

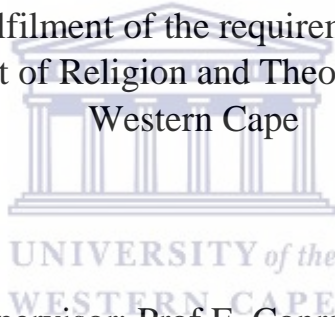
UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

***The Virtue of Temperance and the Vice of
Overindulgence:***

A Case Study of Perceptions in Muslim Households.

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Arts
degree in the Department of Religion and Theology at the University of the
Western Cape



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November 2018

Declaration

I declare that “*The Virtue of Temperance and the Vice of Overindulgence: A Case Study of Perceptions in Muslim Households*” is my own work. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university, and all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Sumaya Hassan

Date: November 2018

Signed:



Acknowledgements

The writing of this thesis has brought with it an immense lesson in addition, to the academic knowledge that I have acquired. This entire process did not materialise in a vacuum; it has been a lengthy journey kept on track through the encouragement, motivation and support of several people. Hence, as I conclude this highly rewarding process, it is with great pleasure and honour that I articulate my indebtedness to my mentors, my well-wishers, my friends and my family and all that stood by me throughout my years of study and who made this study a truly treasured experience and added to the success of this study:

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I pray that the Almighty Allah will reward them and allow them to continue for many years.



Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents for their love, endless support and encouragement and care. To my father Mr Abdulkadir Hassan who knew the value of education and my mother Hukumo Mohammed for her mysterious ways that always kept me in check. Mum and dad, this work is a result of your quiet and unwavering support. Thank you!



Abstract

Overindulgence is widely regarded as a serious social problem in South Africa leading to obesity and associated medical and psychological issues. This study investigated overindulgence from the perspective of Islamic Studies. In the Muslim tradition, overindulgence is regarded as a vice which is contrasted with the virtue of temperance in the Qur'an and the Hadith. There is a long tradition of Muslim virtue ethics that draws from Greek philosophy but also from medieval Arabic sources. This study required an overview of such literature in order to profile contemporary discourse on the virtue of temperance against this historical background.

Even though the virtue of temperance is praised, and the vice of overindulgence is frowned upon in Muslim communities, this does preclude overindulgence amongst Muslims, not even in the holy month of Ramadan. This may be understood in terms of the classic problem of moral formation where it is recognised that virtue cannot be taught. Knowledge of the good does not suffice for the realisation of the good. In terms of this study, this begs the question what kind of considerations play a role in motivating some Muslims to overindulge despite Muslim teachings in this regard, even amidst contexts of food insecurity.

In this study, I investigated the perceptions of such considerations found within Muslim households associated with the Rylands and Belhar mosques. This required a Qualitative Approach where Semi-structured Interviews were conducted with around 10 households associated with each of these mosques. The local Imam in each case was asked to select ten such households of good moral standing. These interviews were recorded and analysed in order to describe the perceptions amongst Muslims of good moral standing with regards to the considerations that play a role in habits of over-indulgence.

The study found several determinants of overindulgence within the selected Muslim households associated with the Rylands and Belhar mosques namely, food insecurity, spiritual apathy, emotional eating, conspicuous and hedonistic consumption as well as social environmental cues. However, food insecurity was exclusive to the Muslim community of Belhar who are distinctive from the inhabitants of Rylands in terms of social-economic status as well as race. This community is largely of Malay origin and is disadvantaged economically compared to their counterparts who are predominantly of Indian descent and enjoy a high-income status.

The study found in both communities that Ramadan; a month of restraint, self-reflection, devotion, and worship had been turned into a month of indulgence and unhealthy eating. It was perceived that most Muslims squeeze a five-course meal in the few hours they can eat. The research further revealed that such individuals to be very meticulous of what type of food they consume when breaking their fast and would prefer oily fried foods to healthy food. This causes weight gain, health complications and sluggishness which stands in the way of worship. It was concluded that the majority gain weight due to their lifestyles.

With regards to the implementation of moral formation, the study revealed self-discipline, leading by example and parents, educators and leaders playing an active role to be key in the formation of good morals. Additionally, the study found good moral formation can be achieved through habituation.

Finally, the study found that the major constraints to moderate and healthy eating to be lack of self-discipline, the absence of virtue ethical education in Islamic institutions and finally Muslim leaders have prioritized the ḥalāl aspect of food and in the interim have forgotten to preach the importance of wholesome pure foods.

The explanations offered in this study indicated the importance of the virtue of temperance in the fight against obesity and in the attainment of physical and spiritual wellbeing. This virtue which is a mean between two vices, namely self-indulgence and insensibility help in the journey towards a higher lifestyle and helps release all the dynamic forces that spiritually weigh down those in affluent as well as food insecure communities.

Keywords

Belhar

Food Security

Islamic ethics

Moral Formation

Muslim Households

Perceptions

Ramadan

Rylands

Vice of Overindulgence

Virtue of temperance



Table of Contents

Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Dedication	v
Abstract	vi
Keywords	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction	10
1.1. Background and Rationale of the Study	10
1.2. Demarcation and Statement of the Research Problem.....	10
1.2.1 Introduction.....	10
1.2.2 The Role of Perceptions.....	11
1.2.3 The Selection of Two Mosques in Belhar and Rylands.....	12
1.2.4 The Selection of Ten Households in Each Mosque	13
1.2.5 Statement and Explanation of Research Problem.....	13
1.3. Research Procedure.....	15
1.3.1 Overindulgence in the Context of Food Insecurity.....	15
1.3.2 The Virtue of Moderation in Muslim Ethics.....	16
1.3.3 Perceptions on Overindulgence in Muslim Households	16
<i>a) Research Design: A Case Study Approach</i>	16
<i>b) Qualitative Research</i>	17
<i>c) Sampling</i>	18
<i>d) Data Collection Tools: Semi-structured Interviews</i>	18
<i>e) Data capturing and Data analysis</i>	19
1.3.4 A Critical Comparison of the Results	19
1.3.5 Concluding Comments and Recommendations	19
1.4. Ethics Statement.....	20
Chapter 2: Overindulgence in the Context of Discourse on Food Security in the South African context.	22
2.1 Introduction.....	22
2.2 Culture as a Contributing Factor	22
2.3 Physical Activity Shifts.....	24
2.4 Nutritional Transition.....	25
2.5 Health Knowledge as a Contributing Factor in Obesity	29
2.6 Obesity amongst Children.....	29
2.7 The Role of Mass Media - Advertisements	30
2.8 Overindulgence as a Psychological Problem	33
2.9 Obesity as a Cause of Non-Communicable Diseases	33

Conclusion	36
Chapter 3: Islamic Virtue Ethics.....	38
3. Introduction.....	38
3.1 The Development of Islamic Ethics and its Sources	38
3.2 The Concept of Virtue in Islamic Ethics.....	48
3.3 The Virtue of Moderation	55
3.4 Moderation in Food.....	56
3.5 The Need for Moral Formation.....	59
Chapter 4: Perceptions of the Muslim Community of Rylands	64
4. Introduction.....	64
4.1 Spiritual Hunger.....	65
4.1.1 Emotional Eating	68
4.1.3 Culture.....	69
4.2 Hedonistic Consumption.....	70
4.3 Conspicuous Consumption	75
4.5 Ramadan	76
4.6 Social Environment.....	78
4.7 Moral Formation	82
4.8 Constraints on Moral Formation.....	84
Conclusion	86
Chapter 5: Perceptions of the Muslim Community of Belhar.....	87
5. Introduction.....	87
5.1 Overindulgence by the Food Insecure	87
5.2 Spiritual Crisis	89
5.2.1. Emotional Eating	90
5.2.2. Dieting.....	90
5.3 Hedonistic Consumption.....	91
5.4. Conspicuous Consumption	93
5.5. Ramadan	97
5.6. Social Environmental.....	99
5.7. Moral Formation	101
5.8. Constraints on Moral Formation.....	102
Conclusion	104
Chapter 6: Discussion and Analysis on the Findings of the Research	105
6. Introduction.....	105
6.2 Determinants of Overindulgence and Mindless Eating	105
6.2.1 Mindless Eating in Relation to Food Insecurity	106
6.2.2 Spiritual Apathy	108
6.2.3 Hedonic Consumption	111
6.2.4 Conspicuous Consumption	112

6.2.5 Ramadan	117
6.2.6 Social Environmental influences on Overindulgence.....	120
6.3 Moral Formation	123
6.4 Constraints of Moral Formation.....	124
Conclusion	125
Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations.....	126
References.....	130
Addenda.....	139
Addendum A: Letter to the Imams of the Habibia and Mubarak mosques	139
Addendum B: Information Sheet	141
Addendum C: Consent Form	143
Addendum D: Guiding Questions.....	144



Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background and Rationale of the Study

Overindulgence is widely regarded as a serious social problem in South Africa leading to obesity and associated medical and psychological issues. This study investigated overindulgence from the perspective of Islamic Studies. In the Muslim tradition, overindulgence is regarded as a vice which is contrasted with the virtue of temperance in the Qur'an and the Hadith. There is a long tradition of Muslim virtue ethics that draws from Greek philosophy but also from medieval Arabic source. This study required an overview of such literature in order to profile contemporary discourse on the virtue of temperance against this historical background.

