



library@chuka.ac.ke; www.chuka.ac.ke

**RATIONALE BEHIND ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH'S
TOLERATION OF MIRAA PRODUCTION AND
CONSUMPTION IN ISEMBE DEANERY, MERU DIOCESE,
KENYA.**

Iruki M.M.^{1*}, Nkonge D. K.¹ and Orina H.¹

¹*Department of Humanities, Chuka University, Kenya*

**moseswithalii@gmail.com; dnkonge@chuka.ac.ke;
horina@chuka.ac.ke*

Citation:

Iruki M. M., Nkonge D. K. and Orina H. (2023). Rationale Behind Roman Catholic Church's Toleration of Miraa Production and Consumption in Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese, Kenya. In: Isutsa, D. K. (Ed.). *Proceedings of the Chuka University 9th Annual International Research Conference held in Chuka University, Chuka, Kenya from 24th to 25th November, 2022. 81-87 pp.*

ABSTRACT

Drugs are a global phenomenon that has spread to all corners of the globe. The; Roman Catholic Church has been a leading voice in opposing the use of pharmaceuticals outside of medical necessity in every society it has encountered. Roman Catholic Church has taken a hard-line approach against any form of drugs legalization, including recreational drugs. On the contrary Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, a contentious drug that many consider a drug, Khat (Miraa) production is tolerated. This; study is on the rationale behind Roman Catholic Church's toleration in Khat production and consumption, which is extensively grown in Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese. Due; to Roman Catholic Church rules that prohibit the use of all narcotics except for therapeutic purposes and the variety of contradicting incidents seen by Khat farmers and merchants who are also members of the churches in the study area, this study was inspired. The study employed a descriptive research design. Data; was obtained from questionnaires, oral interviews, focus group discussion, participant observation and primary and secondary sources to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. The; discussion starts with the various reasons for the Roman Catholic Church's toleration of Miraa. Structural-functionalism was used to establish the rationale behind the Roman Catholic Church's toleration in Miraa production and consumption of the study area. The findings of the study were that the economic, social, cultural, religious, and educational benefits of Miraa in Igembe Deanery are all the reasons for the Roman Catholic Church's in Igembe Deanery to tolerate Miraa farming, trade and consumption in the study area. This study has contributed to the church, particularly the African church, and to academicians studying religion and culture in higher education.

Keywords: Rationale, Roman Catholic Church; Toleration, Miraa, Production, Consumption, Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese.

INTRODUCTION

Drugs are phenomena that are invading all societies in the world. The fight against drug and alcohol misuse is being waged by many of international organizations and institutions. There are, several of these organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), INTERPOL, the UNODC, and the World Federation against Drugs (WFAD) (Nyamongo, 2014). Various churches are also engaged with multiple International Organizations, and Government Agencies in combating drugs and substance abuse and they have gone to the extent of developing multiple policies that are against drug use except on medical grounds only (Gorsuch, 1995). It is a significant violation, according to the RCC, to use medications other than for medical purposes (Pontifical Council for Pastoral Care, 2002) On contrary, Roman Catholic Church which is at the forefront in combating drug use except on therapeutic grounds tolerates Khat production and consumption in Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese, which is a drug as affirmed by NACADA (2006&2007). Therefore, this study sought to establish the rationale behind the Roman Catholic Church's tolerating Miraa farming trade and consumption in Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese.

