

Socioeconomic, Health, and Missiological Implications of Khat in East Africa

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Abstract

Background: Khat is a stimulant plant widely cultivated in East Africa and Yemen. Millions of people chew khat habitually to satiate their cravings for it. The plant generates a very high income for millions of farmers and East African governments. This study explored the economic, social, and health implications of khat use and its missiological implications.

Method: This study used a qualitative approach to explore the effects of khat consumption in East Africa. Secondary data and interviews were the main sources of data. The study participants comprised Seventh-day Adventist pastors and other church members from Kenya and Ethiopia.

Results: Khat chewing and production have significant socioeconomic and health implications in East African communities. Moreover, khat production and consumption negatively affect the mission of Seventh-day Adventists in the region.

Conclusion: Based on the results, several suggestions are provided to address the dangers of khat cultivation and consumption.

Keywords: Khat, Ethiopia, Kenya, Health Impact, Socioeconomic Impact, Missiological Challenges.

Introduction

Khat (*Catha edulis Forsk*), a seedless, evergreen, small tree, or bushy plant, grows mainly in East Africa and Yemen (Silava et al., 2022). Khat is known by various names in various places. “Khat, kat, chat, quat, catha, tschat, miraa, African salad, African tea, Abyssinian tea, kuses-salahin, and tohai” (Etana, 2017, p. 30) are few examples. Khat’s tender leaves are chewed by five to ten million people in East Africa, the Middle East, Asia, the United States,

Australia, and Europe “to attain a state of euphoria and stimulation” (Wabe, 2011; Etana, 2017, p. 29). Its dried leaves could also be consumed by drinking or smoking (Wabe, 2011).

Although it is difficult to tell this with certainty, many scholars believe that khat originated in Ethiopia. Sir Richard Burton, the 19th Century traveler to Ethiopia, describes Harar, an ancient town in the eastern part of Ethiopia, as the birthplace of Khat (Admassie, 2017). Mihretu et al. (2017)

also attributed the origin of this plant to Ethiopia.

Khat production, distribution, and consumption have increased alarmingly in East Africa and Yemen over the past few decades. Ethiopia is one such case (Admassie 2017). For instance, khat production and consumption were virtually unknown in the Benishangul Gumuz regional state before the 1970s. However, the National Welfare Monitoring Survey in 2011 showed that nearly a fifth of the farmers in the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state in northwestern Ethiopia grew khat (Admassie, 2017). The plant is now produced in almost all regional districts and Ethiopia appears to be the largest khat-producing country in the world.

The 2011 Ethiopian Demographic & Health Survey (EDHS) throws light on the prevalence of khat consumption in the country. . . [The] 2011 EDHS found that in the country as a whole, 27.6% of all men and 11.0% of all women who are 15-49 years old have ever chewed khat. It also revealed that 50.0% of the men and 43.1% of the women who have chewed khat had done so more than six times within the 30 days preceding the survey” (Admassie, 2017, p. 2).

Similar reports have been recorded in Kenya. Mugambi (2016) stated that almost every household owns khat trees in the Khat-growing areas of Kenya. According to a national survey conducted in 2007, “the national rate of

khat usage among males and females was 10% and 1.8%, respectively” in Kenya (Mugambi, 2016, p. 21). The same report indicated that the rate was much higher in specific parts of the country. The Eastern, Northeastern, Coast, and Nairobi provinces have a high prevalence.

This study used a qualitative approach to explore the effects of khat consumption in East Africa. Secondary data and interviews were the main sources of data. The study participants comprised Seventh-day Adventist pastors and other church members from Kenya and Ethiopia who were interviewed in 2018.

This paper presents the socio-economic, health, and missiological implications of khat chewing and khat production in East Africa. In so doing, the author hopes to call the attention of the communities and governments of the region to the damage khat is causing and reconsider khat-related policies. Most importantly, I hope this paper serves as a wake-up call to churches in the region to actively reverse the adverse social and missiological impacts of khat chewing and growing.

Health Effects of Habitual Khat Chewing

Khat leaves contain various chemical compounds that are potentially harmful to the human body when used habitually. Cathinone and cathine are the two major psychoactive compounds found in khat. These compounds have

amphetamine-like effects on the human nervous system (Bedada et al., 2018). Their consumption produces euphoric effects, such as over-excitement, agitation, irritability, emotional instability, anxiety, depression, hallucination, talkativeness, over-activity, and a sense of increased energy and alertness (Teni et al., 2015). Thus, users are driven to it because they feel more concentrated, stress-free, and entertained.

