

Abstract

A survey was conducted in Western Kenya involving 281 respondents to ascertain the clay applications and its health effects on human beings. Household survey, focus group discussions and direct observation were employed. A structured questionnaire with reliability coefficient of 0.88 was used to collect data and analyzed using SPSS. Majority of respondents were females (50.2%) aged 21 to 40 years, had secondary education (60.5%), monthly income was below Ksh.5,000 (63.3%), earned income mainly from brickmaking (59.4%), farming (21.0 %) and experience of 6-10 years in making clay products to earn a living (41.6%). Residents acquired information on clay from relatives/friends (31.7 %) and other farmers (34.2 %). They utilized clay mainly for brickmaking (54.8 %), plastering floors and walls (48.1%) and pottery (24.5%). Food cooked from clay pots tastes different compared to conventional utensils (70.0%). 43.3 % of respondents complained of skin irritation after prolonged exposure to clay material during clay handling. The study findings are significant as they unearth the indigenous knowledge of clay in the study area which will facilitate the researchers on understanding the basics of these clays as they explore advanced technological applications.