

in college. However, by a study done in Saudi Arabia Khat chewers were found to have had poorer academic performance compared to nonchewers.^[12] Another study done on students of Jimma University in 2002 also reported that nonchewers had statistically significant higher cumulative grade point average compared to Khat chewers.^[26]

In this study, large proportions of the students reported that they used alcohol (40.8%) and cigarette (40.0%) with and/or after Khat chewing. Alcohol is commonly employed as a means to help decrease or eliminate the exciting/stimulating effects of Khat chewing. Simultaneous use of cigarette and other psychoactive substances with Khat has also been reported by other studies.^[20,24,25] This shows that Khat chewing has a far reaching implication in regard to leading to the use of other addictive substances which could result in a multiple addiction with dangerous consequences.

Various proportions of the chewers recounted they experienced problems such as loss of sleep, loss of appetite, constipation, and loss of weight as the main health problems. Negative consequences of Khat chewing, as well as its perceived effects, on health have been reported by different reports.^[3,24,27]

Most of the chewers reported that they spent up to 10 ETB (1.13 USD) per session for Khat (54.62%) and for related substances (64.61%). When considered in combination with the frequency of Khat chewing among the students involved in the habit, which showed that the majority of the chewers consume it more than once a week, financial impact of the habit is evident. Considerable spending for Khat has also been shown by a study on students of eastern Ethiopian high schools.^[18]

More than half of the chewers mentioned they to spent 1–4 h per session on the habit. This is a source of concern as spending this much time for many days in a week, has a negative impact in the time management of students in pursuing their studies as too much time would be wasted on the habit.

In the present study, 21.5% of the chewers reported that their families knew of their habits and among them a very high proportion of the chewers recalled negative reactions. Furthermore, in another social relation aspect of the practice, nearly two-thirds of the chewers recounted the practice had negative effects on their relation with their families. This evidences the social ills of the habit as it was affecting the interaction between chewers and families. This can be of negative consequences as the habit might follow the students far in to their life after college.

Strength and limitations of the study

The strength of the study lies in its coverage of wider aspects of Khat chewing through assessing prevalence, associated reasons, and impacts which makes it comprehensive. In regard to its limitations, the study was done in one institution only

which may limit its generalizability to similar institutions. In addition, information on health effects of Khat chewing could have been associated also to other factors other than Khat chewing.

Future research prospect

Conducting studies of a follow-up nature could help to assess the pattern, health, and socioeconomic consequences of Khat chewing better.

Conclusion

In this study, the prevalence of Khat chewing was fairly high with statistically significant associations with sex, religion, and monthly income. Most of the chewers started the habit in college and the majority among them uses other substances together with Khat. They have also reported to spending a significant amount of money and time on Khat chewing and faced health problems they attributed to their habit. In the effort to control the increasing use of Khat among students the college should work toward creating awareness on the negative consequences of the practice on health, studies, and financial situation to students. In addition, showing other methods of studying and academic activities which help students to become more successful without turning to the Khat chewing and associated habits is crucial.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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