The health effects of khat are well-observed in long-term users and addicts. The scientific literature categorizes the health effects of khat consumption into various sorts. Following Admassie (2017), I treated the effects under three categories: physical, mental, and reproductive health.

Khat Consumption and Physical Health

Several studies have indicated that habitual khat chewing has serious physical health consequences. Admassie (2017) observed among Asossa study participants that long-term heavy khat users suffer from gastroenterological and skin diseases. One participant emphasized the commonness and seriousness of constipation experienced by khat chewers:

Many heavy khat chewers or addicts suffer from constipation, particularly in the morning Such people habitually take an early morning serving of khat that is locally known as udu banna (bottom

opener) to activate their system and be able to relieve themselves. When the problem gets too severe, they use laxatives. (Admassie, 2017, p. 64)

Teni et al. (2015) reported that university students frequently suffer from sleep disturbances, loss of appetite, urine retention, and constipation. Gastrointestinal symptoms such as tooth decay, mouth ulcers, gastritis, hemorrhoids, constipation, liver disease, and intestinal obstruction are common health problems associated with khat chewing (Malasevskaja et al., 2020). Moreover, cardiovascular disorders, such as hypertension, stroke, palpitation, and peripheral vasoconstriction, are commonly observed among habitual khat chewers (Malasevskaja et al., 2020).

Khat Consumption and Mental Health

Habitual khat chewing has harmful mental health consequences similar to its effects on physical health. Primarily, khat use causes psychological dependence. Many young people in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, and Somalia chew khat almost daily to satiate their cravings for it. They start as a simple recreational activity but end up as addicts. The dependency could be so worse that they become “unable to even get out of their beds without chewing some khat” (Admassie, 2017, p. 64). In Eastern Ethiopia, khat’s morning serving is called “Ijja bana (eye-opener).” Some

prefer to forego breakfast to save money for early morning khat.

It takes a few minutes of chewing khat to feel 'high.' This state of intoxication is referred to as *mirqanna* in Ethiopia. Under *mirqanna*, chewers manifest various signs and symptoms, including dilated pupils, involuntary movement of body parts, restlessness, hallucination, confusion, poor recognition, and fear (Mihretu et al., 2017). Mihretu et al., conducted a qualitative study to explore the problematic uses of khat from the users' perspective. Their finding is an example of what khat chewers experience during *mirqanna*:

In a taxi or a bar I am frightened to express what I want because I believe that they know that I chewed khat and they might think that I did something wrong or committed a crime. When people talk to each other, I take it as if they are talking about me. I also excessively fear when my phone rings; I can't talk. I hear the voice in the left side when someone is in fact speaking to me from the right side.

(Mihretu et al., 2017, p. 5)

Like other addictive substances, khat users develop a tolerance for khat. The quantity of khat consumed needs to increase to maintain a 'high' state. Chewers use additional stimulants such as coffee and cigarettes to augment the intoxicating effects of the plant

(Mihretu et al., 2017).

In addition, forgetfulness, moodiness, hallucinations, depression, psychosis, anxiety, stress, and other khat-induced psychotic disorders are also reported among khat users (Admassie, 2017; Malasevskaia et al., 2020).

Harar town in the eastern part of Ethiopia, known for high khat chewing, is believed to have the highest number of people with mental illnesses in Ethiopia (Admassie, 2017). In the words of Admassie, "khat is at least an aggravating factor, if not an outright cause, of mental illness" (p. 65). Two participants of the study shared their views on the relationship between khat use and mental health:

I have neighbors who have developed mental illnesses owing to long-standing khat chewing. These are two young men from my neighborhood. I know them personally and have seen them with my own eyes. They lost their minds due to chronic khat chewing.

Many people have lost their minds. My brother-in-law has psychotic problems from heavy khat chewing.

(interview, November 26, 2018).

Tefera et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative study on khat chewing in persons with severe mental illness in Ethiopia. They reported that a 55-year-old Ethiopian who chewed khat for three consecutive days experienced sleep deprivation and developed an acute psychotic episode. At the peak

of this khat-induced psychosis, he murdered both his wife and daughter. He was later diagnosed with 'khat narcomania.' (Admassie, 2017).

