

IMPLICATION OF A PROPHETIC DIET FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE: AN EXPLORATION REVIEW

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Abstract. A prophet's diet will emerge by accounting records of Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) food. These records claim to find patterns in creating hypothesis for this prophetic diet which emphasizes healthy living and reduced nutrition-related diseases (NRD). However, the study largely depends upon Hadiths – sayings enriching the earliest recorded historical information about the Prophet and the first Muslims (Muranyi & Juynboll, 1984). The aim of this paper is to analyse the Hadiths and other literature under the scientific lens to identify and document the food eaten by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It was observed that the list of traced food can be codified into a food pyramid, most of which can be an initiating point for more sophisticated research on finding the nutritive reasoning of individual ingredients. The data was then run through DietRx platform which discovers health effects of food ingredients by assimilating interrelationships among food and key molecular agents. Our analysis demonstrated that this prophetic diet can promote a healthy life and reduce the incidences of NRD.

Keywords: Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), diet formulation, food Hadiths, healthy living, nutrition related diseases (NRD)

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1. Background – an introduction

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) was a human being like the rest of us. He was commanded in the Holy Quran (18.111). He is regarded as the last prophet and messenger of Almighty God by all Muslims all over the world. He is ranked as the most effective person in the world history by Michael. H. Hart in his book titled, ‘A ranking of the most influential persons in history’ (Hart 1980). According to him, “Prophet Muhammad was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels”. It is this unmatched blend of both secular and religious impact what has made the author to choose Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) at the top of his list followed by Isaac Newton, Jesus Christ (PBUH), and Buddha respectively.

Muhammad (Arabic meaning of the word is Praised) was born in 570 C.E. in Mecca, a flourishing city that was a hub of caravan trade and religious pilgrimage in the northwest Arabian Peninsula. Muhammad (PBUH) was orphaned at an early age and was raised by his parental uncle Abu Talib. He lived his life in poverty. He worked as a herdsman for his family and neighbours. This gave him enough time and privacy to wonder about deeper questions of life. He soon became known in the community as a trustworthy and peace-loving person (Toronto 2000). His teachings were based upon the Holy Quran which is said to be the word of God and which was revealed to him at the age of 40 (Fisher 1997). Most of his sayings were recorded largely accurately when he was alive (Saniotis 2012). According to the article in oxfordislamicstudies.com, Hadiths (his ordinance) were compiled not so long after his death and had become very effective. It covered all sectors of life including food. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has advised his followers to live their lives based on the teaching of the holy book Quran and the way he lived his life. The main task of the last messenger Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) according to him was to guide humanity on the right path (Alkhatib, 2010).

Another literature that is relevant to our study is the Hadiths. *Al Hadith Al Shareef*, as it is popularly known, is a collection of deeds and sayings of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his companions (Alkhatib 2010). Sahih Bukhari is a collection of sayings and deeds of the Prophet that is considered to be the most authentic among the 6 canonical books of Hadiths. According to the essay, “How the Quran and Hadith tell us to keep physically healthy”, published on 11th August 2017 at the muslimvibe.com; it recommends to “eat what is lawful and good in the Earth”. Looking for more evidence from Quran, honey, vegetables such as corn and herbs, fruits such as olives, dates, grapes, pomegranates and bananas are good for humans. It has also recommended meat of certain animals and their milk, as well as fresh fish and birds.

Below the verses from Quran mention the above-mentioned foods:

He created cattle for you, wherein is warmth and many gains, and you eat thereof. For you there is in the cattle a lesson; We give you to drink what is in their bellies from betwixt the chime and the blood pure milk, easy and palatable for those who drink it. He it is Who made the sea of service that you might eat fresh (fish) meat from it. And the meat of fowls of what they like.

Also it is essential to note that all these foods have been advised to be consumed in moderate amount for being beneficial. The following verse from Quran mentions the same: “*eat and drink and do not commit excesses; indeed He does not love those who are excessive*”. The Prophet (PBUH) has also advised against overeating as identified in the Hadiths: “*Don't indulge in over-eating because it would quench the light of faith within your hearts*”(Alamdar 2003). Another famous Hadith in Sahih (Darussalam) Volume 4, Book 29, Hadith 3349, suggest that only one third of the stomach should be filled with food leaving one third for water and remaining one third empty.

The eating habits of the Ahul-Bait reports that Prophet Muhammad refrained from eating bread from refined flour and preferred bread made with two parts of barley and ten parts of bran. He also rarely consumed meat suggesting vegetarian type diet as a more preferred one. One of his close companion quotes: “*Don't let your stomach become a graveyard for animals*” (Anderson 2007). The manner in which food needs to be consumed as directed in Holy book Quran and practiced by Ahul-Bait matches the balanced diet pattern recommended by national and international health organizations in today's time. Example of this could be the ratio of vegetables to meat in a particular diet suggested in Quran, i.e. three parts to one, exactly the same as the British Heart Foundation (BHF) suggested in 2010.

