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Effects of Khat Consumption on Consumer-Community Relationships in Kamukunji Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract:

Khat chewing is evidently traced from the sociocultural tradition where the users feel the pleasure through the induced stimulation effects. Apparently, the effects seem to influence the socio-cultural lives of the entire community within which it is practiced (Kennedy, 1987). Khat is traditionally consumed in a social gathering - a habit that is seriously considered in Yemen. Nonetheless, the negative implications of Khat, which negatively affect the lives of the individual users, marriages, schooling and religious institutions and the community relationships as a whole cannot be ignored. Thus the study was guided by the objective of determining the effects of Khat consumption on consumer-community relationships in Kamukunji constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. Using the Conflict theory, 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 Conflict Theory and Structural Functionalism theory. Reliability statistic 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 it was expected that because the consumer will have good relations with the community, consumption of Khat is considered a social and cultural engagement that is acceptable. It is evident that while the practice is not necessarily sneered upon by the community, Khat consumers are perceived to be failures and the major culprits in poor community relations. However, the end value of consumption derives their perceived value from the entire process of using what is availed in the society.

Keywords: Khat, Khat consumption, consumer-community relationships, consumers' households, retail traders

1. Introduction

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 (Andualem, 2002).

Khat found its prestigious attention in the traditional culture as it played a significance role in the practice of traditional rites and customs including marriages, wedding planning and executions, after-war reconciliation processes and other important social gatherings. It was consumed in groups as it signified the communal undertaking of community activities in almost all the social contexts. While the medical implications of Khat consumption has been discussed to a fairly good extent, the socio-economic implications of its consumption has not been distinctly investigated, particularly in communities with unique socio-economic identities such as those in some urban areas in Kenya.

Khat chewing is evidently traced from the sociocultural tradition where the users feel the pleasure through the induced stimulation effects. Apparently, the effects seem to influence the socio-economic lives of the entire community within which it is practiced (Kennedy 1987). Khat is traditionally consumed in a social gathering - a habit that is seriously considered in Yemen. The habit is a prestigious activity that influences most of the forms of social functions and social stratification across the entire society (Dhaifalah and Santavy, 2004). The activities involving consumption of Khat are guided by formed and documented rules while reserving the ritual importance attached to the activity. In fact, the locals suggest that the importance of Khat in the context is to provide a pretext for a gathering of high social status orientation significance rather than to provide pleasurable effects for the individual. Indeed, because of its stimulating and euphoria properties, Khat is certainly an appropriate tool for enhancing social functionalism. In other countries other than Yemen, it is consumed in much less rigidly defined context and frequently by lone individuals without application of any regulations. Therefore, it can be assumed that in such countries, the psychological benefits of Khat consumption are of secondary in construct.

In Kenya, and Meru County in particular, the growing, trade and consumption of Khat has elicited divergent viewpoints. According to Bururia and Nyaga (2014), Khat farming is associated with both positive and negative effects and it is the economic activity of the families, schools and churches within Meru North region. While a critical analysis indicates the much negative effects for both short and long-term periods, families and the community as a whole have a strong social, religious and economic believe in the importance of Khat.

For about the last 4 decades, Bururia and Nyaga (2014) reported greater effects of Khat that its potential cultural, social, financial, medicinal and religious gains. These contentions are strongly supported by Kobia and Miriti (2014), that Khat is a foundation for a contextual communication. Nonetheless, the negative implications of Khat, which negatively affect the lives of the individual users, marriages, schooling and religious institutions and the community relationships as a whole cannot be ignored. Thus the study was guided by the objective of determining the effects of Khat consumption on consumer-community relationships in Kamukunji constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

A study carried out by NACADA (2007) found that, the medium age of the first use of Khat is ten (10) years. Mwenda, et al (2003) posits the existence of increasing trend of Khat and other drug abuses. The study postulate that substance abuse problem has permeated all levels of society with the youth and the young adults being the most affected. Kassim, et al (2011) found that Khat was used to maintain cultural practices and community cohesiveness, cope with experience of trauma, adversity and security in the context of civil wars. He states that the use of the plant has been linked to the amphetamine like effects where the user has a short lived increased spirit of energy, self-esteem, feelings of elation, enhanced imaginative ability and the mental levity to interconnect ideas (Dhaifalah & Santavy, 2004). Similarly, NACADA, (2007) states that, usage of Khat by long distance drivers in order to stay awake has been incriminated in causing road accidents with grave socio-economic outcomes. Hence, the entice community and the consuming drivers' relationships will obviously be strained due to loss of lives and property coursed by Khat consumption.