Even though the virtue of temperance is praised, and the vice of overindulgence is frowned upon in Muslim communities, this does preclude overindulgence amongst Muslim, not even in the holy month of Ramadan. This may be understood in terms of the classic problem of moral formation where it is recognised that virtue cannot be taught. Knowledge of the good does not suffice for the realisation of the good. In terms of this study, this begs the question what kind of considerations play a role in motivating some Muslims to overindulge despite Muslim teachings in this regard, even amidst contexts of food insecurity.

In this study, I investigated the perceptions of such considerations found within Muslim households associated with the Rylands and Belhar mosques. This required a Qualitative Approach where Semi-structured Interviews were conducted with around 10 households associated with each of these mosques. The local Imam in each case was asked to select ten such households of good moral standing. These interviews were recorded and analysed in order to describe the perceptions amongst Muslims of good moral standing with regards to the considerations that play a role in habits of over-indulgence

1.2. Demarcation and Statement of the Research Problem

1.2.1 Introduction

Even though the virtue of temperance is praised, and the vice of overindulgence is frowned upon in Muslim communities, this does preclude overindulgence amongst Muslim, not even in the holy month of Ramadan. Knowledge of the good does not suffice for the realisation of the good. In terms of this study, this begs the question what kind of considerations play a role in

motivating some Muslims to overindulge despite Muslim teachings in this regard, even amidst contexts of food insecurity.

In this study, I investigated the perceptions that play a role in the habits of over-indulgence within Muslim households associated with the Rylands and Belhar mosques. This required some clarification on the role of perceptions, and the decision to focus on these two selected mosques.

1.2.2 The Role of Perceptions

Perceptions determine what we feel, what we see and what we do guiding our emotions conscience and thoughts. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a perception entails an attentiveness of the elements of environment through physical sensation, Physical sensation understood in the light of experience, a quick, acute, and intuitive cognition appreciation and capacity for comprehension. Perception is the primary form of cognitive contact that human beings have with the world around them. Since all conceptual knowledge is derived from or based upon the primary form of awareness, it has been of significance to the philosopher and scientist. The precise nature of perception still remains inadequately defined or conceptualized (Efron 1968: 137). According to Efron (1968: 144), “perception denotes all the various forms of direct, immediate, awareness of external reality which result from energy absorption by receptor organs.”

Perception is important as it helps all to have an individual experience of the world. In this simple process, the brain selects, organises and interprets stimuli for an experience to be processed. It gives humans the innate ability to consciously create meanings of the world. Perception affords humans to understand the world by selecting, organizing, and interpreting information. This process may seem simple as it rests on the experiences of the person but the outcome of one’s perception differs greatly. According to Julian Wood (2010: 68), “perception shapes how we understand others’ communication and how we ourselves communicate.” Perception plays a great part in numerous fields of knowledge. While the involvement of perception in knowledge may vary from one field to another, nonetheless the fact that perception has contributed a lot in the areas of knowledge cannot be denied. Knowledge can be categorized under many areas, such as religion, arts and sciences (see Kibin.com).

In this study, I investigated the perceptions amongst ordinary Muslims of good standing regarding the reasons why Muslims sometimes overindulge even though they are fully aware of the Islamic teaching on the virtue of moderation. My assumption was that ordinary people

have a sound ability to understand the complex interplay of factors that motivate eating behaviour and will be able to help explore that when prompted with appropriate questions.

1.2.3 The Selection of Two Mosques in Belhar and Rylands

For the purposes of this study, I focused on Muslims of good standing in particular households related to two mosques, namely the Habibia mosque in Rylands and the Mubarak mosque in Belhar. The Mosque signifies the focal point in the life of a Muslim. It is the generator and powerhouse around which all spiritual aspirations of a Muslim revolve.

The selection of these two mosques have been influenced by especially two factors. Firstly, it is important to take socio-economic class into consideration as this may well influence perceptions on food and over-indulgence. The Habibia mosque is associated with an affluent community while the Mubarak mosque is associated with a low to medium economic community. Secondly, given my own location in the city of Bellville and as a student at the University of the Western Cape, I opted for the sake of convenience for two mosques that are nearby and with which I have some familiarity.

I attended the Habibia mosque in the Rylands community as a student at the Islamic Peace College of South Africa in Rylands. The Habibia Sufi mosque is the only mosque in Rylands. It is the third largest mosque in Cape Town and was built by Shah Goolam Mohamed in 1905. This mosque has served the Muslims in Rylands with its rich spiritual legacy since then. The mosque is a home of the Chishti Sufi order that dates back to the prophet's cousin and son in law Ali Ibn Talib. Sufism is the mystical tradition of Islam, often regarded as the science of spirituality and the Chishti order emphasises love and tolerance with no discrimination on the basis of race or political affiliation (Habibia Soofie Sahib Mosque 2017).

Rylands is a sub-area of Athlone. According to the census of 2011, the Rylands population was 3902 and had 947 households. It is made up 76.88% Indian or Asian, 13.30% "coloured" 7.59 percent "African" (black), 2.20% others and 0.05% white.

Mubarak is one of the three mosques in Belhar, alongside Nurul Huda Mosque and Ow-wal Mosque. The choice of this particular mosque is arbitrary.

Belhar is one of the suburbs of Cape Town situated in the Cape Flats area. It is an urban township, part of the Tygerberg local authority substructure and is situated 33km from Cape Town, in the Western Cape. The Belhar community was initially developed by garden cities in the early 1970s and in 1975 the first 95 families settled into what is currently called old Belhar

(Davidson 1999: 25). Belhar is among the many dormitory suburbs of Cape Town. It is mainly a residential area with related community facilities. It has little industrial or commercial infrastructure and lacks a definable centre (The Belhar local municipality 1991; Davidson 1999: 25). Belhar is predominantly populated by “coloureds” (mixed ancestry) and “Africans”. It is in the lower to middle income bracket (Somers et al 2001: 6). According to the census of 2001, Belhar’s population was 49 404, the majority of residents were found to be between 18 and 54 years of age. 77.5% of the residents had a job. 17.9% of the population was found to be educators, 16% were clerks, 15.1% were in trade and manual labour while 12.4% worked as machine operators and 1.1% were technicians. In addition, 83.4% were found to own brick houses on private property and the other 7.7% lived in different kinds of informal settlements. Furthermore, 97.8% had access to electricity and 90.65% had access to water in their homes.

1.2.4 The Selection of Ten Households in Each Mosque

The imams of these two mosques were asked to assist in identifying suitable households that could be approached for the purposes of this study. Since the imams knew Muslim families in the area best, this was the most convenient way for sample selection. The imams were asked to take into consideration whether these Muslim households were of good moral standing as well as the contrast between Rylands and Belhar in terms of socio-economic class. More specifically, the imams were asked to identify families with members who were engaged in one way or another in food-related occupations, e.g. the hotel, catering or fast-food industries, tenants and stewards in shops stocking food, social workers, health workers, nutritionists, dieticians, etc. The imams were asked for contact details for ten such families and for replacements where families are unable or unwilling to participate in the study.

1.2.5 Statement and Explanation of Research Problem

Within this social and religious context, the specific research problem that was investigated in this study was formulated in the following way:

The problem that was investigated in this study is what perceptions may be found in Muslim households linked to the Rylands and Belhar mosques regarding the considerations that play a role in Muslims who overindulge even though they affirm the virtue of moderation.

Recent studies show that mindless eating in Muslim communities has increased rapidly. According to a study done by the review gazette (Carlson 2016), six Muslim countries made it

to the top ten “fattest” countries with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in the lead. According to the literature review above, such behaviour goes against Islamic teachings and morals. However, little was known about the perceptions of ordinary Muslims regarding why Muslims overindulge even in the holy month of Ramadan or amidst contexts of food insecurity even though they acknowledge the virtue of moderation. Therefore, there was a need to investigate these perceptions in order to determine the reasons behind it. Given this background, the objective of this study investigated the perceptions of ordinary Muslims of moral standing in Belhar and Rylands drawing empirical data against which further studies could be assessed and undertaken as well as to identify new insights taking into account the seriousness of the problem.

In this study I assumed the following as factors contributing to a “hypothesis”; the absence of a spiritual and ethical dimension of life; a shift from consuming organically produced fresh foods to frozen, processed, genetically modified foods, and fast foods; some overindulge in order to fill a gap created by the absence of spirituality and using food as a means to combat a feeling of emptiness and ennui (stress eating); some have been caught in the web of a corrupted food system; while still others have become oblivious of the Qur’an and hadith due to spiritual hardening of the heart, and thus are less responsive to the Qur’an and its teachings; multinational food companies and food scientists have gotten the better of everyone; the negligence of implementing moral formation; finally Muslim leaders have their heads buried in assuring that the endless products that make their way to the supermarkets are ḥalāl and have forgotten to preach the importance of wholesome pure foods. These assumptions are from a theological and ethical standpoint. Looking at it from a social economic and psychological perspective there is a host of other factors contributing to overindulgence.

It was assumed that some of these factors include:

- hedonistic consumption were people seek pleasure and self-gratification in food;
- conspicuous consumption were people engage in the public enjoyment of costly foods so that the ability to pay for such foods is flaunted;
- a demonstration of male supremacy and to show off social status, class and power;
- being influenced by people with whom we eat, the setting in which we eat, when we eat and how we eat.
- the size, label and the varieties of foods consumed;

- the availability of comfort foods.
- seeking food whenever it is available in order to survive in impoverished environments;
- consuming food in order to alleviate stress;
- moving nomadically from one diet to another;
- the availability of fast foods as a staple food for poor people since it is it cheap and convenient;
- a lack of sufficient time to cook for a large proportion of the workforce.

One may therefore identify a wide variety of factors that may influence overindulgence. An empirical study therefore helped to establish the kind of perceptions that may be found amongst Muslims.