No hard scientific data has established a direct causal relationship between mental illness (and other physical illnesses) and khat chewing. However, Admassie (2017) cautioned that this cannot be grounds for dismissing the linkage.

Stopping khat chewing or reducing the quantity used results in withdrawal signs and symptoms, such as frightful dreams, irritability, a sense of tiredness, disturbed mood, and a strong urge for the stimulant (Mihretu et al., 2017). A participant in the study by Mihretu et al (2017, p. 5-6) shared his experience concerning withdrawal effects as follows:

You see horrific dreams, seeing snakes, hyenas, and other dangerous animals come to you. One day, I bought socks with my khat budget, and then went to bed without chewing. During the night, I was tormented a lot by unpleasant dreams. A strange man pushed me saying I gave you the money for khat; why did you buy socks? He forced me to chew the socks. I (actually) chewed the socks during my dream.

Mugambi (2016) observed that khat chewing could lead to addiction to other substances and drugs. Alcohol, cigarette, hashish, shisha, cannabis, marijuana, cocaine, and other potent habit-forming substances are consumed by some khat chewers (Admassie,

2017; Teni et al., 2015). Chewers often consume alcohol and cigarettes to counteract excessive intoxication. This practice is called *Chabsi* in Ethiopia, which literally means "breaking" the *mirqanna*. In this regard, two participants I interviewed from Kenya noted: "Almost always, young people use soft drinks and/or chewing gums as sweeteners for the khat" (interview, December 14, 2018).

Khat Consumption and Reproductive Health

Studies have shown that habitual khat consumption significantly affects users' reproductive health. Both male and female khat chewers have a reduced desire for marital relationships. It reduces a person's sexual urge and causes erectile dysfunction (Admassie, 2017). Admassie further reported that ex-addicts, wives, and sex workers have similar opinions. A wife of a khat addict in a rehabilitation center at the time of the study told Admassie's team that the incapacitating effect of khat on men's sexual performance is undeniable (Admassie, 2017). Similar effects were observed by a sex worker in Assosa Township (Admassie 2017). The sex workers further asserted that their khat-chewing customers could hardly engage in sex due to their failure to attain an erection.

Studies of rodents and baboons have revealed that pregnant mothers injected with khat extracts experience weight loss, reduced blood flow from the mother to the fetus, low fetal birth

weight, intrauterine (embryonic) growth retardation, and reduced milk production in lactating mothers (Mwenda et al., 2003). Further, reduced semen volume, sperm motility, and sperm count; and increased malformation in sperm cells were registered in male animals fed with khat or injected with khat extracts for a prolonged period of time (Mwenda et al., 2003).

In humans, adverse reproductive health effects include an increased incidence of premature rupture of membranes (Yadate et al., 2020), increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases (Abate et al., 2018), low mean birth weight, and increased rate of anemia among pregnant women who chew khat (Kedir et al., 2013). In men, heavy khat use increases the risk of infertility.

Social Impacts of Habitual Khat Chewing

Chewing khat has perceived social 'benefits' and several social harms. Both aspects are addressed in this subsection.

Perceived Social "Benefits" of Khat Chewing

In the distant past, khat was chewed primarily for social and recreational purposes. This trend is still observed in many parts of East Africa and South Arabia. For instance, in eastern Ethiopia, khat is taken to weddings, mourning places, and other social discussion platforms, such as elders asking for a girl's hand in marriage

(Admassie, 2017). Admassie reiterates that khat chewing is a normal family recreational practice, where almost all family members join the "social activity" at home. Some parents even encourage their children to chew khat by providing them with a khat allowance (Admassie, 2017). In Kenya, "khat remains one of the items of exchange before any marriage negotiations could commence" in Meru County (Mugambi, 2016, p. 6). Similarly, khat chewing is mainly a social undertaking in Yemen (Malasevskiaia et al., 2020).

Khat chewing was practiced only among certain segments of society, such as Muslim religious leaders (Mugambi 2016). This trend has changed drastically over the past two to three decades. Older adults, women, and students have joined the habit (Admassie, 2017). Students take the stimulant, claiming they gain alertness and maximum concentration to study. This belief has facilitated the mushrooming of khat-chewing shops around high schools and universities in many East African countries (Admassie, 2017). However, khat chewing habits among students in East Africa are not unique. For instance, in Saudi Arabia, where khat chewing and growing are banned, khat is chewed by high school and college-level young people in the Jazan Region of the country (Alasayegh et al., 2021).