Prominent religious leaders outside its home region have expressed their disapproval. Pentecostal; denominations in Kenya are among the most vocal critics of Miraa, and they're not the only ones (Carrier, 2006). Adherence; to total abstention from such substances by Pentecostal preachers and members of comparable denominations is required for salvation. At the same time, other denominations have a more relaxed stance concerning Miraa (Carrier,2006). Despite Pentecostal churches' preaching abstinence on Miraa production and use, things are different in Igembe where similar denominations strongly support Miraa production and consumption. They mainly do so by quoting the Gospel of Matthew 15:11-17, saying that it is what you think or say that makes you unclean and not what you chew or eat (Carrier, 2006). It was thus necessary to establish in this study the rationale behind the Roman Catholic Church's toleration of Miraa farming and use in Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese since the Roman Catholic Church, in general, condemns drugs' use except on therapeutic grounds, yet the same Church tolerates Miraa production and consumption in Igembe Deanery in Meru Diocese is an issue of concern.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are various factors that led Churches, especially in Meru region to tolerate the production and use of Miraa. They include:

Socio-Cultural Significance of Miraa

Culture is a way of life for individuals, and it influences how people live in different groups. The people of Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese Catholic Church, hold Khat in high regard. While it is a contentious chemical that many people consider being a narcotic (NACADA, 2008 & 2004), it is tolerated by some churches and elements of the RCC. For example, Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese, is the most important Khat producing Deanery in Meru Catholic Diocese, and Christians there are quite proud of the product (Carrier, 2005). Christians in Igembe Deanery hold Miraa in high regard in their traditions. They underline Miraa's economic importance as well as its significance in Igembe traditions (Michella, 2005). However, while Carrier (2005) and Michella (2005) state that Miraa is ingrained in the people of Igembe's customs and culture, they do not explain the explanation for RCC's tolerance of Miraa production, which this study intended to determine.

Miraa is deeply associated with their forefathers, and it is thought that only the seniors consume it. It is, nevertheless, assimilated into the 'young mentality,' where it is seen 'poa' ('cool') (Carrier, 2005). The teenagers' Miraa validation as 'poa' promotes its worth as an item for identity by the youth, rather than leading to rejection owing to its adverse effects. Carrier (2005) stated that "Miraa is so culturally treasured and it forms part of the Igembe identity," but he did not state whether the RCC tolerates Miraa production and consumption because of its cultural worth and identity of the people of Igembe Deanery. Michella (2005) noted that a girl who wanted to marry would gift her father Miraa twigs in exchange for his acceptance of her desire. A suitor who is paying a first visit to his future in-laws is supposed to bring a bundle of Miraa as a present. Similarly, an offer of Miraa twigs is frequently made prior to the reconciliation process. The offended party's acceptance of Miraa twigs is a promising sign that the

healing process will continue (NCST, 1996). This is significant for this study because it emphasized how Miraa is socially and culturally accepted in Igembe Deanery, allowing RCC to tolerate Miraa production and consumption, which this study aims to investigate.

Economic Significance of Miraa

Miraa is grown extensively by the people of Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese. The monetary value of Miraa provided good economic grounds for the people of Igembe to support it, but there was more to their approval than that: Miraa was absorbed into their cultural heritage in Igembe (Kiunga, 2017). Miraa is highly regarded in the Meru Diocese's Igembe Deanery. This is due to Miraa's high economic worth, particularly Mbaine Miraa, also known as 'Colombo,' which is highly valued because it originates from such a culturally significant tree. Farmers with Mbaine plantings are regarded lucky because the returns from their Miraa are substantially higher than those from younger trees (Carrier, 2006). Miraa is known as the green Gold of Igembe by the inhabitants of Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese. The trade has provided numerous jobs, not only for residents of the growing areas, but also for those who have relocated to the area because of the business's potential. By extension, trade generates revenue for the country (Goldsmith, 1998).

The money earned from the Miraa trade is used to build schools, churches, permanent housing, and other projects. As a result, this commerce is a significant economic contributor to the region's development (Goldsmith, 1998). Bururia and Nyaga (2014) argue that Miraa trading benefits Igembe society. The payment covers school fees, food, and other necessities for the family. As a result, Miraa farming enhances the family's living standard based on average monthly returns when compared to other crops cultivated in the area; Miraa generates more money than maize, beans, mangoes, pawpaw, and avocados (Bururia and Nyaga, 2014). However, Carrier (2006), Goldsmith (1998) and Bururia and Nyaga (2014) tell us about various economic reasons of Miraa farming and trade in Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese that makes Miraa to be approved in Igembe society but they do not tell us the rationale behind RCC toleration of Miraa production and consumption in Igembe Deanery.

