



THE RE-EMERGENCE OF A SNIFFING CULTURE IN TAMALE-NORTHERN GHANA

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Abstract

Northern Ghana has been associated with the use of hallucinogenic substances and stimulants such as pito, datura, marijuana, kola nuts and tobacco since pre-colonial times. Stimulants such as kola nuts and tobacco featured prominently as essential commodities in long distance trade and very much played a key part in boosting local economies. Aside their socio-economic significance, these stimulants have also been used as alternatives to orthodox medication. Just when sniffing (*sundi*) was thought to be on the decline, moringa snuff emerged as a stimulant and hallucinogenic substance, seemingly displacing the use of afore-mentioned varieties for recreational and medicinal purposes. Using interviews of users and sellers, personal observation, oral tradition and secondary literature, this paper attempts to provide socio-historical, gender and economic insights into the rise of moringa snuff in northern Ghana.

Keywords: Moringa Snuff Addiction, Tamale, Sniffing Culture, Social History

Introduction

This research is a socio-historical study on the emergence and widespread phenomenon of a sniffing (*sundi*) culture in Tamale. Ghana has a relatively low prevalence of public smoking habit despite the presence of the tobacco industry that has been active for over 50 years (Owusu-Dabo et al., 2009). However, there is high prevalence in the use of other stimulants such as those found in energy drinks and sniffed substances. The consumption of beverages containing stimulant drugs, chiefly caffeine referred to as energy drinks have become an escalating global public health problem (Saku et al., 2020). The youth have taken to misusing and abusing substances that can make them feel 'high' as may be found in their immediate environment. As recently as April 2023,

various news outlets and portals in Ghana carried stories of how some youth have resorted to mixing adhesives (superglue) with energy drinks before consumption (Rainbowradio, 2023). These individuals according to the report, also burn the glue on a piece of cloth and inhale the smoke. They may not be oblivious of the risks involved in such behaviours, due to an obvious societal show of dislike for such 'objectionable' tendencies. This phenomenon is indicative of the severity of the problem of addiction in parts of Ghana, even as the demand and patronage of superglue keeps soaring by the day. On the other hand, snuff inhalation is an age-old practice in northern Ghana that used to be the preserve of the elderly or older generation. At the beginning of the 21st

century, evidence of snuff inhalation started to appear among Ghanaian youth, though with clear preferences for smoking cigarettes and ingesting energy drinks. The history and evolution of the phenomenon of sniffing as a human experience and existence makes it an important academic venture worthy of study as it continues to have the potential of molding the society. While history is replete with examples of many societies with a culture of smoking, sucking, or sniffing stimulants for various reasons, a newer dimension was observed in Tamale metropolis in northern Ghana where the use of *sundi* - moringa-based snuff has gained popularity.

Moringa oleifera is a plant, which in different climes is often referred to as the drumstick tree, the miracle tree, the ben oil tree, or the horseradish tree. Moringa has been recognized for centuries for its medicinal properties and health benefits. Among its listed properties are that moringa is antifungal, antiviral, antidepressant, and anti-inflammatory. But then the use of it entered the snuff pastime, an adult-old age arena that was tobacco-based now usual for the younger generation albeit indoors. From the forgoing, it is evident that moringa was a least known stimulant in the north so its sudden emergence as an important ingredient in snuff makes it an important subject of study. Important questions arise. What are the factors underlying the shift from tobacco-based snuff to moringa snuff? In what way is this practice gendered? What conduits of information are driving the availability and dosage of moringa snuff? In what ways are factors of cost and social acceptability inducing willingness to engage in the practice and its addictiveness? Are these being

perpetuated along historical lines of social interaction and engagement? What is the cost-benefit balance financially and in terms of public health and safety in northern Ghana?