Social Harms of Khat Chewing

The widespread practice of khat chewing among the youth has negatively impacted teaching and learning. It has contributed to a high dropout rate, school absenteeism, tardiness, and increased school delinquent acts (Admassie, 2017). There are also teachers and administrative staff of educational institutions who chew khat and even send their students to fetch khat for them (Admassie, 2017). This is observed both in Assosa and Harar study areas. Such instructional staff in higher institutions are ineffective in delivering their responsibilities professionally (Admassie, 2017).

Criminal acts, such as domestic violence, rape, theft, and illicit drug abuse, are practiced by many khat addicts. One of my study participants from Kenya stated that “khat chewing leads to laziness, engaging in different drugs, and even crime. Sometimes they [khat addicts] become thieves, robbers, and they are being shot by the police.” He further added:

They become irresponsible. Married people cannot sustain their families. You cannot trust him [a khat addict] with anything, including your Ipad [jokingly]; he may go and sell it, and it will become a mirra [the term for khat in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and a few other East African countries] for three weeks, four weeks. And they lie too much. When they are eating mirra, you will think this is the most in-

telligent person. They build castles in the air, and they have too many ideas. But in the morning, the person sleeps till midday.

(Interviews, December 14, 2018).

A Kenyan lady participant also mentioned that khat indeed impacts the social lives of chewers and their families. She narrated her experience from her brother, who is a khat addict, and explained the challenge his habit brought to the family:

He is now completely lost, and he is like a mad person. He does not know himself; he fights with everyone and is sometimes put in a cell. We are struggling with him. So, this mirra can mislead a person completely from the direction of a good life. . . . I can't even leave him in my house because when he sees a TV or a radio or something he can sell, even cloth, he can just pick, go and sell so that he can get some money to buy the mirra. Even, we are afraid of him nowadays, we can't trust him.

(Interviews, December 14, 2018).

Dissolution of marriages due to khat addiction is also reported in some studies. Admassie (2017) alludes sexual incapacity and carelessness of khat-chewing husbands as the reasons for this. Mugambi's (2016) research in the Meru County of Kenya revealed that “a positive relationship between Khat

consumption and marital instability, poor family relationship, addiction, and low investment” (p. 111).

Economic Impact of Khat

Khat cultivation is one of the significant sources of income in East Africa and Yemen. This is particularly true for Ethiopia and Kenya. In Ethiopia, khat is second only to coffee in terms of generating foreign currency (Abiot & Dereje, 2018; Admassie, 2017). Therefore, farmers have an advantage in growing khat over coffee or other crops.

Furthermore, khat is a source of income for millions of people, including laborers, traders, retailers, and transporters (drivers and truck owners) (Abiot & Dereje, 2018). Literally, millions depend on khat for their livelihood in countries such as Ethiopia, Yemen, and Kenya. According to one participant from Ethiopia, “the wealthiest members of the rural community in the Sidama Zone are those who grow and trade khat” (Interview, November 28, 2018). They could buy trucks and build expensive houses in towns.

Governments also generate significant income from khat production and consumption through taxes and foreign exchange. For instance, the Ethiopian government included in its plan the foreign exchange income from khat to grow from “272.4 million USD in the base year of 2014/15 to 650.8 million USD in 2019/20, which represents an increase of 58.1% over the five years duration of the plan” (Admassie, 2017,

p. 1-2). Another study participant I interviewed stated that “Kenya told me that the government protects khat production and trading” (Interview, December 14, 2018).

However, khat chewing and cultivation have significant long-term economic disadvantages. It is economically draining for both the chewers and their families. Habitual chewers spend a substantial portion of their daily income buying khat and related substances (Gudata et al., 2019; Teni et al., 2015). Moreover, chewers spend a significant portion of their time chewing khat. Studies show that, on average, chewers can spend one to four hours per session of khat chewing (Teni et al., 2015). Since most khat users chew daily, the negative economic impact of khat is very significant in the loss of production.

Further, several factors, such as the ever-growing demand for khat crops and increased marketability, have led sizable farmers to replace coffee and other crops with khat production. This practice undoubtedly adversely affects food security in khat-producing countries. For instance, in Hararghe, Eastern Ethiopia, over 63% of the total land previously occupied by coffee has been converted into khat crops (Abiot & Dereje, 2018). Furthermore, Etana (2018) observes that

Currently, in Yemen, estimates suggest that one-half to two-thirds of their arable land is being used to cultivate khat, largely because

farmers earn five times as much for khat as for other crops, including coffee. Khat is also Ethiopia's fastest growing export. In Ethiopia, over 93,000 hectares of land are devoted to khat production, the second largest cash crop in terms of land area (p. 30).

