

Role of Khat Trade for the Retailers' Household Economy and the Consumer Community Relations

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Abstract: This study investigated the socio-economic implications of Khat consumption on the Khat consumers' community relationship and the role of khat trade on the retailers' household economy. The study applied exploratory and field survey descriptive designs, using a mixed method approach. The target population was consumers of Khat and the Khat retail traders in Kamukunji constituency a suburb of Nairobi Kenya. A sample of 424 respondents was taken using purposive snowball sampling technique. The data were obtained through a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods. The study was guided by both structural functionalism and conflict theories. The study found that Khat consumption was widely accepted across marital status and by all age groups and that Khat had a positive influence in the socialization of the subgroup. Khat consumption was found to be a subculture whose values and norms differed substantially from those of the mainstream society and Khat consumers expressed their ethos and aspirations in well-defined places and time. Khat retail traders highest level of education completed had a positive significant influence to the house hold economy ($p=0.013$). Traders reported Khat trade to be more lucrative hence they were satisfied. It is anticipated that this study will act as a benchmark of studying socio-economic implications of Khat trade through its evidence based informed results as well as informing intervening policies that will contribute to the overall stability and solidarity of the society in regard to family structural inequality and competition over scarce resources

Key Words: Conflict theory, structural functionalism, family relations

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I. INTRODUCTION

Khat (*Catha edulis*) has various names depending on its production area. Among the popular names are: Chat, qad, qaad, cat, Catha, miraa and mairungi. The plant is described as hardy seedless, suitable to be grown in all climate and soil. Historically *Khat* is said to have been used as a treatment to various ailments, like depression, headache, Malaria and relieving symptoms of some seasonal diseases. In addition, for some it has dietary requirements.¹ Until the beginning of 20th Century, *Khat* use was localized in areas where it grew wild. This is because, unlike cereals and pulses it could not be harvested, stored or transported to distant places. It had to be used while fresh. Improved road communication and motor transport means, made it easier to transport *Khat* to distant places, to meet the increased demand for the crop, later on, cultivation was initiated.² *Khat* consumption has drawn legal and legislative interest at international, regional and national levels. At the international level, legislative varies from total ban on consumption and import as in Saudi Arabia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Italy to lack of enactment of law and policy on *Khat* consumption in Canada and South Africa. In Kenya, *Khat* growing, trade and consumption is legally permissible and recently the government of Kenya declared it as a cash crop. In 1990, the World Health Organization (WHO) classified *Catha edulis* plant as a drug of abuse that can produce mild to moderate psychological dependency.³ Although WHO did not consider *Khat* to be seriously addictive, its use has been controlled in some countries like Tanzania, Eritrea and Saudi Arabia and recently banned in the larger Europe. Thus *Khat* consumption has elicited heated debate among researchers, scholars, and policy makers due to the differences in perception and perspective on its health and socio-economic implications. Its status as a source of income, livelihoods and as a legal commodity for international trade and consumption is even more controversial. There are two opposing arguments which arise in the context of *Khat* consumption. Those who support, view *Khat* as a moderate non-toxic product which can be used with non-negative effects on the consumers. They claim that *Khat* enhances togetherness when chewed among peers and brings about a relaxed ambiance. On the other hand, those who oppose *Khat* consumption link it to diminishing sexual desire, poor hygiene and environmental untidiness, family break up and financial constraints.

Peoples attitude towards *Khat* consumption varies considerably from one study to another. While majority indicating no preference and some preference^{3,4}. According to Beckerleg, people's attitude towards *Khat* consumption is never conclusive due to conflicting views. Some researchers hold that the degree and the quantity of consumption matters. Those who portray negative attitude towards heavy *Khat* consumption, cite demurring socio-economic and health effects to the consumer and his family. They claim that the plant is devoid of any significant reason for consumption rather its disadvantages surpass any mentionable advantage. There are both positive and negative contributions brought about by *Khat* farming and trade upon the families, schools and churches within the growing region⁵. Although the negatives outweigh the positives in terms of both short and long term intangible damages to individuals, family and society, there are strong social, religious and economic attachments to this product of which *Khat* creates a contextual foundation for communication⁶. However, the negative implications of *Khat*, which greatly affect the individual user, the institution of marriage, school and church cannot be ignored. Consumer community relationship is the process in which an individual creates and maintains a positive relationship with the society. Individual relations focus on good communication with others through better understanding of how the society can improve in diverse areas. Progressive societies have mutual understanding among each other, less crimes, lower poverty levels, and successful community projects among others. However, many of these societies live in conflicts and systems set are no longer functional straining community relationship. The economic trade off of *Khat* growing, trade and consumption in Kenya is evidenced by the recent government pledge to support the subsector with K.sh. 1.2 billion, declaring the commodity as an important cash crop. The exports to Somalia in 1992 amounted to 201,217kg per month and the value in internal trade and consumption was estimated at 432 million Kenya shillings annually⁷. The value in transport has not been estimated but it is assumed to play a critical role for local transport for growing areas to towns as well in air travel to importing countries, Somalia being the most important destination^{5,6,7}.

II. STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM AND CONFLICT THEORY IN KHAT CONSUMPTION AND TRADE

This study was based on Turners conflict theory, where *Khat consumers* use a lot of time and financial resources in which it can be viewed, by the rest of the family, as a wrong prioritization of finances and a source of deviance and disharmony among the family units. The theory is grounded on the four basic assumptions of: competition over scarce resources; structural inequality; social revolution and war assumption. Conflict theorists hold that the fundamental differences of interests between social groups results in conflict which is common and permanent feature of society⁸. When division of responsibility, income generation, utilization of resources and planning is one sided, the family will inevitably degenerate into conflict and disharmony^{8,9}. They further, posit that conflict theorists examine how family helps perpetuate inequalities, especially the subservience of women and power struggle within the family. The conflict theorists view the family not as a contributor but a reflection of inequality that is found within the larger society^{8,9,10}. The African family has traditionally legalized and perpetuated male dominance and is the basis for transferring power, property and privileges from one generation to the other hence contributing to social injustice.¹⁰ When unequal distribution of scarce resource exists in social group, the greater the tension, violence and conflict leading to violence among two or more parties^{11,12}.

The medium age of the first use of *Khat* in Kenya is ten years and 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^{13,14}.

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^{14,15}. When parents consume socially accepted drugs, they will form subconscious desire among children to start using the drugs and that *Khat* consumption among the youth affects their transition to adulthood negatively^{16,17}. *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.¹⁸ In Somalia, poor hygiene and diseases were other phenomena closely associated with the social environment under which *Khat* is chewed. Since *Khat* consumers share drinks, the chances of contracting communicable diseases such as hepatitis, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases is very high⁴. Other implications of *Khat* consumption noted were 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^{6,7,19}.

III. IMPLICATIONS OF KHAT CONSUMPTION ON CONSUMER-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Consumer-community relations resonate with communicative rationality theory, which speaks of the ability of humans to voice rationally in order to create change and make things happen. The conversation which occurs between a community and an individual when dealing with community relations is a rational

conversation in which both parties can see how they affect the other and therefore need to work together in order to thrive. 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. Since Khat consumers form a distinct subgroup in the society which is termed as secondary group by sociologists, their goals and values and any prescriber to consumer status are cultured to the system of the group who in turn is expected to be a fundamental infirming and upholding the groups' ideals and norms. "associating with Khat consumers leads to distortion of experience as a result of being in an unfamiliar culture" This experience referred to by sociologists as culture shock is an experience a person may have when one moves to a cultural environment which is different from one's own. The consumer ends up erecting barrier with the family due to lack of communication^{6,7}. Community effective interaction has always been viewed as a prerequisite for the formation of harmonious organization atmosphere and high degree of organizational identity. Karl Marx used the concept "commodity fetishism," which suggests that the social relations in a community are obscured by consumer goods that carry other kinds of symbolic value for their users. Émile Durkheim's writings note that identity is connected to consumption, and consumer goods play an important role in traditions and rituals. Max Weber pointed out "conspicuous consumption" has been greatly influential to how sociologists study the display of wealth and status^{10,12}. Thus people seek validation through consumption, by looking to and molding themselves in the image of those immediately around them. Accepted norms and behaviors emanates from listening. Individuals gain insight through social listening which involves monitoring conversations, analyzing feedback, and addressing inquiries and issues. Social listening can be even more powerful when it is used in the process of building and managing a consumer-community relationship. Thus, how people interact, the relationship between individual and group identities how lifestyles are composed, expressed, and slotted into hierarchies through consumer practices and identities, processes of gentrification, in which values, practices, and spaces play a central role in enhancing structural functionalism as well as minimizing conflict within the community. Consumer-community relationship therefore entails allegiance to the structures in everyday activities as well as some kind of support system set up.

