

**AN INVESTIGATION ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE GROWING OF
MIRAA HAS INFLUENCED THE EDUCATION OF BOY CHILD IN EMBU
COUNTY, KENYA.**

BY:

MUYAMBIRI DAVID GICHOVI



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ABSTRACT

Miraa (*Catha edulis*) is a flowering shrub, native to the region extending from Eastern to Southern Africa, as well the Arabian Peninsula. Miraa farming has been shown to have a negative effect on both the health and education of individuals who use or cultivate it. Some schools in Embu County have low boys to girls ratio. This is contrary to the expectation that the large sums of money earned from miraa trade might be used in paying school fees and improvement of school attendance and retention. The combined influence of labour provision in Khat farms, trade and chewing on secondary school boys' education has not been well documented. Thus, the purpose of this research was to establish the extent to which Miraa farming in Embu East district has affected the education of the boy child. This was appropriate in order to establish the influence of miraa farming on low retention rates of boys in schools. The study employed a descriptive research design using both quantitative and qualitative data. The population of the study was drawn from Embu East District within Embu County. The study employs descriptive survey research design. Stratified random sampling was used to select the sample. The sample size was calculated at 20% of each category to identify the respondents for each category. The study employed questionnaires and interview schedule as instruments for data collection. Data analysis was done using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 17. The study established that miraa growing impacts negatively on the education of boys since most of them drop out of school to engage in the business. The study established that parents who grow and chew miraa motivate their boys to remain in school. The study established that peer pressure, lack of guidance and counseling and ready availability of miraa in Embu East district are the main driving forces behind consumption of miraa among boys. Finally, the study established that young boys are involved in the growth and sale of miraa. Based on the overall finding of the study, it was concluded that boys from miraa growing families are less likely to complete their studies and that educating children is not a priority among families growing miraa. Most boys prefer working for money than being in school and 50% of the parents who grow miraa pay school fees grudgingly for their sons. It was also concluded that most boys are likely to drop out of school while in form one, form two, and form three and not at form four. However, the study also concluded that most parents prefer their children going to school rather than helping them on miraa farms and that parents who work on miraa farms do not neglect their boy child's education. Based on the results it was also concluded that peer pressure, availability of miraa and lack of guidance and counselling are the main factors that drive boys to consume miraa in Embu East district. The study therefore recommended that parents who grow miraa in Embu County should be sensitized on the value of boy child education. Moreover, strict rules should be enacted to discourage employment/involvement of young boys in miraa trade in Embu County. In addition, the study recommended that the sale of miraa to young boys should be prohibited in Embu County. Finally the study recommended that guidance and counselling department in schools should be empowered or improved to offer counselling services to boys in Embu County in order to curb the negative effect of miraa growing and trade on young boys. The study also recommended that there is need for further study to be undertaken on factors which influence students to engage in miraa cultivation and trade and on psychological impacts of miraa chewing in Embu County.