This study revolved around the notion of perceptions and how Muslims perceive what factors influence overindulgence. The study was guided by the following research questions:

- What are the perceptions of Muslims of moral standing with regard to overindulgence?
- How can moral formation be implemented?
- What are the constraints that hinder the proper implementation of moral formation and exercising restraint in eating?
- What new insights theoretically and practically, can be gleaned from this case study?

1.3. Research Procedure

This study required some background on two aspects that situate the investigation of perceptions amongst Muslim households as to why people overindulge against a particular socio-economic and religious context, namely the role of overindulgence as part of the nexus of problems related to food insecurity in South Africa and an understanding of the virtue of moderation and the vice of overindulgence in Muslim virtue ethics. Both these aspects surveyed the available literature in this regard.

1.3.1 Overindulgence in the Context of Food Insecurity

The study investigated the perceptions amongst Muslim household as to why people overindulge, it was necessary to gain some background on the impact of overindulgence and health-related problems associated with that in the context of concerns over food insecurity in

South Africa. The impact of overindulgence has been discussed in the field of public health, while tendencies towards overindulgence have been explored in psychology. Since I have little expertise in such fields, I only offered a very brief overview of such discourse with specific reference to the Diagnostic Overview, the Diagnostic Report and the National Development Plan produced by the National Planning Commission in South Africa, (see Behavioral and Psychological Factors in Obesity (Collins & Bentz 2009), Compulsive Overeating and Habit Formation (Gordon 2013) and The Truth About Overeating (Kromberg 2015)). I also made use of the authoritative overviews provided by the South African Health News Service (2015), the South African National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (2013) and the contributions by scholars such as Sanders (2016) Muzigaba (2016) and Puoane (2016). This very brief overview has been documented in chapter 2 of the thesis following an introductory first chapter focusing on methodological concerns based on this research proposal.

1.3.2 The Virtue of Moderation in Muslim Ethics

In order to recognize overindulgence as a vice, it was necessary to gain an understanding of the contrast with the virtue of moderation within the Muslim tradition. This required a very brief historical overview of the development of Islamic virtue ethics, an identification of core virtues held in high esteem, and a more detailed discussion of the virtue of moderation. This enabled a more detailed survey of classic and contemporary Muslim literature on overindulgence as a vice. The references to the available literature as cited in the proposal above was used as a point of departure (see e.g. Islamic Ethics (Ansari 1989), Islamic ethics: Divine command theory in Arabo-Islamic thought (Al-Attar 2010) and Ethical Theories in Islam (Fakhry 1991)). The results of this survey have been documented in chapter 3 of the thesis.

1.3.3 Perceptions on Overindulgence in Muslim Households

Against the background, as sketched above it became possible to attend to the main focus of this empirical study, namely an investigation of the perception in Muslim households linked to the Rylands and Belhar mosques regarding the considerations that play a role in Muslims who overindulge even though they affirm the virtue of moderation. The empirical part of this project required clarification on several aspects:

a) Research Design: A Case Study Approach

According to De Vos et al., (2011:307), research designs “are all the decisions a researcher makes in planning the study”. A research design is a blueprint or plan of how a researcher aims to conduct the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:74). Creswell et al., (2007:70) elucidate the notion of a research design when he describes it as “a plan or strategy which moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of respondents, the data gathering techniques to be used and the data analysis to be done”. Furthermore, a research design is when “a researcher selects one that is congruent with her or his philosophical assumptions and most appropriate for generalizing the kind of data required to answer the research questions posed” (Creswell et al.,2007:70). In this study, the concept “research design” is understood as the general plan of linking the conceptual research problems to the relevant (and achievable) empirical research.

In this study, a case study approach was used in which respondents from Belhar and Ryland's communities were identified and interviewed. A case study is defined as the technique which takes “multiple perspectives into account and attempts to understand the influences of multi-level social systems on subjects’ perspectives and behavior” (Welman et al., 2005:193). Creswell et al. (2007:75) define case study research “as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used”. Thus, according to Creswell et al. (2007:75), case studies offer “a multi-perspective analysis in which the researcher considers not just the voice and perspective of one or two participants in a situation, but also the views of other relevant groups of actors and the interaction between them. It opens the possibility of giving a voice to the powerless and voiceless, like children or marginalized groups”.

b) Qualitative Research

The research design used semi-structured interviews with selected Muslim households. This implies a qualitative rather than a quantitative model of doing research. Qualitative research “involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials-case study, personal experience, introspection, life story, interview, artefacts, and cultural texts and productions, along with observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:3- 4). Babbie and Mouton (2001:278) define qualitative research designs “as the study which emphasizes on studying human action in its natural setting and through the eyes of the actors themselves, together with an emphasis on detailed description and understanding phenomena

within the appropriate context, already suggest what type of designs will be methodologically acceptable”. Brynards and Hanekom (1997:29) define qualitative research in terms of description of research data. They argue that qualitative research “refers to research which produces descriptive data, generally peoples own written or spoken words. Usually, no numbers or counts are assigned to observations.”

It is worth stating that the qualitative method was designed to deliver empirical findings in which the phenomenon under examination is connected to the social context in which it transpires, and in which these links are made unambiguous as participants of the data analysis procedure. The choice of a qualitative design in this study is appropriate as it aims to appreciate the opinions and perceptions of respondents within faith communities.

c) Sampling

Sampling is the “process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:287).

In this study, I kindly requested the imams of the Habibia mosque in Rylands and Mubarak mosque in Belhar to refer me to potential households that meet the main criterion as described above, namely being of good moral standing in the mosque. The imams were also asked to identify families with members who are engaged in one way or another in food-related occupations. The imams were asked for contact details for ten such families and for replacements where families are unable or unwilling to participate in the study.

d) Data Collection Tools: Semi-structured Interviews

According to Brynards and Hanekom (1997:29), a research method is the “reflection on the planning, structuring and execution of the research in order to comply with the demands of truth, objectivity and validity. Therefore, research methods focus on the process of research and the decisions which the researcher has to take execute the research project”. This study used Semi-structured in-depth interviews as an instrument to collect data. According to Bloom and Crabtree (2006:21) Semi-structured in-depth interviews “are conducted once only, with an individual or with a group and generally cover the duration of 30 min to more than an hour”. They further mention that, “Semi-structured interviews are based on semi-structured interview guide, which is a schematic presentation of questions or topics and need to be explored by the interviewer. To achieve optimum use of interview time, interview guides serve the useful purpose of exploring many respondents more systematically and comprehensively as well as

to keep the interview focused on the desired line of action”. Unstructured interviews are generally used when “conducting long-term fieldwork and allow respondents to let them express in their own ways and pace, with minimal hold on respondents’ responses” (Corbin & Morse 2003:54).

e) Data capturing and Data analysis

Creswell (2014: 209) mentions that, “Merriam (1988) and Marshall and Rossman (1989) contend that data collection and data analysis must be a simultaneous process in qualitative research work. Creswell (2014: 209) adds, “Schatzman and Strauss (1973) claim that qualitative data analysis primarily entails classifying, things, persons and events and the properties which characterise them”

On the basis of the collection, capturing and analysis of such data I identified, clustered together, prioritised, described and critically analysed the perceptions of Muslim households as to what considerations play a role when Muslims overindulge even though they affirm the virtue of moderation. The results of such empirical investigations were documented in chapter 4 (on the Habibia mosque in Rylands) and chapter 5 (on the Mubarak mosque in Belhar) of the thesis.

1.3.4 A Critical Comparison of the Results

As Creswell (2014: 211) points out, “Lafland (1974) suggests that although data collection and data analysis strategies are similar across qualitative methods, the way the findings are reported is diverse.” Creswell (2014: 211) adds that, “Miles and Huberman (1984) address the importance of creating a data display and suggest that narrative text has been the most frequent form of display for qualitative data”.

The main findings on the perceptions of Muslim households as to what considerations play a role when Muslims overindulge in the Habibia mosque in Rylands (see chapter 4) and in the Mubarak mosque in Belhar (see chapter 5) were compared and contrasted. The question here was whether such perceptions differ from each other and what factors were involved in this regard, e.g. in terms of the history of the communities, issues of class and geographical context. The critical comparison of the results has been documented in chapter 6 of the thesis.

1.3.5 Concluding Comments and Recommendations

The concluding chapter of the envisaged thesis has offered a summary of the main findings of the study and highlighted what the study adds to the knowledge in the field being studied.

Anderson (2010) mentions that, “Mays and Pope suggest the researcher ask the following 3 questions to determine whether the conclusions of a qualitative study are valid: How well does this analysis explain why people behave in the way they do? How comprehensible would this explanation be to a thoughtful participant in the setting? How well does the explanation cohere with what we already know?” The concluding comments and recommendations have been documented in chapter 7 of the thesis.

1.4. Ethics Statement

According to David and Resnik (2015:1), ethics refers to the principles for behaviour that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable conduct. Ethical norms also apply to people who conduct scholarly or scientific research. The adherence to ethical norms in research is of utmost importance, as ethical lapses can significantly harm human subjects, animals, ecological systems, students and the public at large. Firstly, they promote human rights, social responsibility, animal welfare and health and safety. Secondly, norms attract public support that is people are more willing to fund research if they trust the project is of quality and integrity. Thirdly, ethical norms ensure that researchers can be held accountable for any misconduct by the public and those involved. Finally, ethical norms promote the cooperation and coordination of researchers in different disciplines and institutions assuring trust, mutual respect and accountability. Moreover, they ensure the prevention of fabricating and falsifying of research data as well as, the avoidance of error. Therefore, every research project has to adhere to certain ethical norms and this one is no different (David & Resnik 2015).

