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TOPIC:

The effects of khat growing and use on the quality of education of the male youths in Meru North District: A case study of the male school dropouts in Igembe North Division. //

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Abstract

The study evaluated the effects of Khat growing and use on the quality of education of the male youths in Meru North District. The study focused on the male youths aged 13 –20 years.

Education is considered as a basic right and need; its provision particularly at secondary school level has been experiencing several bottlenecks. According to MOEST 2003:7 “ the highest drop out rate in Kenya is in the Eastern province at 6.1% and the lowest is in Nairobi at 1%. Meru North is one of the Districts that make up Eastern province. The study evaluated if khat use could be the Major cause of school dropout in the district.

The study was guided by three research questions namely;

1. In what ways are the male youths quality of education affected by khat growing?
2. To what extent has khat use contributed to school dropout among the male youths?
3. To what extent is the male school drop out dependent on the family socio-economic status.

Three theories were used to enhance the study namely, the reference group theory, social learning theory and symbolic interaction theory. The study findings revealed that youths interactions as well as their background determined whether they used khat or non.

The hypotheses tested showed that khat growing and use by the male youths affected the quality of their education. The youth's earnings, khat use, participation in non-school activities affected their schoolwork.

The study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The primary data were obtained from the school dropouts and secondary school students aged 13–20 years. Standardised questionnaires were used to obtain the data. The key informants provided adequate data pertinent to this study. The research made observations that enhanced the study. A total of 151 respondents were interviewed of which 75 were school dropouts and 76 secondary school students.

The data was collected from the respondents in Burieruri Boys, Nturuba mixed and Njia boys secondary schools and the major Khat packaging center located at Muringene in Igembe North Division.

Data analysis was done by use of the statistical package for social scientists (SPSS). The study revealed that 30.7% of the school dropouts aged 13–20 years who are of Secondary school going-age are married, 60% single and 9.3% are separated or divorced. The study also established that 98.7 % of the school dropouts in Meru North District had not attained KCSE level of education. The study also established that there is direct proportional relationship between khat use and high school drop out rate among the male youths.

The study established that the respondent's parents were of very low levels of education, which in turn impacted on the respondent's levels of education. The findings revealed that 83.5% of the respondents participated in multiple khat activities; which impacts negatively on their education (students) and other activities (dropouts). Some of the dropouts have recognized the importance of education because 58.9% said that, if they were given a chance they could go back to school. 77.3% felt that young people should not engage in khat related activities.

In future independent studies should be carried out regarding the topic in order to unravel the mystery surrounding khat growing, use and abuse.