Religious Significance of Miraa

Miraa farming and trade has led to the growth of the religious sector in Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese. Kiunga (2017) noted that some churches in Igembe region grew their own Miraa or had Miraa in their compounds. Through the capital raised from Miraa, Churches have been able to put up permanent structures, maintain their spiritual leaders such as ministers, pastors, bishops and other members of the clergy as well as the acquisition of worship instruments as the churches seems to be financially stable. However, Kiunga (2017) tells us that Miraa farming and trade has led to the grow of religious sector but he does not tell us why Roman Catholic Church tolerates Miraa production and consumption which this study established.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive research design. The core concept underlying descriptive research is to collect data that depicts actual phenomena by asking people about their views, attitudes, and values (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). According to Kathuri (2000), the descriptive research design is employed when the topic is clearly defined and the researcher has a specific issue to describe. The Descriptive research design was used in this study as it enabled the researcher to collect, describe, record, analyze, report and present the rationale behind the Roman Catholic Church toleration of Miraa farming, trade and consumption in Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese. In all this, there was no manipulation of the variables and the study reported the exact responses from the respondent's consent.

Data Analysis Procedures and Presentation

According to the stated aims and study questions, the acquired data was processed, sorted, structured, and summarized. To organize, summarize, evaluate, and present data or characterize the characteristics of the sample population, descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages, and mean were utilized. The statistical package for social sciences [SPSS] version 27.0 for Windows. The researcher presented an introductory letter to the respondent and with the consent of the respondent, the interview was conducted. Research permit was obtained from the National Council for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) The researcher booked appointments with the respondent to conduct the

interview before the discussion. The purpose of the discussion was explained to the interviewee who participated in the interviews willfully and where the interviewee sought to remain anonymous, the researcher respected the will of the respondent guided by Israel & Hay (2006).

Findings of the Study

This chapter presents discussion on why the Roman Catholic Church tolerates Miraa production and consumption in Igembe Deanery in Meru Diocese, yet, the policies of the general Catholic Church are against the use of any kind of drugs except on therapeutic grounds. The conversation is based on oral data received during the field research from respondents in Igembe Deanery. The structural functionalism theory, which views society as a complex system whose components work together to produce solidarity and stability, was utilized as the study instrument. This was done in the belief that it enabled the researcher to understand the main economic, social, education and religious reasons for the church's support of Miraa production and consumption in the study area. Respondents in this study were asked to give reasons for the Roman Catholic Church's tolerance of Miraa production and consumption in Igembe deanery, yet, the same Church is against all form's drugs except on therapeutic grounds. These reasons are discussed in detail in the following subheadings.

Economic Reasons

This research established that Miraa is the backbone of the people's economy in Igembe. The production and consumption of Miraa in Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese have been tolerated by the Church due to the enormous economic benefits it provides to the local people (Meeme, 2021, OI). All the informants affirmed that Miraa farming and trade is the main economic activity of Igembe region. For instance, all the priests interviewed, 10 (100%) confirmed that Miraa is the primary source of livelihood for the people of Igembe. They acknowledged that Miraa has the highest returns as compared to all other types of crops which have ever been grown in the region. All the priests, 10 (100%) and the catechists 8 (100%), who are the key religious leaders in Igembe Deanery affirmed that Miraa is the cash crop of Igembe region, just like tea, coffee, sisal, tobacco, and others are in other parts of Kenya. They elucidated that Miraa has acquired a new status in Igembe Deanery as 'Green Gold' of the people of Igembe region where Igembe Deanery falls. The researcher noted that all the economic developments in Igembe area traced their success and growth from Miraa farming and trade. Thus, the main reason as to why the Roman Catholic Church in Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese has continued to tolerate this trend of Miraa farming and trade among its members and by extension the wider Miraa production and business is due to its huge economic benefits. The Church has therefore openly encouraged her followers to be involved in the Miraa activities (Muturia, 2021, OI) due to the following economic reasons raised by from the field research:

