

MUSLIM FEMALE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON SUNNAH DIET IN KASHMIR VALLEY OF J&K STATE

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ABSTRACT

In Islam, there are many commands in Holy Quran that direct the believers to the necessity of keeping healthy the physical body so that the soul and spirit also remain healthy. Many people realize that their food intake affects their health; they often choose food for a variety of reasons but always keep in mind their religion. This study which was conducted at Kashmir valley, aims to examine Muslim female students' attitude to Sunnah diet. The survey collected valuable data on several Sunnah diet related conditions such as sources of food, start-up age, frequency and practicality of practice, availability of the diet, reasons for non-practice, societies' observance and their difficulties to keep to the diet. The resulting wealth of information obtained from the data collected is very useful to establish university policy on nutrition education, food assistance programmes as well as examine the relationship between Sunnah diet and health of the female students'.

Keywords: Awareness and health, diet, Muslim students, Sunnah, Statistics

INTRODUCTION

Islam is a way of life that focuses on the physical and spiritual aspects of health. The Quran says, "And said one of them: "O my father! Hire him! Verily the best of men for you to hire is the strong, the trustworthy" (The Noble Quran, chapter Al-Qasas(28), Verse 26). 'Strong' in this verse refers to the health of a human being that

comprises of physical and spiritual health. In a famous hadith, Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) said, *“In a body, there is a lump of flesh, if the flesh is good, the whole body becomes good and if the source is bad, the whole body becomes bad and indeed it is the heart”* (Al-Bukhari, 2002). A person therefore needs to pay special attention while selecting the food as it may greatly affect the heart as well as the soul. In Islamic law, Muslims have to keep in mind the permissibility of sources of food to be consumed. The word halal is derived from the Arabic verb ahalla meaning to make lawful or permissible. Anything which is lawful in Islamic Law is described as halal. The opposite of halal is haram. The term is used to denote anything which is forbidden or unlawful in Islam. Whatever halal and haram is described through Quran, it is mandatory for the believers to accept it as such (Hussaini, 1993). Hadith says: *“The Halal is that which Allah has made lawful in His book and the Haram is that which He has forbidden, and that concerning which He is silent, He has permitted as a favour to you”*, (Ibn Majah, No 3367). The principles of halal and haram are not limited to the consumption of food only but cover all the aspects of human life. According to Wahab (2004), halal, when used in relation to food means consumption of lawful products of foods or drinks. Processed foods and drinks as well as products are halal when the raw materials and ingredients used are halal and according to the Islamic guidelines (Zurina, 2012). It is obligatory for a muslim to evaluate the legal status of any food before consuming it. Forbidden foods for Muslims are summarized as (i) pork or pork by-products (ii) animals that were dead prior to slaughtering (iii) animals not slaughtered properly or not slaughtered in the name of Allah (iv) blood and blood by-products (v) alcohol (vi) carnivorous animals (vii) Muslims have to distinguish the forbidden foods (Haram) from the lawful ones (Halal). According to Rahman et al., (2011), (2010) and **Karayanni (2010)** a good knowledge was influenced by the experience of information exposing about halal products. Rajagopal et al., (2011) in his study showed that the respondents that aware of the concept of halal still have low awareness and knowledge regarding of labeling and halal certification. We observe halal products are labeled by a green logo as given in picture.



Awareness of people towards halal food consumption does not serve only religious motive, but also related to health issues (Bonne et al, 2007). Researchers agree that modern ill health is related to poor nutrition and unhealthy daily consumption. This argument is related to halal as the main purpose of Allah regarding halal is to ensure healthy life of an individual. The Sunnah of the beloved Prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h) teaches us a balanced diet to ensure healthy body as he said, *“The son of Adam does not fill any vessel worse than the stomach. It is sufficient for the son of Adam to eat a few mouthfuls, to keep going. If he must do that (fill his stomach), then let him fill one third with food, one third with drink and one third with air.”* (Al-Tirmidhi, 2006). The health benefits in avoiding the haram food and favouring the halal ones are:

Dead animals: This prohibition covers all types of animals that die naturally or is slaughtered in any other way different from recommended method of slaughtering in Islam. Common diseases which are associated with dead animals include; Campylobacteria (Campylobacter), Cryptosporidiosis (Cryptosporidium), Escherichia coli infection 0157:H7 (E.coli0157) and Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS), Salmonellosis (Salmonella).