It is thus worthy of note that the widespread use of various substances such as moringa and tobacco for sniffing purposes in Tamale and its environs and beyond may eventually become a source of concern for the outcomes of addiction. What makes this emerging popular lifestyle unique is the casually observed youthfulness of the categories of users, the seeming acceptance of the sniffing practice at the time of a public health lockdown, and its gendered dimensions which would be presented in latter stages of this paper. While the Covid-19 pandemic has its dictates to norms of social interaction, moringa sniffing appears to be yielding a reorganization of the urban space as it serves as a point of convergence, especially for the youth, associated with future public health concerns and immediate security ramifications in Tamale, the hub of major production and redistribution.

The motivation to undertake this socio-historical study of a sniffing culture in Tamale and northern Ghana for that matter was also borne out of the death of some close relations from conditions that were diagnosed as throat cancer. With this kind of consciousness, the seeming permissiveness for moringa snuff especially among the younger population opens a new page of social and public health reasoning. Many of the consumers of tobacco, mostly the elderly in the north eastern corner of Ghana did so through sniffing or sucking in the era preceding the 21st century. During this period, the youth fancied smoking, which was strenuously preached against. In the

year 2001, one of the authors had an unpleasant responsibility of taking his elderly uncle to the hospital. *Nshikpie Kwana* as he was affectionately called by his nephews had travelled from Wenchiki, a town in the North-East Region of Ghana to Tamale for medical attention. In mean weather condition, “I took my uncle on a bicycle to the local hospital; he was suffering from throat cancer and had difficulty swallowing, even water”. His addiction to snuff (tobacco and sodium chloride as laboratory analysis later revealed) predicated the health condition for which treatment was sought. *Nshikpie Kwana’s* story is not an isolation as it reflects a certain detrimental lifestyle ironically viewed by the society as a status symbol and now largely patronized by the youth. Across many communities in the North of Ghana, the use of snuff now appears to be widespread, cutting across age groups. The practice of taking snuff is thus steeped in the region’s history, justified in some accounts as traditional prescription drug for various ailments, mostly for the aged. It is still viewed by some to be therapeutic and believed to relief users from nasal congestion and related complications, while over time, snuff has the potential of getting users hooked or addicted, some perpetually with dire consequences. So, the trajectory of usage from therapeutic agency to a stimulant is blurry. As has been stated, snuff like other psychoactive substances is not new and has been patronized by many over centuries, yet several studies have concentrated on the scientific and medical perspective, of some of its active ingredients such as tobacco, hence the need for a socio-historical study. The diverse and numerous uses of the

substance is of utmost concern to the researchers.

Kola nuts, Tobacco and Snuffing in the History of West Africa and Northern Ghana

The consumption of tobacco and kola nuts in West Africa has deep historical roots and continues to hold cultural and economic significance in the region. Through trade, social practices, and traditional customs, these commodities have shaped the identities and interactions of West African communities. The demand for such commodities for personal and societal satisfaction was indicative of their acceptability. Falola and Heaton (2008) reveal that kola nuts have been an integral part of hospitality and gift-giving customs, symbolizing friendship and unity. They note that the traditional use of kola nuts in Nigeria and its significance in ceremonies, rituals, and social gatherings is much an institutionalized traditional customary necessity. According to Law (2009), this customary necessity was not part of the people’s culture until after the arrival of tobacco from Europe altered consumption practices and had lasting cultural impacts on West African communities. Law (2009) highlights the introduction of tobacco through European trade networks during the 19th century.

The forgoing, showcases the complexity of pre-colonial trade networks and the role of these commodities in facilitating economic and cultural exchanges thus highlighting the significance of tobacco and kola in early interactions with European traders, their contribution to regional economies, and

their broader impact on West African societies.