Various authors have mentioned the nutritional benefits of these individual foods separately in their studies (Harun 2011, Newman 1991). However, for the present research we do not intend to address them, but we cannot deny the fact that the recommended foods mentioned in the religious text of Quran and Hadiths are consumed even today. Though little has been researched on the active ingredients of these plants and their products, in today's times the benefits of these foods are known among few religious scholars or *Hakeem* (an herbal medicinal practitioner). Since the majority of them are not researched to generate enough evidence, there is an easy opportunity to analyse the powerful healing properties of these super foods to prevent the highly prevalent NRD (Ali et al. 2018).

The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid (MDP) was designed in 1993 by Oldways in partnership with the Harvard School of Public Health and the World Health Organization (WHO). The purpose of it was to have a healthy alternative to the previously proposed by USDA. MDP became popular as chefs and home cooks found it relevant in terms of Mediterranean ingredients and flavour profile. In 2011, a revised version of MDP was developed which was needed due to latest inventions and discovery in the field of Nutrition and Public Health. This has contributed to the development of a framework and an educational tool in Mediterranean geography (Bach-Faig et al. 2011) dietary, sociocultural, environmental and health challenges that the current Mediterranean populations are facing. Mediterranean region and its populations. Many innovations have arisen since previous graphical representations of the MD. First, the concept of composition of the ‘main meals’ is introduced to reinforce the plant-based core of the dietary pattern. Second, frugality and moderation is emphasised because of the major public health challenge of obesity. Third, qualitative cultural and lifestyle elements are taken into account, such as conviviality,

culinary activities, physical activity and adequate rest, along with proportion and frequency recommendations of food consumption. These innovations are made without omitting other items associated with the production, selection, processing and consumption of foods, such as seasonality, biodiversity, and traditional, local and eco-friendly products. Adopting a healthy lifestyle and preserving cultural elements should be considered in order to acquire all the benefits from the MD and preserve this cultural heritage. Considering the acknowledgment of the MD as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO (2010).

Data analysis of all food-related Hadiths accounts for the list of foods consumed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). To detect the patterns emerging from this data, it can be codified into a food pyramid. Simultaneously data can be tested using DietRx Software for facilitating the understanding of relations between food and disease, to enable data-driven readings which can be further used for culinary mediations. "DietRx is the search bank with all of 21207 positive and negative food-disease associations for 1781 food entities belonging to 24 categories (vegetable, plant, fruit, meat and egg, herbs and spices, etc.), text-mined from biomedical literature (27 million MEDLINE abstracts) using state-of-the-art named entity recognition tools, and a deep learning based relation classification model (Precision = 0.87, Recall = 0.8, and F1 Score = 0.84), which was trained with significant amount of manually curated data" (Tuwani and Garg 2018). The data on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) when analysed using this model will assist gaining an insight into healthy eating and its relations with nutrition-related diseases.

2. Methodology

For achieving the objectives of our study, we first collected all the information of food eaten by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). We have taken two important sources for the reference collection. The first is the Sahih Bukhari chapter 70 (Book of Foods, Meals), and the second source is the Holy Quran. There are many verses in the Holy Quran mentioning the lawful food to be eaten. The reason why the second source is also added to the final list is because of the below verse mentioned in Quran:

I don't tell you that with me are the treasures of Allah, nor (that) I know the unseen; nor I tell you that I am an angel. I but follow what is revealed to me by inspiration. Say: Are the blind and the one who sees equal? Will you not then take thought? (Quran, Surah Al An'aam, 50)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) only said or did what God commanded him to do. This is explained in the above verse. Therefore, anything that is not recorded in Hadith, but is lawful to be eaten in the Holy Quran can be considered as a part of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) diet.

Once the data of food items was collected, it was then inserted into a food pyramid model. For our study Mediterranean diet pyramid (MDP) was chosen (Figure 1). The selection of MDP, a revised model for today's life style is because of the following evidence:

