

A Comparative Analysis between the Islamic Dietary Habits Guidelines and Modern Lifestyle diseases (Diabetes, Hypertension)

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Abstract: In contemporary Era, chronic lifestyle diseases like type 2 diabetes and hypertension are considered a great challenge for global health and contributing significantly to illness and humanity. These diseases are intricately related to poor dietary selections, sedentary lifestyles, and high stress levels. Whereas the Sunnah-based diet-ingrained in the Islamic teachings and traditions of Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) guides a compelling and holistic approach to nutrition that provides restraint, balance, and the pleasure of natural, wholesome foods. This research article explores the transformative potential of the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) Sunnah-based diet in prevention and management of modern lifestyle diseases. This investigation draws attention to famous prophetic foods such as dates, olive oil, black seed, honey and barley. This study uncovers the dietary principles of Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and the modern evidence-based diets grounded in both classical Islamic sources and contemporary scientific literature. This investigation suggests that integrating Sunnah based nutrition into public health initiatives could present not only culturally sensitive but deeply effective solutions for improving metabolic and cardiovascular health. This approach has the potential to revitalize individuals and communities by encouragement healthier lifestyles grounded in Islamic traditions and wisdom.

Keywords: Lifestyle Diseases, Sedentary lifestyle, Hypertension, Sunnah Based diet, Public Health

1. Introduction:

Non-contagious diseases often known as non-communicable diseases (NCDs), especially type 2 diabetes and hypertension, represent a thoughtful public health disaster that echoes across the world. The World Health Organization (2023) reported that more than 1.28 billion adults aged 30 to 79 are affected by hypertension whereas around 422 million people deal with diabetes. These alarming statistics highlight the substantial impact of lifestyle adoption. Nowadays diet plays a

significant role in any type of disease. The increasing popularity of Western-style diets, overloaded with saturated fats, sugars and heavily processed foods, has significantly intensified the prevalence of metabolic disorders.

In contrast, traditional dietary habits ingrained in religious and cultural norms offer a detailed guideline about balance and moderate dietary habits with the emphasis on natural nutritional approach. The Islamic dietary guidelines based on the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad SAW educates the Muslims for simple dietary practices and the consumption of food in moderation. Prophetic Practices not only emphasize the logical approach of eating but also nurture the physical well-being of individuals as well as spiritual well-being.

In several verses of Quran, Islam promotes and encourages the consumption of pure and healthy food. (Hossain MZ 2014) .Islam teaches the etiquette of eating in moderate way, i.e, not filling the stomach completely but leave some space . Prophet Muhammad PBUH says, “A man does not fill any vessel worse than his stomach. It is appropriate for the son of Adam to eat that amount of food which keep him alive. For this he must eat one-third portion of the stomach for his meal, one-third for his drink and one-third for the air so that the food could be easily digested.) (Narrated by Al-Tirmidhi, 2380; Ibn-e-Majah, 3349; classed as saheeh by Al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Tirmidhi, 1939).

By adopting this manner, the body remains healthy and light because over filling the stomach makes the body heavy which leads to laziness in overall physical work for an individual. Islam teaches the muslims to eat lawful and wholesome, the food which has been prepared by following the Islamic laws and guidance and avoid the unlawful meals (for example; eating pork meat). This study explores the health benefits of Sunnah based dietary habits in context with the modern lifestyle diseases, mainly diabetes and hypertension. It examines how the Prophet Muhammad SAW dietary model could serve an effective framework for public health through the insights from Hadith literature, Quranic verses and modern nutritional science.

Research Question: To what extent can adherence to Islamic dietary practices contribute to the prevention and management of modern lifestyle diseases such as diabetes and hypertension?