The craving for intoxication is nearly as controlling a drive as the innate survival drives of hunger, thirst and sex. Northern Ghana has been associated with stimulants for several centuries. Stimulants like *pito*, *kola nut*, *marijuan*, *dattura*, and *tobacco* among others have been used since pre-colonial times for various reasons and impacts on individuals and society at large. Proceeds from trade in kola and tobacco were used to finance warfare, like the business system of ‘plough back profit’ (Abokyi, 2020; Illiasu, 1971). These stimulants were also very important articles of war logistics in traditional military in pre-colonial West Africa during the expansionist period. Particularly, *pito* was documented as severally used as a war lubricant since colonial times by the Gonja, Anufor, Dagomba and Mamprusi (Ntewusu, 2017). Tobacco and kola nuts helped sustain mercantilist and slave trade economies in pre-colonial West Africa. Paradoxically, whereas they were consumed or used by soldiers to stay awake and alert during prolonged hostilities in the generally rough and rugged savanna terrain, they were equally very crucial at peacetime as they were used in cementing and fostering diplomatic relations. The use of stimulants like brandy was on offer and in extreme cases, a weak solution of cocaine to ‘native’ colonial soldiers in West Africa as antidotes and treatments on the battlefield (Osseo-Asare, 2008). Among some ethnic groups in northern Ghana, kola nuts and tobacco are very important marriage items often presented to the bride’s family. Drucker-Brown (1995) has elaborated on the ritual

significance of kola-exchange in northern Ghana. Among the Anufor of north-east Ghana, every extended family household is given a piece of the kola nut, and this serves as not just a form of announcing the union, but that the whole community is deemed to have witnessed and approved of the relationship. Whereas kola nuts are brought in from southern Ghana, tobacco is easily cultivated and used in the north and has been sniffed for a longer period. Notwithstanding their socio-cultural uses, the excessive consumption and abuse of these psychoactive substances have had dire consequences and perhaps continue to be the cause of several deaths. Nonetheless, their consumption is glaringly on the ascendancy and especially among the youth, most of who have recently been recognised as being in a new period of ‘waithood’. Waithood as postulated by Honwana (2012) is a liminal period between childhood and adulthood. This has economic, social, and psychological ramifications for the waiting individuals whose numbers continue to surge in the wake of failed global neo-liberal policies with dire impacts on third world nations. The extended period of socio-economic stagnation becomes a new context of trial of imaginations where they not only become foot-soldiers of armed groups, continued dependents of parents and guardians, delayed marriage occasioned by joblessness, solace appear to now being sought in stimulants by converging at restricted physical spaces where they can benefit from a re-modelled version of African primordial conviviality and social solidarity.

Methodology

Study Area

Tamale remains the largest cosmopolitan city in the north of Ghana and evidently one of the fastest growing settlements in West Africa, thus an obvious attraction for many migrants from the sub-region, including neighboring countries. Between 1897 and 1907 the capital of British administration in the Northern Territories was at Gambaga. In 1906 the British authorities, considering a new site for a capital for the northern territories decided in favour of Tamale, a village among others south of Savelugu (MacGaffey, 2006-2007). With the opening of the new British Headquarters in 1908, and rapid investments and facelifts, Tamale ceased to be a monoethnic village inhabited by indigenous founders, and it became a diverse zone of the *tinbihi*, Hausas from the sub-regional north, Yorubas from Nigeria, British officers, and employees of southern origin. Tamale has grown to become a very important major agriculture, trading and administrative hub in Ghana's north. Tamale Metropolitan Assembly is one of 261 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in Ghana. According to the 2021 population and housing census, the population of Tamale stands at 374,744, comprising 185,051 males and 189,693 females (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). Majority of Tamale's residents are Muslims and largely belong to the Dagomba ethnicity, though other ethnicities and religious adherents are equally domiciled in Tamale. The metropolitan area consists of Tamale Central, Sagnarigu and Tamale South Municipalities, with more than 115 suburbs and communities. Tamale is positioned as

Ghana's fourth largest city, famous for the concentration of NGOs and strong presence of aid organizations, and an emerging investment hub in West Africa (Mwakideu, 2016).