This research adhered to the guidelines set by the Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape. The study was conducted only once permission has been granted by the UWC Senate Research Ethics committee.

The following ethical considerations that are particular to this study have been taken into account. The permission and collaboration of the imams of the Habibia and Mubarak mosques were solicited on the basis of a letter informing them of the nature of this study (see attachment). The participation of Muslim households in this study was based on informed consent. The attached information sheet provided members of such households with basic information about the nature of the study. The information provided emphasized that this study focuses on perceptions around overindulgence in Muslim communities in general and not on any form of overindulgence that may be found in that particular household. Such sensitivity is crucial for this study as any confusion in this regard may jeopardise the results of the study.

Participants were informed that their participation is voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study any given time. Participants were asked to sign the attached consent form that indicated their willingness to participate in the study. Participants were also asked to consent to the recording of such interviews for the sole purpose of being able to listen to them after the interview is concluded in order to analyse contrast and compare with other interviews conducted.

The privacy, anonymity, confidentiality and rights of participants were protected and respected in the following way. The names of the two mosques were indicated in all cases. Households in each mosque were distinguished alphanumerically (e.g. Household A, B, C etc.). Individual members of the household were identified in terms of role responsibilities where need be (e.g. “The mother in Household A, a tenant in Household B, an adult daughter in Household C). These descriptions were read to the participants for their approval.

During the course of this study, the recordings were kept safe in electronic form in the apartment rented by the researcher. The recordings will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.



Chapter 2: Overindulgence in the Context of Discourse on Food Security in the South African context.

2.1 Introduction

South Africa, like the rest of the world, grapples with the epidemic of obesity due to the overindulgence of energy-dense foods and sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) (Tugendhaft & Hofman 2014). A growing body of research shows that the alarming obesity rates in South Africa are mainly due to overindulgence in food and drink (Birrell 2014; Vorster 2009; Kruger 2004; Mungal-Singh 2010). Recent studies indicate that nearly 75 percent of South Africans are overweight and where four in 10 are clinically obese, the country ranks the seventh “fattest” nation in the world (Smith 2010; Carlson 2016). In South Africa obesity ranked fifth as a risk factor for early death and years of life lived with disability or disability adjusted life years (DALYS). This condition is further exasperated by cultural beliefs, sedentary lifestyles, denial, a nutritional transition, and the lack of health knowledge, which then lead to health problems (Kruger, et al 2005: 493). The prevalence of obesity with all its afflictions is found both in the lower and upper social classes (Smith 2010). In conclusion, this epidemic affects the population as a whole including the Muslim community which will be our focus in this study. Although there is a lack of data of how serious it is amongst South African Muslims given that they are a minority, nonetheless research done in Muslim populated countries indicate a strong presence of the obesity epidemic.

2.2 Culture as a Contributing Factor

The cultural belief amongst many South Africans that “being overweight is associated with wealth and affluence” fuels the obesity crisis. Adeboye (2012) asserts that culture serves as a mirror and shapes health behaviours (see also Niang 1994; Dutta-Bergman 2004). Currently, in South Africa like most parts of Africa, obesity is held with little opprobrium, particularly amongst women (Walker 1998; Walker & Walker 2001). This is to such an extent that fatness is associated with beauty, fame and is evidence of good health and standard of living (Mvo et al. 1999). Furthermore, in some Muslim cultures’ women are fattened up for suitors prior to marriage as a symbol of beauty and fertility (Rguibi & Belahsen 2006; Smith 2009). Consequently, cultural norms and beliefs regarding obesity have an influence on nutritional knowledge¹⁸⁰. These beliefs are driven by social-economic status; the challenge affects both advantaged and disadvantaged communities and is prevalent among adults and children alike

(SANHANES-1 2013: 188). The social and cultural environment that people live in influence perceptions of body size, body size concerns, and plays a role in the encouragement of fuller or thinner bodies. These views tend to have control over bodily appearance and have an impact on beliefs about the benefits of health knowledge and diseases associated with obesity (SANHANES-1 2013: 191). The same is true for the majority of Muslim societies who equate a certain largeness with self-esteem. Such that a big belly is an impressive thing for an Arab man in the Muslim world as they are of the perception that they will be taken more seriously if they are physically heavy. This new cultural beliefs and perceptions that have to do with the ego go against Islamic teachings. Subsequently, such perceptions will be probed in this study. The body image is one of the most significant psychosocial factors that affect the individual's body status. Studies allege that the body image is multidimensional (SANHANES-1 2013: 190). The dimensions of the body image include the attitudes, perceptions and dissatisfaction regarding body size status, body size concerns, as well as the direction and level of body size dissatisfaction. It is also believed that these dimensions determine an individual's preference for fatness or thinness. Moreover, it governs their adoption towards healthy lifestyle behaviours such as engaging in physical activity and eating healthy foods.

Obesity in South Africa is attached to social meanings predominantly among black African women who have scored the highest in risk. They associate wellbeing to weight gain and are influenced by the decreased opportunities for physical activity in non-rural areas, together with the lack of access to affordable healthy food choices. A survey conducted shows that more than 60% of South Africans are contented with their body size status and this was maintained by the low rates among those who made an effort to lose weight (SANHANES-1 2013 190-201). According to a study by the Human Science Research Council, 88 percent of South Africans consider a fat body as the ideal, and as a result do not see the need to change their lifestyles (Puaone et al. 2002: 1041). Similar research conducted in rural communities indicated that obese and overweight black women were not willing to lose weight; and very few of them associate the food that they consume with diseases such as diabetes, heart attack, stroke, cancer, or hypertension (Faber & Kruger 2005). In addition, obese individuals typically regard themselves as healthy or very healthy so that there remains a gap between perception and reality (Smith 2010). Other research findings purport that African men have a preference for overweight females compared to thin women. (Puoane et al. 2005 Moïse Muzigaba). In addition, the HIV pandemic has contributed to the perception that obesity or overweight is "healthy" in South Africa. Okop et al. (2016: 365) found that thinness and loss of weight were

associated with HIV/AIDS. This perception was more common amongst black women and resulted in a reluctance to lose weight in fear of being stigmatized. This is similar to a study conducted in black American communities that indicates reluctance in maintaining slender bodies due to the same belief (Rebecca et al 1999). Body image perceptions have also been reported in the United States, in sub-Saharan Africa and other populations to relate to weight control behaviours and eating disorders (SANHANES-1 2013 190-201).

Perception of body mass can be described as the precision of an individual's view of their size generated by the way they view themselves. The lack of appropriate health information on the risk of obesity and the focus of public health interventions on infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS compounds the crisis. South Africans irrespective of their gender associate negatively with the knowledge of obesity and its related illnesses as well as health knowledge. South Africa is a diverse country in terms of traditional beliefs, culture and attitudes but nevertheless, the population has adopted a westernised lifestyle caused by the increase of urbanisation and globalisation. Although, South Africans have adopted a westernised lifestyle their perception of the ideal body image has not been influenced. Consequently, beliefs that were internalised during early socialisation within families especially by black individuals regarding food and attitudes towards it are still adhered to for that reason, such behaviour, attitudes, and beliefs resisted in these individuals for example, what food means in relation to health, general perceptions about food, the values attached to food, body size and image as well as food portions (SANHANES-1 2013: 189-190).

2.3 Physical Activity Shifts

The shallow perception of the threat of obesity optimises sedentary lifestyles. Smith (2010) states that, "49% of South Africans do not exercise and 71% have never dieted. Most worryingly, 17% of children under nine are overweight." Regional studies have also documented low levels of physical activity amongst the elderly as well as young women who did not complete high school. In urban black communities in the Western Cape, 30–40% of subjects also reported low levels of activity during their work and leisure time (Levitt 1993; Levitt 1999). The other issue that diminishes physical activity is the ease of transportation and the availability of 'fast-foods' which both support in their own way, sedentary lifestyles. This type of lifestyle is worsened by the access of a television set by most people in South Africa – be they rich or poor, as they require no physical exertion watching television programmes (Fairbrother 2009). In addition, it is important to note that inactivity is equally a problem

conspicuously and unmistakably amongst Muslims more so amongst women partly because of their confinement to their homes and the absence of any real tradition in exercising, particularly in this age where no one walks as was the case of traditional Muslim cities. In olden days for people to get from one city to another they had to walk or ride which was strenuous in its own right however by the time they reached their destination they were pretty fit. As a result, the means of transportation has left people over bloated equally in the Muslim world.

2.4 Nutritional Transition

South Africans have undergone a nutritional transition over the past years with increasing evidence showing that there is a rapid change in the structure of dietary intakes (Bourne, Lambert & Steyn 2002: 157–162; Vorster 2002: 239–243).¹ The end of apartheid witnessed the migration of the black population from rural areas to urban areas; better opportunities, easier lifestyles, better jobs, more money associated with urban life lured many individuals into the city, combined with cheaper foods that are in abundance and in varieties as well as fewer physically demanding tasks. Rural-urban migration is a global trend and not unique to South Africa. The desires associated with urban migration are universal desires since they provide better chances of job opportunities, healthcare, and education. (Kruger et al., 2005: 492-493). However this shifts come with great burdens such as lack of sufficient public health and not many governmental infrastructures can cope with such excessive populations. Furthermore, rural migrants are greeted with the information and media frenzy. Although this is positive under some circumstances, the loads of advertisements that are aimed to sell products will unduly influence those with little knowledge of how media influences choices. For example, they make individuals like the consumption of a product that is nutritionally “bad “or an excess of “good”.