Blood: Blood may contain a great number of pathogenic microorganisms as it travels to different parts of the body. It is not necessary that the microbes that are harmful to some animals may be harmless to others. Direct consumption of the blood causes a direct contact with pathogens which can be potentially dangerous.

Pork: Prohibition of pork in Islam is for healthy living. Pigs are considered very dirty and unhygienic animal. Moreover, pork contains more fats as compared to other type of meat. As a result making pork eaters to be more susceptible to obesity and its related complications. With higher cholesterol level in their blood, regular pork eaters are also prone to atherosclerosis, cardiovascular accidents and even sudden death. Common diseases associated with the consumption of pork are Trichinella Spiralis (Trichina worms), Taenia Solium (Pork tape worm), Round Worm (e.g Ascaris causing obstructive jaundice), Hook Worm (e.g Ancylostomiasis – causing anaemia, oedema, heart failure, retarded growth, tuberculosis, typhoid and diarrhoea), Schistosoma Japonicum (causing bleeding, anaemia etc), Paragonimus Westermani (causing bleeding in the lungs called endemove haemoptysis), Pasirolepsis Buski (causing diarrhoea and oedema), Clonorchis Sinensis (causing obstructive jaundice and liver enlargement), Metastrongylus Aspri (causing bronchitis and abscess of the lungs), Gigathorinchus Gigas (causing digestive disorder and anaemia), Balatitidium Coli (causing acute dysentery and general weakness). Islam guides us towards personal hygiene, cleanliness, diet, sickness, dress habits etc. The main purpose of the study is to analyse/examine an Islamic perspective regarding halal and haram diet (sunnah diet) to encourage Muslims to investigate through scientific knowledge the advantages and disadvantages, of halal and haram food. Whether it

has any positive or negative effects on the health of the consumers, study is also conducted to know the perception of female muslim students regarding sunnah diet.

METHODOLOGY

In order to measure the level of awareness about *Sunnah* diet, 400 female respondents from different fields were randomly chosen from different Universities of Kashmir valley. This research utilized the quantitative research methodology through a well designed questionnaire which comprise of different types of questions such as yes-no, category, ranking and optional questions. Several different sources were also used in this study comprising of both Islamic and scientific materials. In the analysis, the data were extended into the computer using Microsoft Office Excel 2007 software and SPSS version 20 software. Results obtained using standard statistical tools are presented through tables and charts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data presented in the Table 1, reveals that the majority (63.25%) of the students under study were from science stream and the remaining (36.75%) from arts stream. Majority (54%) of the students were from urban areas and rest of (46%) were from rural areas. Majority (67.75%) were post graduate, followed by (19.25%) who were under graduates and the remaining (13%) were PhD scholars. Further, majority (82.25%) respondents belonged to nuclear families and (17.75%) belonged to joint families. Majority of the respondents (58.75%) were having 5-7 family members, followed by (19.5%) having less than 4 family members and (1.75%) respondents have more than 7 family members. Finally, it is observed that majority of the respondents (47.75%) were having 10,000-20,000 monthly family income, followed by (31.75%) having 20,001-40,000, (10.75%) having up to 10,000 and (9.75%) having above 40,000.

Table 1: General information of the respondents under study

Characteristics		No. of respondents (z)	%age
Subject	Science	253	63.25
	Arts	147	36.75
Residence	Urban	216	54
	Rural	184	46
Educational status	Under graduate	77	19.25
	Post graduate	271	67.75
	PhD	52	13
Family type	Nuclear	329	82.25

	Joint	71	17.75
Family size	Up to 4	78	19.5
	5-7	235	58.75
	Above 7	87	21.75
Family income (monthly)	Up to Rs 10,000	43	10.75
	10,001-20,000	191	47.75
	20,001-40,000	127	31.75
	Above 40,000	39	9.75

The data shown in Table 2, reveals that in response to statement (i) i.e., honey is the most eatable food mentioned in Al- Quran, majority of the respondent (83%) said yes.