In researching the re-emergence of a sniffing culture in Tamale, the first methodological trigger was the observation of the very conspicuous use of snuff by relatively young adults. The initial cursory observation led to questions about the openness of use, conduits of information sharing, associated trading network of the product – the consumers and sellers.

Subsequently, an ethnographic data of a qualitative nature was used for this paper. It was gathered progressively in 2020, 2021 and 2022, yet observation of this phenomenon date back several decades. The study used purposive sampling technique to select 25 participants (15 male and 10 females) of varying ages (20-65 years) engaged in moringa substance use/abuse. More males were selected because a preliminary reconnaissance study pointed to high prevalence among males whilst females are mostly discreet about it. These participants were selected because they possess the abilities, awareness, and involvements of use or have vested or special interest. Regarding primary informants; an imam or Islamic cleric, orthodox health official, herbalist and two sub-chiefs were interviewed. Another category of secondary informants, many of whom we engaged periodically consisted of market women, teachers, artisans, drivers, the politically exposed and vendors. During the research, we interacted with them in their traditional palaces, market women on market days, schools of selected teachers,

funeral ceremonies, and sporting activities. In these social encounters. Producers, and retailers offered invaluable information on the production process and retail chain and extent of supply.

Direct observation of users of the snuff was also conducted when opportunities arose. Additionally, the research made use of; scientific analysis and secondary data. Randomly obtained samples of moringa snuff were subjected to laboratory analyses at the Department of Food Science, University for Development Studies, Tamale and of the University of Ghana's College of Basic and Applied Sciences to ascertain the constituents and properties. In order to ascertain the reaction and feeling that comes with sniffing and sucking the substance, one of the authors attempted minute samples on two different occasions. This was to see if correlational or differential descriptions of the workings of ingested samples exist when compared to expressions of some faculty members who also volunteered to sniff and give account of their experiences. Oral accounts were thereafter compared to field observations in the Tamale Municipality.

Participants were engaged in face-to-face in-depth interviews comprising of semi-structured and open-ended questions to collect data. The utilization of this approach allowed participants to feel comfortable and express themselves freely during the data gathering process. Interviews were recorded, listened to severally transcribed, and analyzed thematically.

Understanding Substance Abuse and Addiction

Addiction is a complex phenomenon that has puzzled researchers, clinicians, and the public for decades with socio-historians developing interest in studying its impacts. In an effort to understand the underlying causes and mechanisms of addiction, various theories have been proposed. Though this is a socio-historical study, it is important to situate it in the broader context of cause and effect which may dovetail into other disciplines due to its peculiar nature. The biological theory of addiction suggests that addiction is caused by changes in the brain's chemistry and structure that are the result of drug or alcohol abuse. Consequently, withdrawal symptoms occur when the substance is stopped, leading to a cycle of addiction. According to Volkow and Morales (2015), addictive substances activate the same neural pathways in the brain that are activated by natural rewards, such as food and sex.

On the other-hand, the genetic theory of addiction suggests that addiction may be inherited genetically. Hence, some people may be more vulnerable to addiction because of their genes, which can affect the way their brains respond to drugs or alcohol. Twin studies by Hopfer (2003) show that genetic factors account for a significant proportion of the variance in drug use and addiction. This therefore removes the burden of blame from the 'sufferer' or addict as is the case with the environmental and socio-cultural triggers. Behavioral theory of addiction emphasizes the role of environmental factors and learning in addiction. It suggests that people develop addictive behaviors because they associate

drug use with positive experiences, such as feeling relaxed or euphoric. Environmental factors, such as people or places associated with drug use, can trigger cravings and lead to relapse. There is a growing body of evidence supporting this theory. Contextual cues associated with drug use can elicit conditioned responses in animals and humans, leading to drug-seeking behaviour, (Koob & Volkow, 2010). Additionally, Berridge and Robinson, (2016) have shown that exposure to drug-related environments can activate brain regions associated with reward and motivation, even in individuals who are not addicted to drugs.