Miraa is the Main Cash Crop in Igembe Deanery

Miraa is the main source of income for the inhabitants of Igembe Deanery in Meru Diocese, according to all respondents (priests, catechists, elders, traders, and church members). This makes it the most treasured crop by the members of the Roman Catholic Church in Igembe Deanery, generating income which they, in turn, use for the purposes of the Church's development as well as for their own survival. During the field interview by the researcher, it was established that indeed this assertion was valid since the researcher, in his visits to the area, observed that most of the farms in the Igembe region, including those of the Churches had Miraa.

As the main cash crop in Igembe region, Miraa farming, trade and consumption are tolerated by the Roman Catholic Church in Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese, because it is the primary source of livelihood for the people (Mwiti, 2021, OI). It provides employment opportunities to the people of Igembe Deanery (Muturia, 2021, OI). Most people in Igembe have Miraa farms, and there are many vehicles for transporting Miraa produce to various markets throughout the country and business stalls of Miraa in Igembe region. This study established that Miraa is the primary source of income for the people of Igembe, which has led to tremendous development and growth in the religious, economic and education sectors as well as in various aspects of human life. Therefore, this study, established that the Roman Catholic Church in Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese tolerates Miraa farming, trade and consumption because it is the primary source of income for the people of Igembe which has the highest income.

This study shows that all of the priests, 10(100%) affirmed that Miraa is good as it is the source of livelihood of the people of Igembe. In addition, the entire priest acknowledged that Miraa was good as it improved the living standards of the people in Igembe region. Further findings show that the most of the catechists 7(70%) said that Miraa is vital for cultural values. They also opined that Miraa is essential for religious significance. Just as the priests had affirmed, all the catechists 8(100%), said that Miraa is crucial because it is the source of livelihood. Also it is vital for its economic significance to the people and the church in Igembe region.

Supporting Evangelization

Data from various respondents showed that the Roman Catholic Church tolerates the production, trade and consumption of Miraa since it is used by the church to help in the spread the gospel. This could also explain to why most of the Roman Catholic Churches in Igembe region have Miraa farms in their compounds. The money got from the sale of Miraa once it is given by Christians as tithes and offerings helps the Church in evangelization (Kananu, 2021, OI).

The church members also reported that Miraa could be sold to help in purchasing church instruments. This was seen to be very crucial to the members since it took away the burden of contributing money to buy the items.

The catechists 6(80%) raised an issue where the Church in Igembe Deanery has suffered so much financially due to a fall in Miraa sales in recent years since it was banned in various countries. Miraa traders have faced the challenge of lack of markets which has affected the church's ministry because there is decrease in tithes and offerings as the churches mainly rely on contributions from Miraa income. The catechists, 7(90%) also said that the challenges facing Miraa production has led to a decline in members' support to the church. This has in turn affected the spread of the gospel which is supported by the income from Miraa.

On Miraa traders most of the respondents 8(80%) said that their churches owned Miraa plantations while the least group 2(20%) said that their churches did not own a Miraa plantation. This study further shows that most of the elders who accounted for 8(80%) owned Miraa plantations while a few of them 2(20%) did not own a Miraa plantation. I as the researcher agreed 100% that churches owned a Miraa plantation. The researcher noted that the Roman Catholic Church in Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese tolerated Miraa farming, trade and consumption has various churches in the region have Miraa farms, which they sold and got money to enhance evangelisation through Igembe Deanery.

Construction of the Churches

It was observed that the church normally conducts fundraising to build infrastructures like the church buildings, priests' houses and even residential rented apartments as part of the income needed by the Roman Catholic Church in Igembe Deanery. Because of this, the church has always accepted Miraa in its funds-drive to raise money for undertaking such projects. Miraa could always be brought by church members and/or obtained from the church's Miraa farm.