IV. THE ROLE OF *KHAT* TRADE FOR THE RETAILERS' HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY

Khat Retail trade is concerned with the sale in small quantities to consumers. This type of trade is facilitated by vendors at the consumer level, however, the growers and wholesalers may also undertake retail distribution to bypass the intermediary retailer so that they earn higher profits^{6,7}. Khat retail trade ensures that the product reach the right places to enhance growth of the economy of the region. By allowing accessibility of Khat to all parts of the consumers the standard of satisfaction of the consumer in that region is met so do the rate of employment. Consumption theories have found in general a significant relationship between income and consumption and thus wages of retailers in particular. Available income influences the structure of consumption, which is crucial for retailers supply adjustments. The economic trade off of *Khat* growing, trade and consumption in Kenya is evidenced by the recent government pledge to support the subsector with Kshs 1.2 billion, declaring the commodity as an important cash crop. Kenya exports to Somalia in 1992 amounted to 201, 217kg per month and the value in internal trade and consumption was estimated at 432 million Kenya shillings annually.⁷ The value in transport has not been estimated but it is assumed to play a critical role for local transport for growing areas to towns as well in air travel to importing countries, Somalia being the most important destination. A number of *Khat* traders engage in sexual unfaithfulness or have mistress across trading towns; however, it is apparently not clear the role that Khat plays in the household economies of the retailers, who are an important link between production and consumers.

V. RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS

Since sociological factors are multifaceted 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. This study targeted the entire *Khat* consumers' households and retail traders in Kamukunji constituency a suburb in Nairobi the capital city of Kenya. The study also involved focus group discussions made up of ward administrators, elders from the area, religious leaders, youths and women representatives. The study selected a subset of 335 main consumers and 70 retailers as respondents from the entire *Khat* consumers and retail traders in the region through snowball sampling. This sample was distributed proportionately into the five wards in Kamukunji. Thus the ward with high population had a bigger portion of the sample. Qualitative data were analyzed through the process of coding where common themes were identified and examined in relation to the context, meaning and circumstances. Similarities and differences about the compiled codes were clustered together to create categories to enhance efficient analysis and help tabulate the process. Conceptual saturation was reached when no new category emerged. Theoretical memos were written throughout the coding process. Credibility of the data was established through persistent observation, peer briefing and number checks. For quantitative data, to ascertain the implication of *Khat* consumption on

consumer community relationship, questions on: the forum in which one chews *Khat*, the relationship between *Khat* consumers and other people in the community, incidences of insults both verbal and physical, use of threats, violence and prevalence of blames were asked. All these factors were assumed to be related to the consumers' consciousness and identity. To analyze the role of *Khat* trade for retailer household economy, questionnaires were distributed to the *Khat* retailers. The retailers were selected using purposive sampling due to lack of the sampling frame then the demographic statistics were obtained as well as the inferential statistics.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To understand the relationship between *Khat* consumers' subgroup and other members in the community, 33.4% of the respondents consumed *Khat* in groups, three to five times in the past one month. *Khat* consumption was found to be a subculture whose values and norms of behavior differ substantially from those of mainstream society with consumers expressing their ethos and aspirations in well-defined places and time. These results also point out that *Khat* consumption isolates the consumer to the primary complex group which is the society. Most respondents didn't prefer going to others homes to chew of which 30.7% have never, 29.6% did once in the past one month and 14.0% only twice. This implies that majority of *Khat* consumers are not comfortable in exposing their chewing habits to the main stream society, they fear being rebuked by members of the society for rapturing values and norms. This leads to community stratification into proletariat (those who succumb to authority) and bourgeoisie (those in authority). 37.0% reported to have never turned away friends as a result of *Khat*, 15.2% have turned away friends once in a month and 20.6% twice a month. 40.3% of the *Khat* consumers have never restricted others from using community facilities as a result of *Khat* consumption while 28.7% did it three to five times in the last one month. Generally, when *Khat* is chewed, people are friendly since they share the same distinct characteristics of place to meet, time to meet and who to socialize with. 68% of the *Khat* consumers reported to have insulted others in one way or another. In this study, the 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. They also 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 was that. *Khat* has no benefit, with health consequences and has long term negative effects health wise and emotionally. At the same time, they reported a strong social, religious and economic attachment to this product. The regression model for consumer community relationship found 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 the consumer and the community), The other explanatory variables namely; level of education, marital status, gender, the length one has been consuming *Khat*, variety of *Khat* and number of hours had negative effects. 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= -0.102). People who worked and earned more (beta = -0.02) and the elderly had better relationship (beta= 0.043) but the educated had poor relationship (beta= -0.023). The overall model was not significant (F=0.451, p=0.920)