Honey is a source of healing for mankind. In an authentic tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h), a man came to him and said, “My brother has some abdominal trouble.” The Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) said to him “Let him drink honey.” The man came for the second time and the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h) said to him, ‘Let him drink honey.’ He came for the third time and the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said, “Let him drink honey.” He returned and said, “I have done that.” The Prophet (p.b.u.h) then said, “Allah has said the truth, but your brother’s abdomen has told a lie. Let him drink honey.” So he made him drink honey and he was cured” (Al-Bukhari, 2002). In addition, honey can be used as a Dressing for Wounds, Burns and Ulcers: A Brief Review of Clinical Reports and Experimental Studies,” Molan (2006) says that honey has proven to be useful medicine in his practice. In response to statement second i.e., Habbatus Sauda can cure all disease except death, majority of respondents (74%) said yes. The black seeds (habbatus sauda) of the *Nigella sativa* (NS) plant that belongs to the *Ranunculaceae* plant family have an extensive history of medicinal use that dates back thousands of years as a spice and food preservative was used by physicians to treat an assortment of illnesses, however Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) once stated the black seed can heal every disease except death (Atta, M.B. 2003). It is also used to cure some autoimmune diseases like type 1 diabetes world wide. For the statement third i.e., Milk is the best drink described in Al –Quran, majority (77.25%) said yes. Prophet (p.b.u.h) said, “Drink milk, for it wipes away heat from the heart as the finger wipes away sweat from the brow. Furthermore, it strengthens the back, increases the brain power, augments intelligence, renews vision and drives away forgetfulness” (Ibn Majah, 1998). Milk is the very source of calcium (around 120mg/100g). Consumption of milk during childhood and adolescence helps prevent osteoporosis in adulthood (Weltan *et al.*, 1997). Regarding fourth statement i.e., Date is considered sunnah diet because of its nutritious value, majority (85%) said yes. Dates are the best kind of fruit as they can be consumed simply having high content of carbohydrates and can easily be absorbed by the body (Pamplona, 2004). It was narrated from Aisha that Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h) said, “A house in which there are

no dates, its people will go hungry” (Ibn Majah, 2000a). Dates as an example of good food are also highlighted in the holy Quran, “And from the fruit of the date palms and grape, you derive strong drink and goodly provision. Verily, therein is indeed a sign for people who have wisdom” (The Noble Quran, verse 16:67). In response to fifth statement i.e., Muslims prefer to take those food items which were mentioned in Quran and Hadith, majority i.e., (67%) said yes. Scientifically, halal foods have been proven in extensive pharmacological studies to justify the Islamic traditional food.

Table 2: Attitude of students towards halal foods

Statement	No (%age)	Not sure (%age)	Yes (%age)	Firm (%age)
Honey is the most eatable (nutritious) food mentioned in Al-Quran.	0 (0%)	16 (4%)	332 (83%)	52 (13%)
Habbatus Sauda can cure all disease except death.	24 (6%)	52 (13%)	296 (74%)	28 (7%)
Milk is the best drink described in Al –Quran.	28 (7%)	51 (12.75%)	309 (77.25%)	12 (3%)
Date is considered sunnah diet because of its nutritious value.	25 (6.25%)	27 (6.75%)	340 (85%)	8 (2%)
Muslims prefer to take those food items which were mentioned in Quran and Hadith.	54 (13.5%)	66 (16.5%)	268 (67%)	12 (3%)