Closely linked to the behavioral theory is the social theory of addiction which emphasizes the role of social and cultural factors in addiction. Social factors such as poverty, unemployment, and social isolation can contribute to substance abuse. Culture can also play a role in addiction by influencing attitudes toward drug use and the availability of drugs. Addiction is thus a multidimensional phenomenon that involves a complex interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors, hence the use and abuse either for therapeutic or recreational must be viewed with caution.

Results and Discussions

Types, Production and Distribution in Tamale

Trade in moringa snuff is a brisk venture in Tamale. There are about seven (7) different brands on the market, though there may be more owing to the unregulated nature of the market. Names have been given to the various brands including; *burkina*, *savelugu*, *togo*, *sankpang*, *janjei*, *katari*, and *lماشهگو*. Some of these names give an

indication of the brand's origin (for example, Togo and Burkina Faso are from outside the country, though in the West African sub-region). The one nicknamed *lماشهگو* is the most-preferred by users. *Lماشهگو* is the name of one of the oldest suburbs of Tamale and 'that is where the best stuff is made' – according to one of our interlocutors. The reasons given by users and distributors were about its potency and quality. Though it is physically difficult to differentiate between the various types of moringa snuff available on the market, users claim that they are able to tell the difference when they sniff. However, there are distinguishable packaging particularly in the different colors of plastic containers used in retail trade. When we inquired from the snuff traders about if they use secret additives to boost potency and desirability, the traders refused to be pressed on this, though they claimed steadily increasing numbers of customers and increasing control of large share of the market.

The main supplier and distributor in Tamale makes nearly 100,000 cedis (€11,000) a month from the sale of the substance. As many people get hooked to the substance and several others join the business though unable to compete with the main supplier, the net value of the moringa snuff business shall continue to appreciate. Opinion is divided about the acceptability of trading in moringa snuff - one school of thought (mostly traders) reported with pride that 'the business of moringa snuff is a very lucrative venture and it has gained public acceptability given the increasing number of users; another school of thought on which side are the religious leaders deemed the

traders as ‘a few merchants making money from misery’.

According to a general purpose moringa trader, S. Baako (personal communication, June 5, 2022) “the stuff” was introduced into Ghana by long distance drivers who ply the Ghana-Abidjan corridors in the early 2000s. The drivers started to use it as stimulants to enable them stay awake and alert during long distance journeys. With such usefulness, some of the drivers introduced the snuff among petty traders, it became more lucrative than expected as the brand was better accepted by existing users of

tobacco snuff. There are instances where some of the long-distance drivers have quit professional driving and moved into sale of moringa snuff. Currently, the owner and main producer/supplier of moringa snuff in Tamale is a retired driver/mechanic. He brings in supplies from Elubo (a town on the Ghana-Cote d’Ivoire border) at least twice in a month. The moringa snuff powder are brought in big bags, and are split into smaller plastic containers immediately on arrival in Tamale so as to prevent losses associated with molding if kept for a longer term in the bags.

Figure 1: Moringa Snuff Powder Re-Packaged for the Market



Source: Fieldwork (2022)

Reason for Use/Abuse (Socialization)

Moringa snuff is a very important consumption item at community gatherings and features prominently at important socio-cultural events. These products are copiously consumed during these important gatherings, and in private spaces. As discussed under the environmental triggers, Berridge and Robinson (2016) reveal that exposure to drug-related settings can “activate brain regions associated with reward and motivation”, even in individuals who are not addicted to drugs. *Sundi* finds space during social interactions and thus an

important reason garnered from interviews and observation is one of its roles in fostering socialization; a product around which people converge, a product when consumed together yields shared experiences. The urban space in Tamale is organized in various ways to reflect unique socio-political and religious groupings. Nearly every male youth belong to a group where they meet for social interaction within the urban space. Whereas many of the youth are under-employed or unemployed, they engage in what has become known in Ghanaian parlance as *Kpakpakpa* where the unemployed go out in search of any

opportunities available in the urban space to make ends meet, and this may sometimes include outsmarting others. Together with those who are employed, they meet usually in the evenings to de-stress.