61.43 % of the *Khat* retailers interviewed were males while 38.57 % were females. Thus Male *Khat* retail traders had a strong link with *Khat* trade while females were more hesitant to this trade. This observation may be described by the fact that most *Khat* consumption is done at night and due to the religious and society believes that females who work at night are associated with immorality. 38.6 % of the respondents were aged 31-40, partly 11.4% were aged 41-50 and above age 50 were 1.4%. 25.71 % of the *Khat* retail traders interviewed were single while 64.29% were married. The divorced and separated were 8.57% and 1.43% respectively. This implied that *Khat* retail trade was dominated by married persons. 27.1% of the *Khat* retail traders had no children, 50% had between one and three children, 21.4% had between four and six children and partly 1% had above 6 children. This implied that most of the interviewed retail traders (72.8%) had dependents of which the trade sustained them. Cross tabulating gender of the *Khat* retail trader and whether they consume *Khat*. The survey established that 68.4% of the males who sell *Khat* consume as compared to 31.6% of the females who sell and at the same time consume. To understand why *Khat* retailers consume *Khat*, 70% consume for leisure, 20% to reduce stress and others 10% reasons of boredom and to attracting customers. 31.43% of the *Khat* retail traders earned above 20,000 Kenya shillings per month, 25.71% earned between 5001 and 20,000, 21.43% of the respondents earned between 2000 and 5000 and those who earned below 2000 were 21.43%. The highest percent of *Khat* retail traders had their highest level of education being secondary (42.86%) followed by those who had primary education (22.86%). 10% of the traders had no education at all while tertiary and university

graduates accounted for a combined percentage of 7.1%. The reason why most of the traders had some formal education is that retail trade in Kenya is an intensely competitive industry and it is also becoming more technology-focused even though years of formal education or specialized training may not be necessary needed to be a successful retail trader. Good customer relations, relationship with the supplier and the knowledge of the market trends are pre-requisite so that one can remain in business which requires some form of basic education. On the same time, In Kenya the learned (tertiary and university graduates) had more employment openings; this explains their lower numbers in *Khat* retail trade. 5.71 % of the retailers who took part in the survey were student, 20% were not employed, and 55.7% were permanently employed while 12.86% were self-employed.

32.9% of the *Khat* retail traders came from Central Kenya, 18.6% came from Eastern Kenya 12.9% and 11.4% came from Western and Nyanza respectively and 10% come from northern Kenya. The highest number come from Central can be explained by the proximity of central Kenya to Kamukunji and also the highest number of inhabitants of Kamukunji has their origin from Central Kenya and North Eastern Kenya. Eastern had the second largest number of traders since the main source of *Khat* in Kamukunji is the Eastern parts of Kenya of which they understand the source and have connections with the farmers. In all regions the females are poorly represented. The distribution of Work satisfaction with income reported that traders who had a higher income (above 20000) seemed to be generally more satisfied. Overall 78.5% of the *Khat* traders reported to be satisfied as compared to 21.5% who were dissatisfied. The levels of satisfaction were almost the same across board in terms of income.25% of the respondents who were single (marital status)strongly agreed that *Khat* was good for consumption compared to 63.4% of the married. To assess the extent to which earnings from *Khat* trade were more preferable as compared to other forms of trade, 44.3% strongly agreed that *Khat* trade earned them relatively more, 47.1% agreed while a combined 8.6 % did not agree. The preference cut across all the income brackets favoring more those who earned less than 2,000 Kenya shillings per month.23% of the male respondents rated *Khat* trade very high in terms of satisfaction while 37.21% rated high. For the females, 14.81% rated very high as compared to 44.44% who rated high.This was in agreement with the fact that most of the retailers felt satisfied with the trade even though they were willing to venture in other trade. This can be explained by the fact that traders would like to earn more even though they were satisfied.