Booth & Dunn (2014) explicate that the phenomena becomes practical when parents are in dispute caused by Khat consumption where parent-child relationships are strained hence affecting the discipline and behavior of the child negatively. The same is echoed by Melgosa (2004) who argues that when parents consume socially accepted drugs, they will form subconscious desire among children to start using the drugs. The same is echoed by White et al. (2005) who assert that Khat consumption among the youth affects their transition to adulthood negatively while the community that they hail from considers them to be deviant and transgressors to the prevailing cherished norms, values and acceptable way of life of the society. Colzato et al. (2011) found that Khat consumption induces state of euphoria and mood exhilarations with feelings of increased alertness and arousal of vivid discussion in the social life of Khat consumers. Jibril & Yussuf (2012) states that, rampant disease associated with poor hygiene were other phenomena closely observable in the social environment under which Khat is chewed. They further claim that, since Khat consumers share drinks, the chances of contracting infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis and other communicable diseases is very high that may spread to the entire community. Closely associated with hygiene is tooth decay where Sikuru and Babu (2009) elaborate that Khat contains chemical substances that corrode tooth and the mouth gums thus Khat consumption has various impacts on the social relationships. Among those implications are: abnormal deviations to crime due to psychological repercussions, weak senses towards social duty and family responsibility. In addition, economic burden on family budget, juvenile delinquency, poor upbringing, nurturing, social corruption and reluctance to marriage by some youths which will unavoidably hamper the general developmental agenda and management of the community that may result total decadence to the society at large. For the purpose of our current study, the impacts of Khat on our study area has not been ventured into, hence the knowledge gap, particularly on the issues of the consumer community relationships.

Guided by the Conflict theory and Structural Functionalism Theory, the problem of Khat consumer-community relationships is associated to the theory through the assumption that a working society is always stable and organized. The Structural Functionalism Theory states that 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 beliefs, values and behavior. From this background, a society is having elements that are inter-related and function together which forms a system-like structure. For Conflict theory, members in a society experience conflicts due to competition of scarce resources and dominance in socio-economic and political spheres.

3. 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 include 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, efficient and coherent 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, this will allow for the largest possible sample size –which is most preferable leading to a slight overestimate of the number of people needed, rather than an underestimate. 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.

For consumer-community relationship, physical insults, verbal insults, threats, violence outside, violence within, relationship with friends, keeps on blaming, restricts others from using some facilities, preference to visiting others homes to chew Khat, talkativeness and feelings of being great reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.871.

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 the quantitative data, the researcher engaged, at first, instance, in data preparation stages. The stage involved examination of raw data after collection through careful 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.

4. Results

Study found that the age bracket of Khat consumers who were found to where the majority were represented in 21-40 years' bracket, constituting 73% of the respondents. This is contrary to known patterns where the age groups reported to be Khat consumers fall in the bracket of 40 years and above. This was because more the consumption of Khat by elderly persons is culturally and socially sanctioned. This is a significant finding unique to this study, which differs from patterns known in Ethiopia and Somalia where the majority of consumers fall in the age bracket of 41 to 49 years. This can be explained by the fact that in these two countries, Khat consumption is more strongly linked to established social and cultural values to which older people identify with more. In this study, the fact that more young persons are Khat consumers has significant implications for society because they constitute the backbone of production. In the study area, the findings on the age brackets also agree with findings on the level of education and employment, which formed the majority of Khat consumers. The regression model for consumer community relationship were as shown in Table 1.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	P-value
	B	Std. Error		
(Constant)	2.959	.612	4.833	.000
How many days did you take Khat last week?	.005	.044	.122	.903
What is the average number of hours you spend consuming Khat?	-.018	.026	-.698	.485
For how long have you been consuming Khat?	-.008	.089	-.089	.929
What variety of Khat is chewed mostly in your household?	-.116	.138	-.845	.399
GENDER	-.102	.195	-.527	.599
AGE	.040	.109	.370	.712
MARITAL STATUS	-.163	.100	-1.631	.104
Highest level of education completed	-.023	.074	-.310	.756
Employment status	.013	.068	.187	.852
Approximate monthly income in Kenya Shillings	.065	.089	.735	.463

*Table 1: Regression Model for Community Relationships
a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Community Relationship*

The results showed that apart from the number of days Khat is consumed per week, age, employment status and monthly income which had positive beta coefficients (positive relationship between consumer and community). The other explanatory variables had a negative effect. These are level of education, marital status, gender, the length one has been consuming Khat, variety of Khat and number of hours. These results implied that the number of weeks one consumed Khat enhanced community relationship unlike the number of hours and the year's one has been consuming Khat. Females Khat consumers had a negative community relationship in general compared to males ($\beta = -.102$). People who worked and earned more $\beta = -.102$ and elderly $\beta = 0.043$ the older had better relationship but the educated had poor relationship $\beta = -0.023$. The overall model was not significant ($F = 0.451$, $P = 0.920$). The summary of responses on consumer-community relations are shown in Table 2.