1. Muhammad was born in Mecca in Saudi Arabia in 570 (BBC 2011, Biography.com Editors 2020, Tapper and Tapper 1987).
2. The Original MDP, a cultural model of healthy eating by Old ways preservation and exchange trust 1994 represents areas where olives are cultivated in the Mediterranean part (Willett et al. 1995).
3. The updated MDP is the latest revised edition which depicts modern society and its changes (Bach-Faig et al. 2011) dietary, sociocultural, environmental and health challenges that the current Mediterranean populations are facing. Mediterranean region and its populations. Many innovations have arisen since previous graphical representations of the MD. First, the concept of composition of the ‘main meals’ is introduced to reinforce the plant-based core of the dietary pattern. Second, frugality and moderation is emphasised because of the major public health challenge of obesity. Third, qualitative cultural and lifestyle elements are taken into account, such as conviviality, culinary activities, physical activity and adequate rest, along with proportion and frequency recommendations of food consumption. These innovations are made without omitting other items associated with the production, selection, processing and consumption of foods, such as seasonality, biodiversity, and traditional, local and eco-friendly products. Adopting a healthy lifestyle and preserving cultural elements should be considered in order to acquire all the benefits from the MD and preserve this cultural heritage. Considering the acknowledgment of the MD as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO (2010).

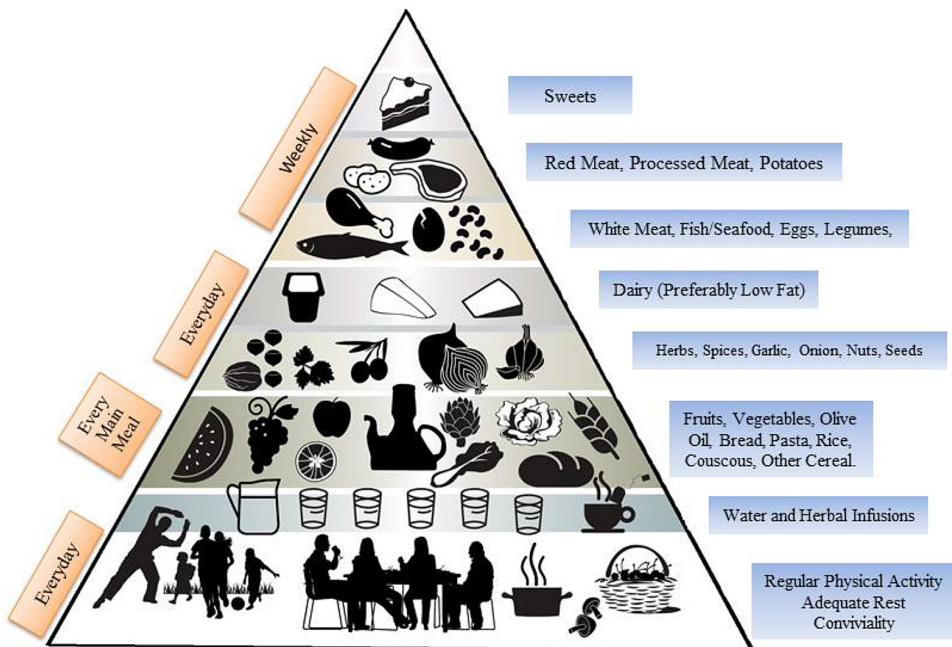


Figure 1. Mediterranean diet pyramid: a lifestyle for today (Bach-Faig et al. 2011).

3. Results

Foods consumed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were identified and collated. This information was then categorized under various food groups. Table 1 shows the combined data collected and categorized from reference of the Holy Quran and Hadiths.

Table 1. Categorization of foods in food groups based on Holy Quran and Hadiths

Beverages	Fruits	Vegetables	Animal meat	Dairy	Grains	Others
Water	Dates	Olives	Camel	Butter	Wheat	Nuts
Milk	Grapes	Onions	Cow	Dried yoghurt	Barley	Mustard seeds
Honey	Pomegranate	Cucumber	Calf	Fat	Beans	Black cumin
	Banana	Gourd	Sheep		Lentils	Saffron
	Fig	Leaves of hubula	Goat			Garden cress
	Watermelon	Garlic	Fish			Chicory
	Ber	Ginger	Quail			Indigo
	Aloes	Truffles (mushroom)	Horse			Narcissus
		Corn	Elephant			Purslane
		Snake cucumber	Locust			Sweet edible things
		Quince	Onager			
		Beetroot	Cured Meat			
		Fenugreek				
		Dill				
		Sweet basil				
		Citron/lemon				
		Marjoram				
		Celery				

The extracted data was then applied in the updated Mediterranean diet pyramid. The results in the pyramid format are presented in Figure 2.

