low levels of sexual interest and libido, in the study area, it is noted among the majority of the respondents, especially men that their interest in sex increased with consumption of *Khat*. However, there was an interesting difference where more women observed that *Khat* consumption diminishes sexual interest.

Most of the *Khat* users had a history of *Khat* use in their family and the social economic implication associated with *Khat* use in Kamukunji Constituency is comparable to other studies carried out in other parts of the world. There is urgent need to create awareness on *Khat* consumption and available treatment and rehabilitation services for those who are willing to reform and that schools and religious institutions can be excellent avenues for information dissemination.

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