	Physical Insults	Verbal Insults	Use of Threats to Others	Threatens To Leave	Violence Outside	Violence Within	Keeps on Blaming
This has never happened	34.9	31.6	34.9	36.7	39.7	39.7	35.5
One in the past one month	17	9.6	9	8.4	6	6.3	32.5
Twice in the past one month	6.3	5.4	11.3	12.8	5.1	4.8	8.1
3 to 5 times in the past one month	3	10.7	3.3	3.6	18.2	9.3	3
6 to 10 times in the past one month	9.3	20.3	2.7	10.1	2.1	9.6	7.5
11 to 20 times in the past one month	17.6	10.1	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.6	0.9
more than 20 times in the past one month	0.6	2.1	26.3	1.8	1.2	2.1	1.8
not in the past one month but it happened before	10.7	10.1	11.9	25.4	26.9	27.8	10.7

Table 2: Summary of Responses on Consumer-Community Relations

The study found that 34.9%, 31.6%, 34.9%, 36.7%, to 40.3% of the respondents claimed that they had never assaulted others in terms of use of insults, use of threats, violence and blames respectively. This implies that the remaining between 60%-68% of the Khat consumers had insulted others in one way or another. This figure is quite high hence very significant. From these results it can be concluded that Khat consumption has a negative effect on the consumer community relations

Consumer-community relations are also concerned with making the community happy nevertheless in the modern society, digital media has greatly affected both community and consumer relations because it gives people from around the world a place to collaborate and organize information. Bad relations with the community can go viral with the advent of technology leading to a huge threat to the individual endurance in the community.

The study also showed that having a good relationship with the community is vital because without that community in the first place they would not be where they are. Individuals need to comply with the preferences of the community in order to coexist peacefully. All the Key informants and FGD1 and FGD2 corroborated that Khat consumers form a distinct subgroup in the society which is termed as secondary group by sociologist.

In this study, all the five FGDs reported that the main implication of Khat consumption on community relationships includes youth not participating in community work and projects and most of them having no intention to marry. When asked whether Khat consumers indulge in criminal activities, The FGD response was varying. Some reported that jobless Khat consumers need money to satisfy craving of which majority are forced to indulge in criminal activities like fighting, stealing extortion, prostitution and mugging to afford Khat. But some FGD were categorical that not at all but some do.

All the FDGs and all the Key informants interviewed reported that Khat consumption contributes to environmental hazards and untidiness when in groups, at "maskani", which is another name for Fadhiga or Khat dens when not properly disposed leaves and twigs decay if properly disposed unique smell, spit all over, bad breath, some do not bath. The advice they gave is that. Khat has no benefit, with health consequences and has long term negative effects health wise and emotionally. These findings were in agreement with Bururia and Nyaga (2014) who postulated that there were both positive and negative contributions brought about by Khat farming and trade upon the families, schools and churches of which the negatives outweigh the positives in terms of both short- and long-term intangible damages to individuals, family and society. At the same time, they found a strong social, religious and economic attachments to this product.

5. Conclusion

The study concluded that it was expected that because that the consumer will have good relations with the community because its consumption is a social and cultural engagement that is acceptable. It is evident that while the practice is not necessarily sneered upon by the community, Khat consumers are perceived to be failures and the major culprits in poor community relations.

Regardless of whether one is an extrovert or introvert, all people need some form of social interaction and socialization in their life. Some people are naturally inclined to seek opportunities to participate in the broader community, but others need encouragement to seek out socialization. However, in most communities, there are people left

on the margins of society, who do not have access to the same social supports as others and thus social conflict among communities.

Although the end value of consumption derives their perceived value from the entire process of using what is availed in the society and that can satisfy a certain need, the process of retailing is of importance to other aspects of life. People do not just consume, but rather engage in activities that would span their standards up the perceived ladder as social status, which carries the weight of the need of basic needs as they gain the value of using the goods and services available. The study recommends future studies to focus on a comparative study on the social economic implication of Khat consuming families and non-Khat consuming households to determine their consumption habits and their implications on the wellbeing of families

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