1. Literature Review

2.1 Background of Sunnah-Based Dietary Model

Prophet Muhammad SAW dietary practices ingrained with the true Islamic teachings that emphasized on Halal (Lawful) and tayyab (Pure and Wholesome). Prophetic teachings give the complete guideline for the well-being of every member of society. Prophet Muhammad SAW emphasized greatly on the moderate consumption of food, stating “No human ever filled a vessel worst than the stomach. The son of Adam needs no more than a few morsels to keep his back straight”. (Sunan Ibn Majah, Hadith 3349). These everlasting principles not only reflect philosophical spiritual insight but also recall modern medical guidance on the virtues of caloric moderation and mindful portion control. (WHO, 2023)

2.1.1 Prophet Hadith on Overeating:

The Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad SAW provide clear and practical guidance about moderation in eating and the hazards of overeating. His teachings are basically providing Islamic principle of sustaining physical and spiritual well-being through balance and self-control.

2.1.2 The Basic rule for eating

"The son of Adam does not fill any vessel worse than his stomach. It is enough for the son of Adam to eat an appropriate amount of meal to keep his back straight. If he must (eat more), then he should take one third for the food, one third for the drink, and one third should remain unfilled for the digestion. (Sunan Ibn-e-Maja) The above Hadith strongly promotes moderation and digestion in food intake and discourages overeating and commends a 1/3 food, 1/3 water, and 1/3 air approach to meal consumption.

2.1.3. Overeating causes laziness and health complications:

"Overeating does not go beside good health."

(According to the various narrations of Prophet Muhammad SAW with different wording). Excessive eating can cause physical lethargy and spiritual dullness. This reflects modern medical intimation about how overeating leads to obesity, insulin resistance, and other metabolic issues.

2.1.4. Moderate Eating is a form of worship:

Islamic scholars have derived from various Prophetic Sunnah that eating consciously and moderately is part of virtuous living and helps a Muslim remain spiritually vigilant and physically proficient of worship.

2.1.5 Islamic Viewpoint:

Fasting during Ramadan and other voluntary fasts also helps Muslims develop self-discipline, reduces the routine of overeating, and permits the body to rest and detoxify like the benefits documented in intermittent fasting today. In Quran Allah SWT says: "And eat and drink but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess." (Quran 7:31) Prophetic guidance on eating promotes moderation, mindfulness, and self-control, which supports modern health advice for avoiding lifestyle diseases like diabetes and hypertension. Overeating is discouraged not only for physical health but also as part of a general approach to psychic and decent living.

2.1.6 Discouragement of Laziness

Prophet SAW says: وَالْكَسَلُ الْعَجْزُ مِنْ بَكَ أَعُوذُ إِلَهِی اللّهُمَّ

"O Allah, I seek refuge in You from incapacity and laziness." (Sahih al-Bukhari : 2823) (Sahih Muslim : 2706) The Prophet often requested refuge from laziness (كسل) in his prayers, recognizing it as a harmful attribute that leads to physical and spiritual decline. This shows a proactive attitude against inactivity.

2.1.7 Physical Activity Encouragement- Archery, Horse Riding, Swimming

"Teach your offspring swimming, archery, and horse riding." (Reported by Umar ibn al-Khattab) (Al-Suyuti, Al-Jami' al-Saghir). However, this specific narration is weak, it reflects the social practices of the Prophet and his companions, who are regularly involved in physical activities. The Prophet SAW himself participated in races and encouraged sports for recreation and exercises.

2.1.8 The Prophet SAW Raced with His Wife

“I contested with the Prophet Muhammad SAW in race and I beat him. Later, when I had gained weight, I raced him again and he beat me.” (Musnad Ahmad, 26194 : Abu Dawood). This Hadith shows that the Prophet encouraged light-hearted physical activity, even in personal situations. It highlights that fitness was cohesive into everyday life. (Musnad Ahmad Ibn-e-Hanbal: Hadith 26194)

2.1.9 The Walk of Our Holy Prophet SAW With Purpose

“The Prophet Muhammad SAW used to walk briskly, and it was as if the earth folded for him.” (Shamaa-il Tirmidhi, 116). The Prophet was known for his active lifestyle, walking regularly and energetically, a key remedy to sedentary lifestyle.