Biblical Perspectives on Addictive Behaviors

Khat is an addictive substance that is heavily abused in East Africa and elsewhere. Although the Bible does not explicitly address such substances, there are enough principles to guide Christians.

First, the Bible reminds believers that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. *"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?"* (1Cor. 6:19). This verse indicates that we are not our own, we are God's. Our bodies are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, humans should not abuse their bodies by chewing khat. Instead, Christians, especially Seventh-day Adventists, are called to practice good health habits to protect the command center of their body temples - the mind, which is the seat of the Spirit of Christ (Ministerial Association, 2018).

God calls His people to holiness (see Lev. 20:7, 26; 21:8). Moses was instructed to *"speak to the whole congregation of the Israelites and tell them, 'You must be holy because I, the Lord*

your God, am holy" (Lev. 19:2). The New Testament also urges believers to practice holy living (1Thess. 5:23; 2Cor. 7:1; 1Pet. 1:15-16). Moskala (2011) correctly views holiness as a means of wholeness and completeness. He further suggests that "health is one aspect of holiness" (Moskala, 2011, p. 21).

Violating God's principles of health adversely affects spiritual life. That is why Seventh-day Adventist Christians are concerned with wholeness. (Ministerial Association, 2018). Khat, as a stimulating substance, affects the health of the chewers. Therefore, khat chewing contradicts God's principles of health. Addiction to such substances opens the door for Satan to destroy the users. "Satan, the enemy, wants to steal our health, our joy, our peace of mind, and ultimately to destroy us" (Ministerial Association, 2018, p. 313).

Khat chewing has a very similar social, economic, and health impact to alcohol consumption. Several passages in the Bible show the negative impact of alcohol abuse. Noah's story is a common example (see Gen. 9:18-28). He got intoxicated until he could not control himself. He laid down naked (vs. 20, 21), resulting in the cursing of his youngest son, Ham, and his descendants (vs. 24-25). Drunkenness also affected Lot and his descendants (Gen. 19:30-38). Drinking wine, he lost control of himself. He did not know when his daughters lay down with him (vs. 33). The effect of his alcohol drinking led to incest, "and he gave to

the world, not a race of righteous men, but two idolatrous nations, at enmity with God and warring upon His people, until, their cup of iniquity being full, they were appointed to destruction” (White, 1890, p. 222).

Proverbs 31:4-6 reveals that strong drinks cloud the mind and pervert justice. Priests are forbidden from drinking alcohol as they serve God. “Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die” (Lev. 10:9). The same is true for the New Testament. Paul urges Timothy to select bishops and deacons who are “not given to wine” (1 Tim. 3:3, 8).

Missiological Challenges of Khat Chewing and Khat Growing

In addition to the negative social and economic impacts, khat chewing and production pose significant missiological challenges. In East Africa and Yemen, khat chewing used to be primarily associated with the Islamic religion (Douglas & Hersi, 2010). According to Douglas and Hersi (2010), Muslims and Islamic scholars do not have a unified view of khat and its use. Some argue that chewing khat is lawful in Islamic law. They base their argument on the absence of reference to khat in both the Qur’an and the *Sunnah*, the acts and sayings of Prophet Muhammad (Douglas and Hersi, 2010). People who perceive khat chewing as *halal* (lawful practice) claim that the crop is “a tree that God loves” (Gebissa,

2004, p. 3). They believe chewing khat improves personal communication with God (Gebissa, 2004).

Other Muslims consider the khat a “neutral” plant from an Islamic legal perspective. For them, growing and chewing khat is not religiously unlawful unless one abuses it, in which case, it becomes *haram* (unlawful) (Douglas & Hersi, 2010). In contrast, some Muslims and Islamic scholars consider khat chewing unlawful. They argue that anything that clouds the mind is harmful and, therefore, unlawful (Douglas & Hersi, 2010). I believe that the latter are a minority in East Africa and Yemen. Many believe that the habit is religiously permissible.