Judging from the high consumption of beverages and energy dense foods, high levels of overweight/obesity amongst women as well as from the relatively moderate levels of underweight in men and children, it is clear that South Africa is among the countries in their final stage of nutritional transition. Consequently, the South African population display NCDs that are related to nutrition intake (SANHANES-1 2013: 178). These changes seem to be prevalent in both urban and rural communities where people seem to be inclined towards a diet

¹ “Nutrition transition” is a phrase which defines a global shift in dietary patterns characterized by better accessibility of some kinds of food at lower cost and the demand of less energy at work and at home (Caballero 2006).

high in refined foods, sugar and saturated fats but low in fibre often termed the “Western diet”. Initially, dietary shifts, the exigency of obesity and chronic illnesses were basically identified with the higher socioeconomic strata of the populations in developing countries. However, later patterns exhibit a move from the higher to the lower socioeconomic level. The number of overweight people rivals the number of underweight people, for the first time in human history (McLaren 2007). Apparently, there is an increasing momentum, particularly among blacks, in this imprudent dietary shift. Steyn (2006) reviewed the nutritional transition of black South Africans who make up three-quarters of the population. He states that in the past 50 years fat intake among South African blacks living in urban settings, augmented from 16.4% to 26.2% of total energy (approximately an increase of 59.7%), whereas the carbohydrate intake reduced from 69.3% to 61.7% of total energy (approximately a decrease of 10.9%). Rural African dwellers have also made a shift towards such a Western diet. McIntyre et al (2005), discovered in their research that the fat intake among rural subjects is 22.9%. It was also noted that the switch to animal-derived foods was on the increase at the cost of plant-based foods. Although such dietary patterns imply an increased iron and calcium intake, they also increase the intake of saturated fats, one of the major risk factors for cardiovascular disease (Steyn 2006). Hence, there is a clear indication that the nutritional transition is contributing to the double burden of malnutrition and chronic illnesses, since previously undernourished communities in rural settings are exposed to diets in urban areas that are associated with an increased risk of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) (Vorster 2010; UN General Assembly 2011).

Studies show that high obesity rates are evident in communities with high poverty rates and the least education. This is due to the consumption of high energy dense foods which are mostly composed of refined foods such as grains, sugars and fat and are of low cost. The price of food plays a leading role as it has an influence in grocery shopping among South Africans. Other factors that influence grocery shopping includes food taste, health considerations, hygiene, nutrient content, safety and shelf life. Muzigaba and Puoane (2013) mention that, poorer communities prefer and opt for foods that are less healthy and cheap, high in fats and added sugars, given that they are readily available compared to the healthy food options. They also found that the lower the education, the more they preferred unhealthy foods such as fried chickens and other fried foods. Another cause of obesity in poor communities is the association of food insecurity that they suffer from which is associated with lower food expenditures, this results in the consumption of lower quality diets i.e. low fruit and vegetable consumption. In

other words, for those exposed to poor quality foods, it has become a default choice (Drewnowski & Specter 2004 6 -16).

Due to the swift changes that, South Africa is undergoing which includes environmental and economic; food-consumption patterns have seen a drastic change. The proliferation of fast-food chains has been caused by the increase of economic development, urbanisation, less energy-demanding jobs, and sedentary lifestyles which is also associated with urbanisation. Existing studies have also implicated urbanisation in the growing burden of co-morbidities of obesity such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease (CVD) and hypertension. With the increase and diversification of foods the quality and nutritional wellbeing has been influenced. This means a shift is made from the consumption of traditional staple foods that are rich in fibre and, low in fat to refined and processed foods, dairy products, and meat that are high in sugar and saturated fats. This then results in the double burden of under- and over-nutrition that co-exists in the same household, family or community; food insecurity has been linked with obesity especially amongst women (Chaput et al. 2007; Adeboye 2012.). This triggers the double burden of disease i.e. communicable diseases which are caused by under-nutrition and chronic diseases related to obesity and over-nutrition (Bradshaw et al. 2006). Consequently, NCDs have prevailed before the battle of non-NCDs could be won (Standing Committee on Nutrition 2006). If we are to digress and have a glimpse of the Islamic world one sees that the majority of Muslim countries are under the burden of diet-related diseases. These illnesses are ever escalating as these countries witness a triple burden of disease and are in dire need of public health nutrition strategies. Hwalla et al. (2016) state that the triple burden is “characterized by the simultaneous presence of undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight and obesity as a consequence of both emergency situations and nutrition transition that are placing different communities in the region at various nutrition-related health risks”. This is due to recent sociodemographic changes which have initiated many politically vulnerable populations which has resulted in undernutrition and its many comorbidities. On the other hand, is a population parallel to the under nourished whose rapid transition is due to the shift from a traditional diet rich in vegetables, fruits and whole grains, that was diverse and more seasonal towards a “westernised” diet. Hwalla et al. (2016) further mention that, “data from the Food and Agriculture Organization food balance sheets and from food consumption surveys in the region have highlighted a shift towards an increasingly energy-dense diet and high intake of fat and sugar, coupled with a parallel decrease in complex carbohydrate consumption”. Subsequently, this results in NCDs. It is clear that Muslim societies have

forsaken Islamic teachings regarding the etiquettes of consuming food and the often-taught tradition that the physical body has been entrusted to us by God. Hence this study will investigate what has come of the Muslim world by documenting the perceptions of South African Muslim communities.

Steyn et al. (2006) mention that, hidden hunger a term that points to micronutrient deficiencies is present in overweight, stunted and underweight individuals due to their dietary intake. In a similar research, Vorster (2010) states that, “A reduction in diet costs in linear programming models leads to high-fat, energy-dense diets that are similar in composition to those consumed by low-income groups. Such diets are more affordable than are prudent diets based on lean meats, fish, fresh vegetables, and fruit. The association between poverty and obesity may be mediated, in part, by the low cost of energy-dense foods and may be reinforced by the high palatability of sugar and fat. This economic framework provides an explanation for the observed links between socioeconomic variables and obesity when taste, dietary energy density, and diet costs are used as intervening variables.” In conclusion, the poor become obese and overweight by consuming a great amount of energy dense foods and spending a small amount of their disposable income on food. Research shows that obesity follows a social economic gradient in that it falls disproportionately on the poor those with limited resources, the racial ethnic minorities, low income and those of low level of education.

The food environment is one of the factors that influences the prevalence of obesity referred to as “obesogenic environment” (Lake and Townshend 2006). Food systems have undergone changes, notably food production, manufacturing and distribution (Steyn et al. 2001). Multinational corporations have found a niche in local food systems. Such food and beverage corporations include the Coca-Cola Company; Cadbury, Schweppes; among many others such companies have changed the consumer food environment (Igumbor et al. 2012). Franchises such as McDonald’s and Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) have become the leading fast food outlets in South Africa and continue to blossom with the use of strategic marketing campaigns to increase their market as well as promote the consumption of energy-dense ready-to-eat foods; they are a factor in obesity and NCDs (Cordain et al. 2005). Research shows that in 2010 individuals on average, consumed 254 Coca-Cola products in each year compared to 130 in 1992 to 175 in 1997 (Hawkes 2002). The consequence of urbanisation has given rise to a lifestyle that has caused the increase of high-calorie sugary meals and drinks and the intake of energy-dense foods as well as the adoption of detrimental eating habits commonly referred to as ‘westernisation’ this includes the regular consumption of fast foods and the so called ‘eat

out' craze (Adeboye 2012). Therefore, obesity is most prevalent in the disadvantaged groups. In addition, studies show that women who live in households where there is food insecurity tend to be overweight and obese hence there is a link between food insecurity, lower diet quality and overweight which is something of a paradox (Drewnowski & Specter 2009). This nutritional transition is further aggravated by the lack of health knowledge by the majority of South Africans.

2.5 Health Knowledge as a Contributing Factor in Obesity

SANHANES-1 (2013: 89) unearthed that the argument i.e. an improved education translates into improved health knowledge which in turn results in better health choices has not worked for South Africa despite the improved education in recent years this is not the case for South Africa. SANHANES-1 concluded in their measurement of health knowledge that the majority regardless of their ethnicity, age and educational background did not know the suitable period of time to engage in physical activity or had enough knowledge to tell what foods were high in fat, salt and sugar. Such inadequate nutritional knowledge will contribute to the development of nutritional status disorders. In addition, the belief that the wealthier and educated the community the more they possess health knowledge is not true for the majority of South Africans in the same way that the belief, i.e. those who can access health knowledge whenever they want can take responsibility on their food choices is not true of most communities. Although poor communities are most vulnerable in terms of health knowledge given that they lack access to nutritional information, given the evidence this is not the case of South Africa in view of the fact that regardless of their financial and educational level they still score very low in nutritional and physical knowledge. Therefore, both the rich and poor communities should be prioritized when implementing appropriate strategies to provide health knowledge.

SANHANES-1 (2013: 190) further mention that, the implementation and modification of healthy behaviours of adults have shown to produce short-term benefits. However, in the longer term, interventions that were implemented earlier in life became ingrained in individuals thus they adapted to health behaviours. The adoption of these health behaviours early in life tend to track into adulthood. As well as have a possibility on the prevention and reduction on health complications later in life. Subsequently, the reduction of childhood obesity is achieved. Therefore, obesity is not confined to adults sadly but also affects children due to the rise in inappropriate infant and young child feeding practices.