2.1.10 Work and Physical Effort Were Privileged

“No food is better than what a man eats from the work of his own hands. The Prophet Dawood used to eat from the work of his own hands.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, 2072)

Islam promotes lively earning and labor, discouraging inactivity and laziness. This Hadith praises physical work over inactivity. The Prophet Muhammad’s Sunnah offer clear guidelines that discourages sedentary lifestyle and promote movement, productivity, and healthy engagement in both personal and social life. Although the phrase “sedentary lifestyle” is not used in Islamic teachings but its naturally align with modern medical advice to avoid prolonged inactivity. It’s a major risk factor for diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity.

2.2 Prophetic Foods Practices and their effect on Health

2.2.1 Dates

Dates are the natural treasure of nutrients, available widely in a variety worldwide. It is rich in fiber, potassium, magnesium and antioxidants. Dates have a low glycemic index which ensures that they do not spikes in postprandial blood glucose levels for diabetic patients. (Alkaabi et al. 2011) Moreover it is remarkably suitable for the patients with type 2 Diabetes with a good addition in moderate balanced diet. (Alalwan et al. 2020)

2.2.2 Olive Oil

Olive oil beautifully acknowledges the olive as a blessed tree (Surah An-Nu 24:35). Olive oil is rich in heart-healthy monounsaturated fats and powerful polyphenols, works wonders by lowering LDL cholesterol and enhancing endothelial function. Covas (2007) demonstrated its potent effects in preventing cardiovascular disease and reducing blood pressure, seamlessly aligning with the principles of the Mediterranean diet renowned for its health benefits. According to the research it was explored that the Mediterranean diet, when enriched with extra-virgin olive oil, decreased diabetic risk in persons with high cardiovascular risk. Furthermore, a low carbohydrate Mediterranean diet cause a greater reduction of HbA1c levels, higher rate of diabetes remission, and delayed need for diabetes medication compared with a low fat diet in patients with newly diagnosed Type-2 Diabetes (Greco M et al. 2014)

2.2.3 Black Seed (Nigella Sativa)

As the Prophet (PBUH) wisely proclaimed, “Use the black seed, for it contains a cure for every disease except death” (Bukhari, Hadith 5687). Scientific studies by Bamosa et al. (2010) and Kalus et al. (2003) underscore the remarkable anti-inflammatory, antihypertensive, and hypoglycemic properties of the black seed, affirming its invaluable role in maintaining metabolic syndrome. Another investigation found that the extracts of Nigella Sativa (Black seeds) had beneficial effects in patients with diabetes mellitus, insulin resistance syndrome, dyslipidemia and cardiovascular diseases. (Tang ZX et al. 2013)

2.2.4 Honey

Revered in Quran as a divine healing substance (Surah An-Nahl 16:69), honey boasts an array of antibacterial, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory qualities (Mandal & Mandal, 2011). The research by Erejuwa et al. (2012) highlights how naturally honey not only enhances glycemic control but also improves lipid profiles, making it a sweet ally in the quest of metabolic health.

2.2.5 Barley

Barley (Sha’eer), cherished by the Prophet (PBUH) as a staple food, is a nutritional powerhouse. Its richness in beta-glucans works wonders by lowering LDL cholesterol and boosting insulin sensitivity (Behall et al. 2006). This aligns perfectly with the whole grain lauded in the DASH diet, a cornerstone for effective hypertension control (Appel et al. 1997). With these wholesome foods, we can embrace a lifestyle that nurtures both our bodies and our souls.

2. Methodology

This paper undertakes a comprehensive qualitative analysis, drawing on a rich tapestry of sources:

- Classical Islamic texts, including revered Hadith collections and transformative Quranic verses.
- Peer-reviewed research illuminating the nutritional and medicinal virtues of prophetic foods.
- International dietary guidelines and insightful public health reports.