- Bottom Tier Information gathered here is the most essential. If one wants to adapt to the prophetic diet then it is vital to understand the lifestyle and habits of the Prophet as well. Daily activities and physical mobility will provide more effective results overall.
- Moving upward water, milk and honey is vital in the everyday meal and there is enough evidence through the Holy Quran and Hadith to support the same. Alcohol is prohibited (Haram) in Islam and therefore not a part of this diet.
- Fruits, vegetables and grains with a repeated mention of dates, gourd and barley are evident in the results. Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) liking of gourd attracts special attention. Combination of cucumber and dates together is also recommended and liked by the Prophet in many Hadiths (Khan et al. 2009).
- Raw onion and garlic were prohibited when entering the mosque. Though in one Hadith it is evident that the last dish the Prophet ate before his death was onions. This indicates that onion and garlic can be a part of this diet when properly cooked or when you are not associated with mosque related activities (Marwat et al. 2009).
- Butter, fat and dried yoghurt is evident through Hadiths. The type of fat used is not specified and should be tackled in further research. Consumption of a fermented cheese by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during the Tabuq expedition A.D. 630 makes cheese a part of the diet (Akgün and Öztürk 2017).
- Fish was familiar but not common. The most common meat was camel. Apart from this, other meat like sheep, goat, cow etc. are also mentioned. Pork is prohibited in Islam and a special slaughtering method (Halal) is a compulsion.



Figure 2. New prophetic food pyramid.

- Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) loved to eat sweets. Most common ingredients used in the era were milk, flour, dates and honey.

Results from the software DietRx revealed that there is conclusive evidence for the beneficial effect of prophetic diet on numerous diseases, such as cancer, diseases of the nervous system, diabetes, diseases of the endocrine system, mental disorders, cardiovascular diseases, and many more. When the data was entered in the software, out of the 2636 inferred disease text mined associations, 2078 (78.8%) represented positive associations while 558 (21.2%) represented negative associations. It can be therefore postulated that a diet created from the prophetic food pyramid will help reduce nutritional-related diseases.

4. Discussion

According to the World Health Organization, a healthy diet protects against malnutrition in all its forms, as well as nutrition-related diseases, especially the non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer. The quality of the diet can be measured through four parameters: assortment and range, sufficiency and abundance, restraint and moderation, and overall balance. Any diet which has all these properties and is eaten over a period of time will increase health benefits. In addition for a diet to be generally acceptable it needs to take into account the intake of micronutrients (proteins, fats and carbohydrates including dietary fibres) also important micro nutrients such as vitamins and minerals in respect to diverse population with respect to age, gender, physical activity and psychological state (World Health Organization, 2020).

In order to improve eating, physical activity and weight management, environmental and policy interventions are the most effective tools recognised by groups like the World Health Organization (WHO), the Institute of Medicine (IoM), the International Obesity Task Force (IOTF) and the Centre of Disease Control (CDC). The frequent dining out culture and away from home food sources have gained popularity in the last few decades leading to consumption of more saturated fat and less fibre resulting in obesity and nutrition related problems (Glanz 2005). The application of dietary solutions has become a global challenge. Yet it also epitomizes a prospect of great environmental and public health importance. To tackle the rise of diet-related diseases the search for a healthy diet has led to a search in the demand for functional foods with multiple benefits (Magrath and Sanz 2020). Researchers and scientists are constantly on a lookout for breakthrough means and so-called super foods to overcome these challenges.

The religion of Islam takes into account every aspect of living; it promotes physical health and warns off conduct that leads to poor health that would affect the health of an individual and of the community. Therefore, in Islam, the usage of intoxicating substance like alcohol is forbidden (Haram). Alcohol can lead to unstable behaviour that interferes prayers, stimulates unnecessary arguments and

fosters disruption in society. All kinds of excess are also restrained whether its food or overstated living practices. The Quran and Hadiths are two important reference points. The Quran provides the theory aspect whereas the Hadiths, a collection of deeds and sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) provides the practical aspect of practicing Islam. Research also indicates much better health among Muslims who follow Islamic teachings and forsake alcohol, drug and cigarettes, extramarital sex and extravagant living practices (Koenig et al. 2014).

5. Conclusion

Multiple Quran verses and Hadith records show the significance of food practices, outlining foods that are permissible (Halal) and prohibited (Haram). The objective of this paper was to construct a possible diet from the above sources (Quran and Hadiths) and review it in the light of recent research tools (Mediterranean Diet Pyramid and DietRx). This new diet may provide an answer to issues of nutrition-related diseases that the world is currently facing. Prophet Muhammad himself participated in sports (archery and running) and urged his followers also to look after their physical health. The data that has emerged during this research suggests that the diet of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) included the best use of provisions available in those times. His diet included fibre-rich fruits and vegetables on a daily basis. Along with the food, much importance was given to thoughtful eating and sharing. He instructed the importance of particular food with respect to their healing properties as well. Every region and society is diverse and proposes suitable options, which if followed with proper knowledge and guidance can be helpful in preventing nutrition-related diseases. From our results it is quite clear that the quality of each individual food item in terms of its nutritive and functional value should be examined through well-planned research and thus has the scope of promising future studies.

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