2.6 Obesity amongst Children

Obesity amongst children is a growing challenge around the globe with 22 million children under the age of five years classified as obese (Rochon 2002). Studies confirm that children who are obese are more likely to be obese in their adulthood and remain obese throughout (Park et al. 2013). It is advised that nutrition of infants should be improved in the first 1000 days so as to prevent over and under nutrition. Studies found that there is a link between low birth rate and obesity in early stages of childhood. Other studies have shown that there is a link between high birth rate and childhood obesity (Vasylyeva et al. 2013). The excess consumption of sugar is a major component of weight gain. The sales in sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) has escalated obesity in South Africa in conjunction with urbanisation and high-caloric energy dense foods (Tugendhaft & Hofman 2014). What drives obesity and overweight can be put in four categories namely inappropriate early childhood feeding practices, lack of knowledge, poor diet, and physical inactivity.

Ways in which to tackle overweight and obesity includes food taxes on unhealthy foods, physical counselling, subsidies for healthy foods and the reduction in salt intake, this will result in a multiple-intervention approach which is better than individual interventions and results in larger health gains. Academics from Wits University indicated that a 20% taxation on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) could decrease the impact of obesity; using a mathematical model Denmark observed a reduction in consumption of the taxed products by 10% to 15% in the first nine months. Although individuals are responsible for their health the ability of individuals to exercise personal responsibility is affected by environmental factors. The environment plays a major role in delivering large amounts of unhealthy foods to people, their food preferences are then affected which in turn increases the demand for unhealthy foods (Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Obesity in South Africa 2015-2020).

2.7 The Role of Mass Media - Advertisements

The other factor that influences obesity in South Africa is the use of the advertising industry to sell food products, without considering the long-term consequences. Research done by the WHO concludes that the advertisement of foods that are unhealthy are extensive and widespread. This results in the change of purchase requests, food preferences and consumption patterns (Vasylyeva et al. 2013). Advertisements have become a billion-dollar global industry and have shown to dictate human behaviour with the use of symbols and messages so as to convince consumers to buy their products. Advertising companies are well steeped in experience in which every word and image is carefully thought of for example a thirty second

advert could take months to be made. Research is done on the target audience as to what makes them tick in order to achieve the best presentation as well as the most interest from the viewer. As a result, every image and every word is carefully picked (Caballero, 2006). Advertising agencies take advantage of the effect the media has and try to affect the behaviour of consumers in the long term by using different theories argues Fourie. These include the “Modelling Theory” “Social Expectation theory” “Meaning Construction theory” and the “Stereotype theory” The "Modelling Theory" illustrates how individuals associated with a certain character or a certain setting and thus model their behaviour based on that (de Fleur & Dennis, 1994: 585, cited by Fourie, 2007: 240-241). This theory would drive the use of famous characters and celebrities to endorse specific products. As a result, this improves the identification of the brand; this is done in food advertisements aimed at children, where popular media characters are included (Fischer et al. 1991: 3145-3148).

The “Social Expectation theory” describes the adoption of social norms by media users of what they see (de Fleur & Dennis 2007: 591, cited by Fourie, 2007: 241-242). With this influence on individual foods high in fats and sugars are shown on TV shows disproportionately (Bell et al. 2003). This disproportionality influences the behaviour of those who aspire to be the characters on TV.

The “Meaning Construction theory” is when the media dictates a meaning for a word or attaches an exaggerated meaning to certain words and phrases especially a one-sided and oversimplified one in which audiences have not been previously exposed to, and then it is adopted (de Fleur and Dennis, 1994: 595, cited by Fourie, 2007: 242-243). This is mostly done through advertising. For example, the Coca-Cola brand which has reached global recognition through its current campaign slogan, “The Coke side of life”. it is being associated with carefree, happy fun experiences.

The “Stereotype theory” is the portrayal of specific stereotypes that is in existence and the media reinforces these existing patterns of behaviour by or towards specific groups. In Africa stereotypes are often used for perpetuating a certain myth, in order to sell a certain product. (Fourie 2007: 252). Fourie contends that myths are mainly communicated through stereotypes. According to Crisp (1987: 412) this happens when the self-image induced by stereotypes convinces a person to see himself in a specific role. It can be contended that persuasive advertising surpasses the autonomy of persons. This is possible because individuals are manipulated without their knowledge. Such techniques are used in the food industry and this has an impact on obesity. For example, KFC uses adverts that depict a life of a mother that is

chaotic it paints a picture that communicates stereotyped childhood behaviour such as a teenage boy dabbling in rebellion this then leads to his quailed mother who finds cigarettes in the pocket of his school jacket and a young girl trying out with a pair of scissors on her hair. This advert portrays the subtle plight of a working mother that is a dominant parent. The advert ends with her concerned and exhausted expression and the payoff line, “Moms have so much to worry about. Luckily dinner isn't one of them”. This type of advertising appeals to most moms and is a reality to many of them– if not stereotypical then causes a yearning in a way that necessitates a condition of autonomy, that eliminates the possibility of multiple choices, that is eat KFC. Another example of a stereotype which is frequently used in advertisements for junk food is the “chubby” child.

This type of pervasive advertising has been made possible since the South African media is controlled or owned by a few large corporations thus the industry has undergone concentration (Fourie 2007:363). Secondly, the digitization of the media has seen this industry more persistent than ever before resulting in far more avenues for information to travel. With the many forms of media that we are in contact with for example the television, internet, radio, media, print and telecommunication. As a result, individuals living in urban settings are exposed to numerous media messages every day, it was reported, by Media Matters in 2007 that the typical American adult sees 600 to 625 adverts of any form every day. The exact number of adverts exposed to individuals in a day is disagreed upon due to the confusion stemming from the definition of “exposed to”, nevertheless, a study published in 1968 found that among the numerous adverts a person is aware of in any given day (from waking until asleep) is 76. Keeping in mind the great expansion of the media industry since then (Fairbrother 2009)

As a result, the focus of media in South Africa is less on entertainment and information and rather on marketing and selling. This shift to commercialization was signalled by the new South African Broadcasting Act (no. 4 of 1999) making public broadcasters’ commercial entity like SABC. Moscoe and Rideout (1997) define commercialization as, “the process that takes place when the state replaces forms of regulation based on public interest and public service with market standards. In the communications industry, this has meant greater emphasis on market position and profitability. With this shift caused by globalization towards the concentration, commercialization and digitization, of the media in South Africa, it is argued that South African media is among the most “pervasive ideological agent” owned or controlled by a population who's aim is to increase revenues.” To quote Fourie (2007: 130), “The media is seen to be the

most pervasive ideological agent in late 20th century and 21st century”. With this reality, the South African media industry serves as an instrument for imposing ideologies on the masses it serves. An ideology is a conception of meaning which serves those who wish to assert their power (Thompson, 1990: 273; Fairbrother 2009).

2.8 Overindulgence as a Psychological Problem

Obesity is as much a psychological as a physical problem. The etiological basis of obesity and eating disorders typically lies in the combination of psychosocial, environmental, and biological attributes. Psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders cause individuals who suffer from it more difficulty controlling their consumption of food, maintaining a healthy weight and exercising an adequate amount. When individuals get lonely, stressed, sad, anxious and frustrated due to their weight most often they turn food into a coping mechanism. Those who suffer from obesity are known to have a perpetual cycle of mood swings so when distress overpowers them, they resort to overindulgence to help cope. This may result in temporary attenuation and in the long run individuals experience anxiety due to the extra weight gain and their inability to control their stress. This then turns into a pattern where food is used to cope with emotions. It is worsened by the environment which helps this pattern in which calorically dense foods are easily available and physical activity is not easily accessible. problematic eating behaviours such as “mindless eating”, involves snacking on foods that have a lot of calories in them according to Collins and Bentz (2009). This brings to mind the traditional frustration of the secluded Muslim wives working out their frustrations by nibbling at the sweetmeats left overs in their houses which has left many of them in a state of poor health especially in the middle east and the sub-continent. Older women are in particular in poor physical health and by the time they pass the age of 50 they are diagnosed with diabetes and all kinds of debilitating diseases. This is a clear indication that the majority of Muslims are oblivious of the Qur’anic verse which states, “in the remembrance of God do hearts find peace” (Qur’an 13:28).

2.9 Obesity as a Cause of Non-Communicable Diseases

The prevalence of obesity has led to the increase of NCDs such as diabetes, cardiovascular and other degenerative diseases that require lifelong treatments. NCDs are on the rise in South Africa like the rest of the globe. In developing countries, NCDs are more prevalent compared to infectious diseases (Goedecke et al 2005: 67-70). The UN General Assembly indicated in a meeting that NCDs were the main contributing factors to socio-economic problems

predominantly in the developing world. Furthermore, non-communicable illnesses in South Africa account for more than 40 percent of all deaths with doctors predicting that such diseases will be the country's biggest killers overtaking HIV and tuberculosis (Mayosi et al 2009).

Obesity exerts financial strain significantly on economies especially in developing countries because of obesity related diseases. This growing epidemic around the world is to be prevalent in women. Higher prevalence of obesity and overweight was seen in those who had high blood pressures. Bourne et al (2002: 157-162) allege that the increasing emergence of NCDs in black South Africans, compounded by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, presents a complex picture for health workers and policy makers. According to the diagnostic overview deaths have not only increased sharply but have doubled in the last decade. It alleges that the rise in total deaths, is mainly due to a devastating set of epidemics, referred to as the quadruple disease burden, that are present on all aspects of society. These diseases include the HIV pandemic, injury, infectious diseases and finally Non-communicable diseases. The diagnostic overview mentions that, "non-communicable diseases in 2004 relative to baseline value in 1997 showed a fivefold increase" (Diagnostic Overview 2010: 73-85). As mentioned NCDs are on the increase in all strata of South African society and the evidence is compelling. These findings represent the advanced series of rural urban transitions. Further, this suggests that complex health transitions are underway in all settings. Therefore, the perception that communicable diseases are the main burden in South Africa is thus flawed (Diagnostic Overview 2010: 73-85).