To understand the level of satisfaction in relation to the level of education attain by the *Khat* retail traders, for *Khat* retail traders who had no education 57.1% strongly agreed that they were satisfied while 42.9% disagreed. For traders with non-formal education 33.3% strongly agreed that they were satisfied compared to 50% who agreed. For primary school leavers, 56.3% strongly agreed while 37.5% agreed. For traders with secondary education 36.7% strongly agreed while 33.3% agreed and 30% disagreed. Cross tabulating marital status and the levels of satisfaction and reports that 41.4% of the respondents strongly agreed that they were satisfied, 37.1% agreed and 21.4% disagreed. The distribution was the same across the different marital status. For married, strongly agreed and agreed had almost the same percentage of response at 40% and 42.2% respectively. 32.9% of the *Khat* retail traders had been in business for over five years, 54.3% were in business for more than one year and only10% were in business for less than six months.This implied that most of the respondents were experienced in the trade and new entrants in the business were merely 10%. This also meant that there was no monopoly in *Khat* trade and thus it was easy to enter as well as to leave. 64.3% of *Khat* retailers were not ready to consider substituting *Khat* trade with other forms of trade of which males accounted for 72.1% compared to females at 27.9%. Males who had other sources of income were 30% compared to 14.29% females. Specifically, 83.3 % of the single *Khat* retail trades were not ready to switch while for married, 53.3% were not ready compared to 46.7% who were ready for a trade switch. These results confirm that *Khat* business is lucrative across marital status.Similar findings have been associated with *Khat* farmers, families with a source of income from *Khat* was not used in gainful ways with families recording average or below average in terms of family welfare in spite of the large amount of *Khat* money that passes through the family hands. There were also sexually transmitted diseases, children being orphaned due to HIV/AIDS, separation and divorce.

In this study, the measures of household economy included earnings from *Khat* trade, trade sustainability, duration of trade and profit earned from *Khat* trade. The predictor variables were gender, age, marital status, and number of children in the household, highest level of education completed, and employment status, monthly income in Kenya Shillings, and the region of origin and whether they did consume *Khat*.

Table 1: Regression model for *Khat* retailer's household economy

| Model | Beat Coefficients | | t | Sig. |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | | |
| (Constant) | 1.338 | .316 | 4.236 | .000 |
| gender | -.042 | .107 | -.394 | .695 |
| age | .025 | .057 | .442 | .660 |
| marital status | -.044 | .088 | -.503 | .617 |
| number of children in the household | .075 | .085 | .881 | .382 |

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------|------|-------|------|
| | Highest level of education completed | .133 | .052 | 2.557 | .013 |
| | employment status | .106 | .057 | 1.862 | .068 |
| | Approximate monthly income in Kenya Shillings | -.067 | .059 | - | .260 |
| | Do you consume Khat? | .109 | .148 | .736 | .465 |
| | Region of origin | -.003 | .023 | -.128 | .898 |
| a. Dependent Variable: Measure of house hold economy | | | | | |

The variables which reported positive effect to retailers' household economy were age, number of children in the household, highest level of education completed, employment status and consumption of *Khat* by the retailer. The predictors with negative effects were gender, marital status, income and region of origin of the trader. The overall model was significant ($p=0.022$, $F=2.388$) as reported in Table 2. This implied that all the independent variables in the model combined had the capability of predicting the level of the retailers' household economy

Table 2: One-way ANOVA for the model predicting *Khat* trade retailers' household economy

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|------|
| | Regression | 3.379 | 9 | .375 | 2.388 | .022 |
| | Residual | 9.433 | 60 | .157 | | |
| | Total | 12.811 | 69 | | | |
| Dependent Variable: Measure of house hold economy | | | | | | |

VII. CONCLUSION

Consumer-community relations are concerned with making the community happy nevertheless in the modern society, digital media has greatly affected both community and consumer relations. 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

There are certain expectations of members of the community regardless to their preferences, ranging from appearance of which one must look nice and add to the aesthetics of the community in which it operates to participation of which an individual is expected to attend to gatherings and local events to show their support for the community. Thus communities want to be proud of the individuals that operate within their jurisdiction. All these influences functionalism within the community. 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. From these results it is imperative that stronger market competition accelerates trade while consumer shopping behavior holds significance contribution in the growth and expansion of *Khat* trade of which retailers have adapted to new technologies and strategies to meet consumer demand. These developments may all account for the healthy increase in *Khat* retail gross sales in recent years, even as retail employment remains largely unchanged.

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