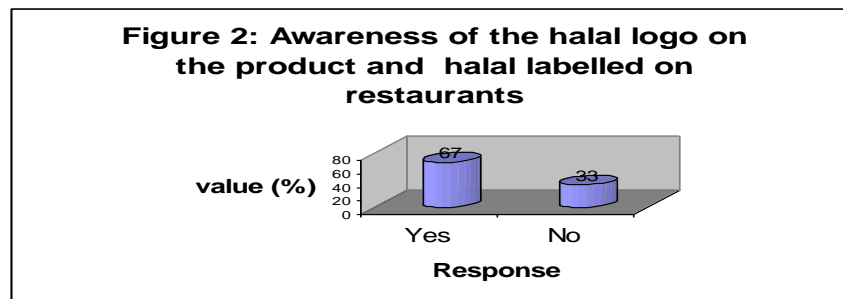
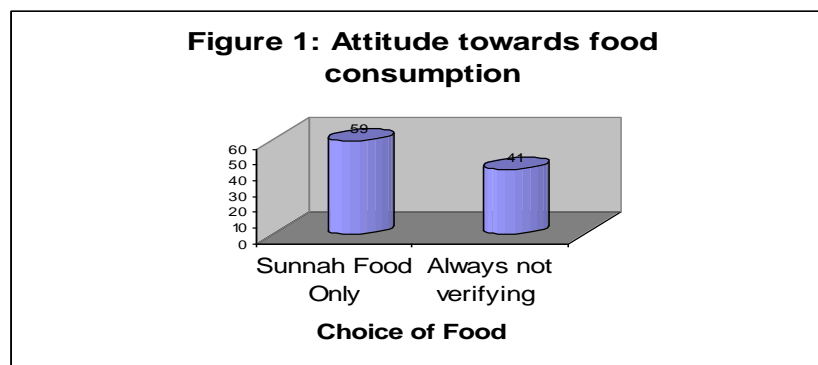
The data presented in Table 3, reveals that majority of the respondents (69%) follow Holy Quran, (15.25%) follow science books, (7.75%) follow internet, (4.75%) follow campaign and (3.25%) follow others in deciding of sunnah food. Statistically, opinion of the students is not uniform ($P < 0.01$). Majority of the respondents (69%) prefer food guided by holy Quran and no student accepted that he likes to take any food which is prohibited in Islam.

Table 3: Source of Sunnah Food

Holy Quran (%)	Internet (%)	Science Books (%)	Campaign (%)	Others (%)
276 (69%)	31 (7.75%)	61 (15.25%)	19 (4.75%)	13 (3.25%)

$X^2 = 617.35, p < 0.01$

The data presented in Figure 1, reveals that majority of the respondents are aware of halal and haram food. 59% respondents told that they check food before taking and 41% students told that sometimes they are in doubt while taking food items like chocolate, sweets etc. as it is not easy to verify these items.



The data presented in Figure 2 reveals that majority of respondents 67% respondents are aware of the halal logo on the food products and halal label on restaurants.

CONCLUSION

Holy Quran directly commanded that human beings pay attention and look to his food. Islam teaches us much etiquette on eating/drinking and halal food is not only about the food that the Prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h) took but also promotes good health by consuming the right nutrition. Holy Quran expresses the way of choosing food according to its purity (cleanness) in eight verses of holy Quran (Mumenoon/51, Anfal/26, Maeda/28, Baqara / 57

/ 172 / 267, Taha /81and Araf/160). Allah (s.w.t) says, o ye people! Eat of what is on earth, lawful and good (Baqara/168). He puts two conditions and human must follow those i.e., first, food must be legitimate and not among foods which are not allowed. Second, the food must be clean and pure. Holy Quran mentions the food which human need to obtain a healthy and pleasant life. The results obtained from our study reveals that students are aware of the concept of halal food but they do not practice sunnah diet regularly. There is scientific evidence that halal food contains essential nutrients to ensure health and well-being. Majority of the students are well aware of the halal food products and check halal food logo before using. They also prefer to use only those medicines in case of illness as allowed by Islam. They are not against scientific development or treatment but love to prefer halal treatment. God loves sound health and there are numerous hadiths which call on the sick to find medical treatment for his sickness. The holy prophet (p.b.u.h) has also advised against excessive use of medicine. In this context it is important to refer that the so called iatrogenic disease, namely disease caused by medical treatment, are today ranked third in importance among all the recognized ailments of contemporary man. Thus, muslim is enjoined by his religion to provide a proper treatment of his body. The surveyed students wish to make sunnah diet as part of their daily life in future. They also suggest that university authorities should provide sunnah diet like honey, dates, melons and black seeds.

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