The National Development Plan 2030 (2011: 330) argues that what South Africans eat, their behaviour and lifestyles contribute to the health challenges faced by the country. It adds, that the lack of information and encouragement from their leaders and influential people makes it difficult for them to change their behaviour and lifestyles. It continues that if South Africans do not change their lifestyles and start eating healthy foods by growing and buying them and exercise often non-communicable diseases such as diabetes high blood heart disease, cholesterol among the poor will become a major risk over the next 20 to 30 years. WHO estimates that South Africa's burden from non-communicable disease is two to three times higher compared to other countries such as central Europe and sub-Sahara. In South Africa these diseases are on the rise in rural communities, disproportionately affecting the poor in urban settings, and causing an upsurge in the demand for chronic disease care (Tollman et al. 2008; Groenewald et al. 2008).

In South Africa, the presence of socioeconomic differentials is worsened by the rich ethnic diversity that has an influence on the distribution of lifestyles and risk factors on NCDs. As a

middle-income country South Africa is in the health transition were infectious diseases and maternal and malnutrition conditions account for 30.6% of deaths and NCDs account for 31.9% while trauma and violence account for 35.3 percent (Schneider et al. 2009)

Infectious diseases are associated with the poor while NCDs are associated with the rich in developing countries. However emerging studies show that NCDs are as high in developing countries as the developed countries. For example, studies done in Mexico, and Vietnam showed that NCDs were prevalent in the poorer regions as in the wealthier regions. Another study done in Vietnam showed that cardiovascular disease (CVD) a NCD accounted for more deaths compared to infectious and parasitic diseases combined and this was in all socioeconomic groups. Moreover, age-specific death rates for NCDs are presently higher in adults in sub-Sahara compared to populations in the western industrialized countries (Schneider et al. 2009)

Women of higher socio-economic status that are engaged in income generating activities showed to be overweight compared to their poorer counterparts. This is because of a nutritional transition and a change of lifestyles (Ziraba et al. 2009). Obesity was on the increase among women of lower socio-economic status, with the speed higher in the poor (+50%) compared to the rich group (+7%). In addition, obesity increased among the uneducated woman nearly by 46% while the educated woman who had attained secondary level or higher studies dropped by about 10% (Ziraba et al. 2009). Beaglehole and Yach (2003) indicate that globalisation has played a significant role in the promotion of NCDs through direct effects on risk factors for instance nutrition, alcohol and tobacco, as well as indirect effects on health systems and national economies (Epping-Jordan et al. 2005; Beaglehole et al. 2007).

A consensus was reached in South Africa on the control and prevention of NCDs at a South African summit held in Gauteng. It was concluded that NCDs necessitate intensified national action, early detection, universal treatment and a strategic plan that addresses prevention and behavioural change. Among the health challenges the Diagnostic Report mentions includes, “Longer term health challenges that relate to nutrition, lifestyle, traffic safety and violent crime” (Diagnostic Report 2011 :32) One of the important factors in the stoppage of and treatment of NCDs related to nutrition is health knowledge, dietary knowledge, practises as well as behaviour that can be used as a point of reference in the future (Diagnostic Report 2011 :178).

Schneider et al. (2009) argue that with the absence of public health initiatives causes of NCDs such as obesity and smoking will become prevalent in the poor regions of the world. Studies show that such has already occurred in South Africa. The study further states that the presence of NCDs is both in the poor and rich regions. However, in the poor regions NCDs as well as its risk factors are not identified adequately or treated properly among the poor. It indicates that NCDs will increase as South Africa undergoes development unless effective policies are put in place. Yach (2002) stresses that there is a need for the transformation and reinforcement of public services and primary health for the poor. Frenk et al. (1989) argue in the same vein that: “Perhaps the major challenge is to make the health-care transition respond to the epidemiological transition in a way that reduces the inequities brought about by the protracted-polarised model” (Schneider et al. 2009).

Researchers propose a national plan of action that should be developed and adopted in a stepwise approach, keeping in mind resource restraint they propose an approach that is evidence-based to discover interventions that are immediate and have a great effect. This plan must be led by government harnessed by NGOs, the private sector and should link with sectors that go beyond the health sector. They further suggest some form of national surveillance platform in order to assess and monitor programmes (Rohde et al. 2006). The South African government has put forward many initiatives to curb the epidemic of NCDs, but none of these efforts have been effective. They propose an initiative both in the rural and urban settings across the country, that is founded on robust provincial and district level partnerships between academics and service providers (Mayosi et al. 2009).

Conclusion

Results from this study show overweight and obesity to be on the increase in all sectors of society due to overindulgence and over-consumption of energy dense foods coupled with sedentary lifestyles. Obesity a disease in its own right and a risk factor for many other diseases could reach epidemic proportions with urban women being the most concern. The higher prevalence of obesity amongst women implies that they carry more of the burden of obesity, including reduced life expectancy, greater risk of obesity-related disease, and increased medical costs. Moreover, an underfunded South Africa and ill-equipped health system cannot deal with such an epidemic alongside communicable diseases. Kruger, et al. (2005: 492-494) mention among the reasons for the obesity epidemic to be globalisation; it is viewed as the main driving force for nutritional transition. This global shift in dietary patterns is because of

the availability of different kinds of foods that are cheap and the reduced need for energy demands at work and at home (also see Caballero 2006). The other factor that Kruger, et al. (ibid: 493) mention is the interesting relationship between level Body Mass Index (BMI), and of education with cheap refined fatty foods. There is also the correlation between wealth and the risk of obesity. Initially, dietary shifts, the exigency of obesity and chronic illnesses were basically identified with the higher socioeconomic strata of the populations in developing countries. However, later patterns exhibit a move from the higher to the lower socioeconomic level. The number of overweight people rivals the number of underweight people, for the first time in human history (McLaren 2007). These changes are driven by a range of factors, including urbanization, economic growth, technical change, and culture. Consequently, this pattern has currently changed as it is increasingly linked with poverty. Thus far general contributing factors include population shifts that cause changes in dietary practices and socio-economic factors in South Africa to the obesity epidemic. Another issue involves diminished physical activity. With the ease of transportation and the availability of 'fast-foods' which both support in their own way, sedentary lifestyle.

In conclusion, preventive measures should be taken into action before it gets out of hand by looking at and ensuring diet, physical activity and the health of individuals but they are yet to be done at a national scale (Ziraba et al. 2009). All sectors are required to engage in the control of obesity and not solely left to the individual. In order to achieve a preventive and effective control of obesity a multi-sectoral, multidisciplinary approach that has an effective leadership is essential to fight it.

These observations provide some background on the socioeconomic and health issues associated with a lack of moderation which results in obesity and its many afflictions. However, this study will not focus on such problems from a sociological, medical or economic perspective but from the perspective of Islamic studies.

Chapter 3: Islamic Virtue Ethics

3. Introduction

Arguably, today's Muslims are in gross violation of Islamic ethics both at an individual and social level (Adeel 2005). The absence of a spiritual and ethical dimension of life in today's societies remains the most critical challenge (Abdulrahim 2013). One may argue that this problem can best be overcome with an adherence to the code of Islamic ethics (Omar 2003). This requires a survey of Islamic ethical documents in order to escape the contemporary upheavals (Adeel 2005). Therefore, to ground one in the teachings of the ages is of paramount importance. This chapter provides a very brief historical overview of the development of Islamic virtue ethics, an identification of core virtues held in high esteem, and a more detailed discussion of the virtue of moderation and the vice of overindulgence. It will present a more detailed survey of classic and contemporary Muslim literature on overindulgence as a vice. It will explore Muslim thinking about moral formation: dealing with the tension between what we know we need to do and what we actually do. To understand Islamic ethics, it is important to consider the influence of classic (Western) ethicists as this helped to mould the views of early Islamic philosophers and theologians.

3.1 The Development of Islamic Ethics and its Sources

Historically, Islamic ethics took shape in the 7th century and by the 11th century, it was well established. It successfully became an amalgamation of the Qur'anic verses, the Hadith, the precedents of Islamic jurists, debates of theologians as well as the ideas of Greek scholars. It was this time that the nature of ethical values was raised with the need of jurists to expand the sources of law as there was an emergence of new problems that could not be solved solely with the literal sayings of the Qur'ān or the Sunna. This occurred in the duration of a century when a great complexity of cultures, races, and religions, embraced the Islamic empire. With Arab scholars facing tremendous administrative problems, there was a rise in the expansion of legal and moral issues and opinion became a legitimate legal method and source. This was then integrated into the Islamic structure. Later, the religious ethics of the Qur'an and Hadith were expanded in immense detail by Muslim scholars (Becker & Becker 1992).