In this study, most of the catechists 4(44.4%) responded by saying that Miraa fund was used in buying of more plots, while a few of them 2(22.2%) said that Miraa was used improving the living standards of the people in the society. In addition, another group that accounted for 3(33.3%) said that Miraa income was used in investing in other income generating projects that supported the construction of the various churches in the region.

The findings of this study showed that most of the elders 8 (80%), said that Miraa farming and trading has enhanced the expansion of church, while the minority group 2(20%) responded by saying that expansion of the church is not as a result of Miraa farming and trading. Moreover, the study also showed that most of the priests 8(81.8%) said that Miraa farming and trading has enhanced expansion of the church. However, a few of the priest 2(18.2%) said that Miraa consumption and production does not enhance expansion of the church.

Building Schools and Hospitals

Since the colonial times, the Roman Catholic Church has been at the forefront in construction of schools and hospitals to enhance the provision of social services to the people. The various respondents reported that Miraa is encouraged by the Roman Catholic Church in Igembe Deanery in Meru Diocese since the money obtained from its sales, is used to help in the construction of educational and health centers. The church has constructed many primary and secondary schools as well as various health mission hospitals through funds obtained from Miraa production in the deanery.

This study shows that most of the priests, 7(72.2%) said that Miraa enhances expansion of church economically, but a few of the priests 1(9.1%) said that Miraa enhances expansion of the church in other ways rather than economically and socially. However, some of them who accounted for 2(18.2%), said that Miraa enhanced expansion of church socially.

This study showed that most of the priests 8(81.8%) agreed that the church grows Miraa on its own while just a few number of them 2(18.2%) of them said that the church does not grow Miraa on its own.

This study shows that most of the church members 253(84.2%) strongly agreed that the church had put up permanent structures from Miraa income while a few of them 1(0.4%) just agreed on that. However, 1(0.4%) just disagreed and said that the church had not put up permanent structures from Miraa income. It is evident from these findings that most of the church buildings in Igembe Deanery have been constructed using the proceeds from Miraa. It is because of this that the church has supported Miraa production and trade among its members.

Social Reasons

This section discusses the major social reason that has influenced the Roman Catholic Church to tolerate the production and consumption of Miraa in Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese. The social reasons raised from the field were: reconciliation, marriage negotiations, social interaction, reference to the Ameru ancestors as well as closing of paths leading to a persons' homestead or farm. The majority of the respondents 289 (95.4%) raised social factors as one of the reasons as to why Miraa is tolerated by the church in Igembe Deanery. The social reason that has made Roman Catholic Church to tolerate Miraa production and consumption are discussed below.

Reconciliation

The data collected demonstrate that, Miraa is used by the residents of Igembe Deanery to reconcile people and solve emanating disputes within the region. The various respondents in this study reported that in the event that there was a conflict between two or more parties in the church, the offending party could bring Miraa to the offended party as a truce and a sign of peace. This means that Miraa is very crucial in solving disputes and promoting peace in the community as well among the adherents of the Roman Catholic Church in Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese, hence the reason for its toleration by the church. For instance, most of Miraa farmers, 8(80%) said that they use Miraa to heal rifts with their friends while the minority group that accounted for 20% said that they do not use Miraa to heal rifts with their friends. Most of the priests 8(81.8%) said that the church solves disputes arising from Miraa farming and trade while a few of the priests 2(18.2%) said that churches do not solve conflicts arising from Miraa farming and trade. It is thus, evident that in Igembe region, Miraa plays a significant role in reconciliation as well as in the promotion of peace.

Marriage Negotiations

Among the Igembe people, marriage institution is essential just like in other African communities. Based on the African-Christian belief, it was reported that it was important for every Igembe man and woman to marry. This was marked by several preparations and ceremonies including negotiations. It was established that most of the members of the Catholic Church in Igembe Deanery, as other members of the community used Miraa as a form of negotiations when seeking a girls' hand in marriage.