Utilizing esteemed academic databases such as PubMed, Scopus and Google Scholar, we have meticulously compiled relevant studies published between 2000 and 2024. Our inclusion criteria rigorously focused on the scientific validation of individual prophetic foods and their clinical efficacy in managing diabetes and hypertension. Through this synthesis, we aim to uncover the profound connections between ancient wisdom and modern health practices.

3. Chart: Prophetic Foods and Their Primary Health Benefits

Below is a placeholder for the visual chart comparing prophetic foods and their core health contributions.

Food	Key Health Benefits
Dates	Regulates blood sugar, rich in antioxidants
Olive Oil	Lowers LDL, supports cardiovascular health
Black Seed	Anti-inflammatory, regulates blood pressure & glucose
Honey	Antioxidant, antimicrobial, supports digestion
Barley	Lowers cholesterol, improves insulin sensitivity

4. Discussion and Analysis

5.1 Parallels with Modern Diets

The Sunnah diet resonates deeply with evidence-based dietary interventions such as the DASH and Mediterranean diets, both celebrated for their remarkable ability to reduce hypertension and prevent metabolic disorders. Much like the Sunnah diet, these nutritional paradigms advocate for:

- The consumption of wholesome grains (e.g. Barley)
- Healthy Fats (e.g. Olive Oil)
- Nutrient-rich, plant-based foods (e.g. Dates, Legumes)
- A mindful approach to sodium intake
- The complete elimination of processed foods

5.2 Spiritual and Behavioral Dimensions

Beyond the realm of physical nutrition, the Sunnah invites us to embrace a mindful and spiritual approach to eating. Practices such as savoring meals while seated, expressing gratitude with the phrase “Bismillah” and pausing before reaching fullness foster a culture of slower, more intentional eating. This mindful behavior has been shown to enhance feelings of satiety and decrease the urge to overeat (Micha et al. 2017).

5.3 Culturally Tailored Health Promotion

Implementation of Islamic dietary patterns into modern lifestyle could be a breakthrough in healthcare system. It can significantly improve the patient's health and can greatly contribute the positive health outcomes. A research study revealed that nutrition education tailored for Ramadan in Pakistan resulted in notable improvements in lipid profiles and glucose control. (Gul et al. 2003) Thus, culturally and religiously sensitive health models arise as powerful and effective public health tools, nurturing a harmonious combination of traditional and modern approach of public wellbeing.

5.4 Limitations

Despite the encouraging recommendations, here are some notable limitations of the study:

- Presently we are lacking comprehensive long-term randomized controlled trials that examine “Sunnah diets” in their entirety.
- Many existing studies tend to focus on isolated foods, missing the opportunity to explore the powerful collaborative effects of the complete diet.
- Non-Muslim audiences should be included for the correct comparison between the Islamic dietary teachings with the contemporary medical approach.
- By addressing these gaps, we can further unlock the potential of these diets and enhance their understanding of all.

5. Conclusion

The sunnah of prophet Muhammad SAW introduced a culturally rich and medically balanced dietary plan. It equips the patients with effective strategies through wholesome foods, moderation and spiritual mindfulness to manage the modern lifestyle diseases such as type 2 diabetes and hypertension. The inclusion of densely nutrient food ingredients like dates, black seed, olive oil, barley and honey significantly aligns with contemporary medical guidance, emphasizing their significant preventive and

therapeutic properties. In light of the rising global crises of metabolic diseases and the inadequacies of Western dietary models for diverse cultural backgrounds, the Sunnah diet emerges as a powerful intersection of faith and evidence-based health practices. It invites us to explore a holistic path to wellness that honors tradition while embracing modern insights. To fully harness its potential, further empirical research and innovative public health initiatives should delve into this captivating blend of heritage and contemporary health wisdom.

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