Social stratification is also a visible element of the use of moringa snuff in public spaces. Largely, the composition of social groups reflects the polarized age-old urban political and chieftaincy divisions. Moringa snuff plays a role in the re-organization of the urban space in Tamale with the sniffed substances used as lubricant. Social and political mobilization and discussions take place whilst group members consume moringa snuff. Y. Iddrisu (personal communication, May 15, 2022) noted that, “in this era of dire economic hardships, I seek solace in taking moringa snuff. In fact, since I am unable to adequately provide for my family, I hardly stay at home, I sneak out to join my friends who oftentimes provide for communal sniffing. I hope to find a job soon so that I sniff wherever I like, and buy for others to sniff. I really feel ashamed that my friends may see me as a parasite. That is why I am working hard to become a successful politician so that in future I would be in a position to provide the best snuff”.

While individuals voluntarily purchase the stuff for others to use and thus promote conviviality, politicians have in time past sponsored and supplied large quantities of snuff in what could be termed sniffing parties. It is an avenue used by some politicians to gain patronage and following. These urban space and groupings it must be noted, are mostly male- dominated whilst the domestic household space continue to culturally remain the space of women. Hence, women who use moringa snuff do so

out of public view and the gendered experience is presented hereafter.

The Gender Dimensions

Moringa snuff consumption present different reactions in males and females. While this may stem from the way the snuff is used, it could also pertain to other human body structures. Firstly, in the general sense, there are comparatively more male users than women. Secondly, we examine the manner of use. Whereas male users usually sniff, huffed, snorted or inhaled moringa via the nostrils, female users ingest it orally by applying the powder to the gum. Thirdly, for their reactions, females attest to the psychoactive properties in moringa snuff as it momentarily makes them weak, relaxed, inactive and intoxicated. A. Amantana (personal communication, December, 16, 2021) reveals that, “I like consuming moringa snuff because it is very good for me. I take it every morning by putting it in my mouth before I take my bath and get ready for the market. I become weak whenever I take it, I am unable to even talk to my own children for at least 10 minutes. My son once came visiting and greeted me and I could hardly hear him hence could not respond because I had just taken it. I like it because at my age my husband no longer comes to me, he instead goes to his younger wives for sex. Whenever I take it, I no longer need sex. My husband is not happy that I am addicted to it but he cannot do anything about it because that is where I derive my satisfaction”.

In a largely patriarchal society where women are unable to question their husbands for staying out late and abusing moringa snuff in their male-only social

gatherings, their home-based spouses become lonely and stressed, resorting to abusing moringa snuff as a coping strategy. This was echoed by a 30-year-old female respondent who noted without equivocation that “moringa snuff is now my husband since I hardly see my husband when I need him most”. Though a coping mechanism or strategy adopted by some women, it has brought about tensions within the domestic setting which is likely to lead to further antagonisms.

Moringa Snuff as Medication

In under-served communities where the provision of and access to western medicine is limited, and affordability is compromised by two factors of costs—rising out-of-pocket expenses and little or no coverage under the national health insurance scheme, resorting to non-conventional treatments and/or self-medication become first choice options for many residents in Tamale. Comparatively high cost of treatment, distance to health institutions were mentioned as key factors by many of our interviewees for resorting to trying moringa snuff and subsequently abusing its use. The search for relief from various medical conditions have thus led many to use moringa snuff in the backdrop of information shared that moringa is useful for treating or curing medical conditions such as: headache, high blood pressure, toothache, cough, relief from nausea and weight management.