This study finding showed that most of the priests 9(90.9%), said that use of Miraa in marriage negotiations, enabled the rich and the poor to get an opportunity to get married. Thus, marriage was the rhythm of life and the institution which was instituted by God. Therefore, Miraa (Ncolo) being used in marriage negotiations' stricked an equilibrium between the rich and the poor as all had equal

opportunities to get married. This is because; if you gave the father of the girl Miraa (Ncolo) you were allowed by her father to marry her even if you had nothing else. According to 10(100%) of the priests, the use of Miraa in marriage negotiations brought people together.

Social Interaction

Miraa is essential in bringing the Igembe people together. During the observation schedule by the researcher, it was established most of residents of the study area, usually interacted together while chewing Miraa at various Miraa joints in the deanery. Most of these people informed the researcher that just like any social activity, they chew Miraa together as form of their socialization and this helps to bring them together. While they do this, they noted that they normally discussed the social, economic and religious affairs of Igembe Deanery as Christians chew Miraa at their will.

This study shows that most of the priests 6(60%) said that use of Miraa promotes social interaction because as people chew Miraa in groups, it brought them together while the minority 4(40%) said that as people chew Miraa they exchange ideas hence promoting social interaction.

Religious Reasons

During the field interviews, the researcher established that, Igembe people of the Roman Catholic Church used Miraa to remember or refer to their ancestors. For example, Muturia (2021, OI) one of the respondents, reported that, *Mbaine* was used to refer to the first Ameru ancestors, who planted Miraa in his homestead. It was also established that Mbaine is considered among the respondents as the best Miraa in the Igembe culture. This is because Mbaine Miraa is used for reverence to the Igembe ancestors that is Mbaine and Ntagi.

This study shows that most of the church members 253(83%) strongly agreed that the church tolerates use of Miraa because of the link between the ancestors and Miraa while a few of them 1(0.4) disagreed on that, a clear indication that Miraa used by the people of Igembe for religious reasons, symbolizing link to ancestor hood.

Other religious reasons raised mainly focused on the church members calling to support the church ministry. These included:

Offering Church Service through Offerings and Tithes

Most of the respondents reported that the church tolerates the production, trade and consumption of Miraa in Igembe Deanery, since Miraa is given by Christians to the church as offerings and tithes. For instance, 7(88.9%) of the catechists said that church members gave tithes and offerings from Miraa income while only 1(11.1%) catechist said that church members did not give tithes and offerings from Miraa income. 9(90.9%) priests aver that most of what the Church gets from Christians as tithes and offerings comes from Miraa sales. As such, the priests cannot condemn Miraa. Only 1(9.1%) said that he does not allow tithes and offerings from Miraa proceeds, something that was doubtful as the people of Igembe cannot allow any priest who is against Miraa to serve them as affirmed by Muturia (2021, OI). Further, the findings indicate that 8(80%) of the elders who formed the majority gave tithes to the church from Miraa income while 2(20%) of the elder respondents did not give tithes from the Miraa income to the church. 8 (80%) of the Miraa farmers respondents affirmed that they gave tithes and offerings to the church from Miraa income while 2(20%) of them gave a contrary view. 254(99.6%) Christians said that they get the offerings and tithes which they give to the Church from Miraa income. This is a clear indication the Church in Igembe Deanery, gets its income from Miraa, and this explains why this Church has tolerated Miraa activities.