Cultivating and chewing khat is not limited to Muslims. Many Christians, particularly young people, have become chewers and growers of khat in East Africa (Douglas & Hersi, 2010). The Seventh-day Adventist church is not exempted. Two study participants from Tanzanian said in an interview that some “Adventist church members are found to be growing khat as a cash crop” (interview, December 17, 2018). A Kenyan lady participant indicated that,

in Kenya, people treat khat as a cash crop. Therefore, even some Seventh-day Adventists grow khat as a source of income...The churches in the area could not strongly object to khat growing and selling by members because the churches also benefit from tithes from those

who grow and sell the crop...there was a serious debate in Meru; but they [members who grow and sell khat] refused, and they said it is a cash crop, it is not a drug, so we can use or we can plant and sell it... She further said that the churches do not censure members who grow or use khat.

(interview, December 14, 2018).

Another Kenyan participant confirmed this in an interview: “ Even pastors could not speak against khat among the churches in Meru County for fear that members would stop returning tithes” (interview, December 16, 2018).

I am aware of a similar local church issue regarding khat planting by Adventist members that caused conflicts in Ethiopia. Some members were reprimanded, even censured, for growing khat. However, they challenged the church elders and pastors to uproot their coffee plants since Ellen White’s writings discouraged growing and drinking coffee. Nonetheless, the church stood firm in censuring members who had grown khat.

The Christian Church, particularly Adventism, does not accept khat chewing as an acceptable Christian behavior. Khat poses a severe challenge to evangelism and discipleship in Muslim and Christian countries of East Africa. I have encountered this challenge in practice. A Muslim who joined the church found it very difficult

to quit chewing khat. Consequently, he left the church because of this behavior. A Kenyan participant stated that khat chewing is a serious missiological challenge. In his view,

Khat is destroying this generation. There are segments of the community who are completely lost. They do not know about God. They do not pray; during the day, they sleep; during the night, they are busy with this ‘ministry’ (jokingly), a ministry of khat chewing. They are very busy with khat, they do not mingle with people. They associate only with friends who chew mirrah. . . They have different “working” hours [night hours] - when gospel ministers are in bed. (Interview, December 14, 2018).

Another Kenyan woman participant believes “people want to chew khat continuously and therefore do not give time to the Word of God (G. Addi, personal communication, December 14, 2018). A University student participant in Kenya, also told me that “khat chewers find it very difficult to sit down to study the Bible and attend church services” (interview, December 14, 2018).

How Should the Church Respond to Khat’s Missiological Challenge?

First, one must admit that khat is a significant challenge in East Africa and beyond. The proportion of land allocated to khat plantations is increasing annually (Admassie, 2017).

Khat production and consumption have been legalized in many parts of eastern Africa. Millions of young people, including university students, have become khat addicts. Farmers regard khat as a lucrative crop. Millions of traders, truck owners, and drivers earn their living from the khat trade in East Africa. Many Christians and Muslims consider khat religiously permissible.

The Seventh-day Adventist church in particular, faces a complicated mission challenge. There is no shortcut to overcoming this challenge. At the same time, the Church has moral and missional obligations to address it. Therefore, it is recommended that the church:

1. ‘Wake up’ and speak against khat production and usage. This should include challenging government policies that promote the spread of the crop at the expense of the health of their citizens;
2. Leads and engages society and religious organizations in the fight against khat production and consumption;
3. Uses its health ministries and media outlets to educate church members and the community on the multi-faceted deleterious effects of khat;
4. Engages her development agencies and institutions to create alternative means of earning a living for people who live on khat income. This should include helping church members, who are khat producers. It is essential to give them time to shift to other income sources;
5. Establishes rehabilitation centers for khat addicts. This will create a mission ‘door’ among khat chewers and their family members; and
6. Uses Jesus’ method (White, 1890) to reach out to khat chewers with love. This could be achieved by educating and actively involving the members, particularly the youth, in awareness creation, rehabilitating addicts, and sharing Jesus’ love with them.

Conclusion

Khat is a stimulant plant that grows widely in East Africa and Yemen. Its production and consumption are increasing because of its high marketability and generation of better income than many other crops. Many governments support the production and distribution of the plant to gain tax and foreign exchange benefits. Millions of people in this region and beyond chew khat daily. Beyond its negative long-term economic, social, and health implications, khat poses a significant missiological challenge. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has moral and missional obligations to confront the challenge by taking the lead and inviting other stakeholders to reverse the damaging effects of khat production and chewing.

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