Many respondents claimed that they stopped smoking given the wide and proven claim that it is injurious to health, and that taking moringa has more beneficial health properties. Therefore, sniffing moringa snuff is a lesser evil that is societally

accepted. Y. Shanunu, (personal communication, May, 23 2022) noted “I used to be a chain smoker of cigarettes but glad to say that this moringa snuff you see me holding has helped me to stay away from smoking. I have not smoked cigarette in the last five years since I was introduced to this snuff. I experienced incessant severe migraine and this product became my saviour. Now I do not have migraine and I don’t smoke which is such a relief. In fact, I only sniff, and I do it intermittently, sometimes during school break-time”.

The health reasons adduced for sniffing moringa snuff need further scientific interrogation even as users and abusers are very convinced of it being therapeutic. A health worker who uses moringa snuff to the level of addiction attested to the advantage of the snuff for lowering high blood pressure, citing how he personally monitored and has seen his blood pressure drop to safe levels. Such claims, coming from ‘medical quarters’ further contribute to cementing the medical potency associated with users in social circles.

Labour Reasons for Use/Abuse

In Ghana, the utilization of hallucinogenic substances for labour purposes is not new. According to Ntewusu (2017), if one considers the labour history of northern Ghana migrants in southern cocoa farms, their use of hallucinogenic substances was severally linked to labour performance. In the period 1902 and 1936, European mining explorations in Ghana called for the use of migrant labour in gold prospecting (Ntewusu, 2017). The influx of migrant labour into these mining centres coincided with and led to an increase in the

consumption of stimulants among workers. In more recent times, with an upsurge in illegal mining activities popularly called *galamsey*, the consumption of energy drinks and use of moringa snuff has seen corresponding increases with supplies to these sites.

Long distance drivers have been found to be one of the earliest users of moringa snuff in the Tamale area. The utilization of moringa snuff by drivers is yet another testament of its ability to stimulate mental alertness. Prior to this, the drivers reportedly relied on kola nuts to stay awake and alert whilst driving. Moringa snuff with its reportedly higher potency and nice packaging has however replaced kola nuts and it remains the preferred choice, though the consumption of energy drinks is also on the ascendancy. J. Kombian (personal communication, November, 10 2021) reveals that “I do not step into my car without my companion; the snuff. It is always beside me and very useful for the period of my long-distance journeys. Anytime I feel drowsy, I make a brief stop, sniff and continue till I get to my destination”.

Also, the complex layered social context of *sundi* becomes even more obvious with the involvement of students in the moringa snuff circus. Some teachers have had cause to complain about its abuse among students, even within school premises where drug use is prohibited when the Covid-19 lockdown ended. Pocket-sized containers of *sundi* have been discovered on students by teachers also at the basic level. Ironically, the use and abuse of *sundi* is reportedly common among teachers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Moringa snuff, a stimulant with hallucinogenic effects, has its origins traced to the beginning of the 21st century among adults, and gained rapid and widespread popularity in Tamale two decades later. Historical evidence also points to the important roles that substances with hallucinogenic properties played in pre-colonial African societies in times of warfare and state building, marriage and choicest gifts to royalty. The recent adoption and popularity of moringa snuff as an important trade item, with paradoxical reasons for use and outcomes, especially among the youth who are mostly unemployed, present both economic and health consequences in its use and abuse. Its role in lubricating and re-organising the urban space has been discussed even as males and females react differently to its use. However, the possible long term addictive burdens and health outcomes represent strong reasons to take a second look at the *sundi*. Further research to show the health implications of long-term use are needed, especially in a context that its use among the youth escalated at a time when a lockdown was put in place to contain a pandemic. Designing and implementing evidence-based drug education programmes in public spaces and schools that offer accurate information about the dangers of abusing psychoactive substances, encourage healthy lifestyles, and help the public learn how to resist peer pressure are among the short- to medium-term interventions that should be considered. To further improve the situation, peer-led support groups where young people may talk about their experiences and encourage one another to abstain from drugs

should be established. It will be beneficial to support the abusers' involvement in extracurricular activities like sports, the arts, and other activities that engage young people in constructive and good ways, as many of them are in the youthful and productive age group.

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