Supporting the Priesthood

Supporting of priesthood is one of the key responsibilities of a Roman Catholic Christians (Meeme, 2021, OI). The most of the Roman Catholic priests interviewed claimed that portion of the Deanery's maintenance costs, are covered by Miraa farming and trade. Most of the times members sold their Miraa and then gave the money obtained to the priests to get their basic upkeep items. To a greater extent, some of them got their vehicles purchased to them by the church members through the sales of Miraa (Kananu, 2021, OI). A big number of priests 8(80%) said that Miraa proceeds are used for supporting church projects while the rest, 2(20%) said that Miraa proceeds were used in building the church, maintaining the priests, facilitating the spread of the gospel and buying vehicles for the priests. 7(70%) Miraa farmers said that Miraa proceeds are used to support church projects and building churches.

However, a few of them 3(30%) said that the proceeds are used in maintaining the priests. This indicates that income from Miraa plays a vital role when it comes to supporting the work of the priests. This explains why the Church in this region supports Miraa activities.

Supporting Seminars, Crusades and Youth Seminars

The data collected demonstrated that, the Roman Catholic Church's tolerated the use of Miraa in the Deanery, since the crop could be sold and the money obtained could be used to finance church programs like holding seminars, crusades and youth seminars.

The findings show that most of the catechists 7(88.9%) said that income from Miraa is used for buying music instrument as well as financing youth, Sunday School and women activities.

9(90.9%) priest agreed the income from Miraa is used for supporting church activities such as conferences, seminars and others. This explains why the Church in Igembe Deanery continues to tolerate Miraa production and trade.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussions, it can be concluded that Miraa is the main source of income of the people of Igembe, in Meru County. This makes it the most available, useful and reliable crop that is used by the Catholic Church to generates income, which is used for the purposes of mission work and the general church developments. It is for this reason that the Roman Catholic Church in Igembe Deanery tolerates Miraa production, trade and consumption. As the main cash crop in Igembe region Miraa forms the economic bases of the inhabitants of this area, and as a result it cannot be taken lightly by persons, institutions or organizations, and the Church included.

Therefore, the researcher can conclude that, Miraa production and consumption in Igembe Deanery, Meru Diocese is due to its enormous economic and social as well as religious benefits that it provides to the local people. This explains the reasons why the Roman Catholic Church in Igembe Deanery has continued to tolerate this trend among its members and by extension the wider population of Meru Diocese.

REFERENCES

- Bururia, D. N and Nyagah, J.N. (2014). *Social-Economic, Religious and Educational Significance of Miraa (Cartha Edulis): A Case of Meru North Region, Kenya Journal of Education Policy and entrepreneurial research (JEPER)*. Vol 1, NO 2 October 2014, Pp 106-116.
- Carrier, N. (2006). *Variety and Manipulation of Kenyan Khat's Value*. St. Antony's College Oxford.
- Carrier, N. (2005). *The Cultural Importance of Miraa for Tigania and Igembe Youth in Kenya Journal for African Cultural Studies* 34-35 Vol. 14.
- Gorsuch, RL (1995). Religious Aspects of Substance Abuse and Recovery. *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol.51 (2):65- 83.
- Israel, M. & Hay, I. (2006). *Research Ethics for Social Scientist*. London: Sage Publication.
- Michela, W (2005). *Green Gold. How a Small Kenyan Town Developed the Most Efficient Agricultural Industry on the planets*, Nairobi, Kenya.
- Mugenda, O.M & Mugenda A.G. (1999). *Research Methods; Qualitative approaches*, Nairobi: African Centre for Technological studies press.
- NACADA, (2007). *Drug abuse*. Nairobi, Government press.
- NACADA (2006). *Alcohol, Tobacco (Cigarette) Bhang, Miraa and Inhalants Prescription*. Volume 19. Nairobi, Kenya.
- NCST (1996), "*Catha edulis(Miraa)*," a Publication of the National Council for Science and Technology Government Press, Kenya
- Nyamango, K. I (2014). *Knowledge, Attitude and Practices of Christian FBOs on Alcohol and Drug Abuse*: University of Nairobi, Kenya.
- Pontifical Council for Health and Pastoral Care, (2002). *Church, Drugs and Drug Addiction*. Libreria Editrice. Vatican.