

EAST AFRICAN DISCOURSES ON KHAT & SEX

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ESRC

- The Khat Nexus
- Khat and Social Identity in Uganda

Kenya - fieldwork

Uganda -fieldwork

Ethiopia – literature review

East African Prohibition Discourses

- “khat makes you mad”
- “khat is an addictive drug”
- “Khat makes you poor”

Discourers on Sex

- Academics (medical and social)
- NGOs
- Civil servants, local authorities
- Users and traders





'Romping'?

'Depressed overall sexual potency' (Hakim, 2002)

Ugandan users:

"It gives a man strength, especially a married man."

"It is an appetiser sexually. After chewing you will need a man."

"It makes me sexually weak. Sleepless nights and it disorganises me."

"It makes some people impotent. You don't need a woman. It also causes loss of appetite and loss of sleep."

Infertility & Leaking Semen

An academic view:

‘insignificant’ decreased volume and sperm count in Ethiopian khat users compared with non-khat users. ‘Possible association’ with abnormal semen.

Leaking semen; ‘common’ but not well understood. Associated with ‘white’ khat in Ethiopia.

(Hakim, 2002)

Infertility & Leaking Semen

- Users' concerns:

Men: Few concerns about fertility expressed.

Occasional anxiety that khat causes infertility.

Women link male infertility to non-performance.

'Leaking sperms' commonly observed and linked to particular varieties of khat – usually cheap ones



Khat and Sex Work

- The majority of women engaging in khat chewing are not sex workers.
- Women who retail khat are often also assumed by men to be sexually immoral.
- Khat retailing keeps women out of sex work
- The stigma attached to selling khat is linked to the situation of independent women in East Africa and the place of commercial sex in urban life.

Lamu, Kenya (2002)

‘Miraa as we are all aware has been a big menace and a cause of a number of problems in our Islamic community. Some of these problems are divorce, prostitution, begging and abandonment of families and etc.’

Our district is now experiencing high rates of thefts and prostitution as well as other sexual crimes.’



HIV & other STIs

Ethiopia: 'Recently it has been observed that people with alcohol-use are more likely than the general population to contract HIV. It is therefore possible that the use of khat can promote this process through alcohol consumption.....'
(Woldemichael, 2004) (Gebissa, 2008)

(Ethiopian studies of khat and HIV appear to examine alcohol in combination with khat.)

HIV & STIs

Kenya:

Lamu: 'Socially, it [khat] is one of the major causes of rising crime rates, it is contributing high rises of disease e.g. STDs HIV/AIDS.'

North eastern Province, Kenya:

NGO workers routinely link khat with HIV transmission. Yet, Somali dominated NEP has lowest rates in Kenya

Ugandan concerns about Rape and 'Defilement'

'When people are high (on khat) they do funny things – rape, petty crime. It makes people high like a drug. More than half the people we arrest are into khat and drugs. These people are robbers and housebreakers and gang rapists.'

Senior Policeman

The Issues Summarised

- Leaking semen
- Infertility
- Sexual potency and desire
- HIV and STIs
- Links of sex work – female honour
- Control of women
- Rape and defilement

What does it mean?

A Conclusion

- Users' lack accurate information on sexual health and khat
- The discourses appear to be driven by the ideological stances of academics, NGO staff and local leaders.
- Many academics, NGOs and local community leaders link khat and HIV, even when there is no evidence. (There is a reluctance to discuss alcohol use in some settings.)
- Male discourses on women and khat reinforce male hegemony.