At the time of the prophet (ce 610–632), the Qur'an served as the moral guide and the prophet reinforced and explained it through his own teachings and practices. Whenever a case arose the prophet would settle it. With the demise of the prophet, his companions looked at the Qur'ān and the Sunna, rationally by trying to understand their underlying rationale, purpose and

effective cause. When the need arose to apply a moral ruling that suspended or replaced the rulings of the Qur'ān and the Sunna the companions would depart on purely rational grounds, at the same time keeping in harmony with the spirit of the text. An example of this is when the Caliph Umar b. al-Khattāb (d.23/644) brought to a halt the share allocated to the *mu'allafah al-qulūb* (non-Muslim leaders, new reverts, influential people and tribal chiefs). Although the Qur'an assigns a portion for them in the revenues of the zakat, the justification behind his ruling was these people were no longer in need of the support of the revenues of the zakat since God had exalted Islam. However, it was only in the middle of the eighth century that questions on the nature of ethical values, their source of knowledge and their ontological status were explicitly raised by jurists and theologians (Blankenship 2008: 33-40).

This led to the era of independent reasoning. This period extended roughly from 132/750 to 338/950 according to historians. It was in this period that major developments took place that later manifested in the emergence of the Sunni mainstream legal schools namely the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Ḥanbali schools as well as the theological doctrines. Islamic theology a source of Islamic ethics discusses meta-ethical and epistemological questions on human freedom, responsibility, and divine justice. It is less concerned with normative questions (Fakhri 1991) and more related to intellectual issues, for example, the relationship between reason, revelation, divine will and human will. It was in the seventh century that the Islamic world witnessed the beginning of a long dispute of Muslim theologians regarding the issue of free will and predestination. The first two groups who emerged in this period were the determinists' al-Mujbirah and the Qādari s (protagonists of human freedom) who first debated the doctrines of free will and determinism (Blankenship 2008: 33-40).

In this early period, the majority of pre-Islamic Arabs, as well as the Umayyad rulers, adopted determinism. The determinists disagreed with the reality of human freedom and responsibility but rather upheld absolute divine power. They did not bother to justify divine justice. It was more of convenience for the pre-Islamic Arabs considering that it was in conformity with their older beliefs of predetermined fate. The same was true for the Umayyad rulers who had restored political unity after a civil war that lasted the length of Ali's reign and brought about the emergence of four factions. In view of that, it was a matter of convenience to adopt this doctrine so as not to be held accountable for their actions as rulers and this warranted political unity since everything was determined by God. This scheme worked for the Umayyad dynasty as it decreased their concern for their moral actions moreover, their citizens could not hold them accountable. The Mujbirah scholars drew from the verses and hadith in the Qur'an and Sunnah

that predestination indicated that there was no difference in the actions of humans and what happens to them. Eventually, this doctrine was challenged by other groups who promoted free will (Blankenship 2008: 33-40; Fakhry 1991: 35-36 Attar 2010: 30-31).

The first group that subscribed to the doctrine of free will was a small moderate group of the Kharijite sect called the Ibādīs. This group emerged after the second civil war (*fitnah*) following the suppression and the marginalisation of the more violent and extreme form of the Kharijites by the Umayyad dynasty. Crushing this faction was easy for the dynasty as they were violent and extreme towards their fellow Muslims. The Ibādī group were the first that had an influence on the evolution of theology as they were against the doctrine of determinism of the pre-Islamic Arabs and the majority of early Muslims. They managed to survive by maintaining a peaceful coexistence with the rest of Muslims by means of teaching patience and calling sinners ungrateful human beings to God's blessings in contrast to their counterparts who called sinners polytheists. Hence, they continued to focus on the topic of sin displaying an influence on the evolution of theology. Moreover, their implication that people are responsible for their sins made them the first group of free will believers before the Qādari s and the Mu'tazilites who also share the belief that the Qur'an is created (Blankenship 2008: 37-38; Attar 2010: 34-35).

This was followed by a group that is regarded as the first initiators of theological disputes in Islam. They were more concerned and worried about their actions and conduct; this group was called the pietists. It was genuinely established in Basra where the Kharijites had a strong presence especially the Ibādīs. This pietistic school of thought was founded by Ḥasān al Basri who opposed the deterministic view of the rulers as well as the violent insurgency of the majority of the Kharijites. Hasan al-Basri and his students rigorously protested against the view of sin held by the rulers and the pre-Islamic Arab determinists. He rejected the doctrine of these determinists that God was the originator of all human actions and thus sinners are clear of blame and guilt which worked well for the pre-Islamic Arabs and the rulers. This notion was rejected by Hasan al-Basri (110/728) the founder the Qādarite school of thought contended that the doings of humans were not predetermined by the creator for this would entail people were not responsible for their actions as they are left helpless. He concluded that error comes from humans and guidance from God. As a result, Hasan al-Basri formulated a new doctrine that concluded that good comes from God and He is the creator of only good while evil comes from humans and the devil. Therefore, the human agent has the free will to sin or not. He further adds that God's foreknowledge of an individual's choice is not predetermining knowledge (Blankenship 2008: 33-40; Fakhry: 1991 22-26).

After the demise of Ḥasān al Basri, another group of K̤harijites emerged that formulated an extreme form of the Qādarite doctrine of free will led by Shabīb al-Najran. In this doctrine, they concluded that God knows not in advance and does not decree human action. Subsequently, this resulted in the Qādari s continuing in two forms; the pietists that were accepted in the Sunni orthodoxy doctrines and the hard-line Qādari s that later aligned themselves with the Mu'tazilites which was considered extreme by orthodox Islam (Blankenship 2008: 33-40).

Amidst these divisive controversies were a small anti-polemical group that emerged. Though they were predestinarian like the Umayyads and the early Sunni traditions, they stressed the notion of justice. Moreover, unlike the extreme K̤harijites, they referred to sinners as misguided believers and left God to be the judge earning themselves the name Murji'ites meaning to defer. They believed that internal faith mattered more compared to external actions and concluded that faith and actions are separate. This line of thought was welcomed as it was a compromising principle that brought ease to a people exhausted by sectarian arguments. Hence it gained popularity as they insisted on justice and managed to oppose the injustice of the Umayyads. Abu Ḥanīfah the founder of one of the four jurisprudence schools was associated with the Murji'as and he opposed the doctrine of the Qādarites, K̤harijites, and Shi'ites. As a result, some of the positions of the Murji'ites were incorporated in the mainstream of Sunni synthesis. However, the term was discarded as it was later used to imply evil and no one applied it to themselves. Later Sunnis did not regard them anything beyond the Sunni pale except for the Ḥanbali who branded them as heretics. This was followed by the Mu'tazilite school of thought (Blankenship 2008 42-47; Attar 2010 37-39). Attar (2010: 42) adds, "Although Ash'arite authors and those who consider themselves Ahl-al-Sunna wa'l-Jamā'a explicitly denied their relation to the Murji'a, it has been noticed that the doctrine of faith held by most of the Murji'a is almost the same as that held by Abū Hanīfa and Ahl al-Hadīth, which also coincides with the view of the Ash'arites".

Mu'tazilism is regarded as a continuation of the Qādari doctrine which is that of free will. The Mu'tazilites built on their simple ideas of free will and elaborated fully until it became the first rationalistic defence of the faith. An associate of Hasan al Basri; Wasil ibn Ata (d.748) is considered as the founder of this school of thought along with Amr ibn Ubaid (699-761) and Abu ḥudhayl al-Allaf (c753- 841). Abu ḥudhayl is considered the initiator of the five principles of mu'tazilism, that is God's unity and uniqueness, His justice, the eternity of Paradise for the righteous and hell for sinners (the promise and the threat), the intermediate state and the

command to enjoin goodness and to forbid iniquity. However, it was the first two of these principles that defined the position of the Mu'tazilites. As a result, they called themselves "People of God's Unity and Justice". The Mu'tazilites agreed on the realm of will that is people are free or capable of choice they also agreed on the outward action meaning individuals are able to carry out their freely chosen designs. These two fundamental principles are crucial for any genuine moral theory according to Attar (2010). Consequently, the Mu'tazilites are considered the first genuine moralists and founders of philosophical or rational theology in Islam, as they asserted that humans have the freedom and power to act rationally. They determined the nature of what is right and wrong purely on rational grounds independent from divine prescriptions. They further argued that good and evil are inherent properties in humans, therefore, reason is enough to determine what is right and wrong. In other words, reason is not subservient to divine command. Furthermore, according to the Mu'tazilites, divine justice implies that God must punish the wicked and reward the righteous. They are also of the view that the pronouncement of reason is binding on God and not on humans alone (Blankenship 2008: 47-54; Mohamed 2011: 22-29; Fakhry 1991:32-42; Zaroug; 60-61).

Mu'tazilites were of the view that God is unique, so they dismissed the anthropomorphic explanations given by the traditionists as they regarded them as an insult to God's transcendence. They concluded that all anthropomorphic descriptions should be explained metaphorically. Another major debate Mu'tazilites had with the traditionalists is God's speech they argued that the Qur'an was created while the Sunnis refuted this claim. However, the rulers of the time adopted this doctrine but were unsuccessful at imposing it on the leading Sunni scholars of the time such as imam Hanbali (780- 855). Another major part of their doctrine is they reduced God to a kind of cosmic justice machine who lacked free will and was subject to his attributes for example justice. Hence, they adopted a mechanistic view regarding the justice of God by misinterpreting the Qur'anic verses that speak of God's free will to pardon whomsoever He wishes, and they left no room for the prophet's intercession for the sinners mentioned in the hadith While they reduced God to a mechanistic justice device they believed in the free will of humans. They elaborated on this doctrine saying that humans are responsible for their fate in eternity and they are the creators of their actions and God only gives them the power to act not the actions themselves (Blankenship 2008: 47-54; Mohamed 2011: 22-29; Fakhry 1991: 36-42; Attar 2010: 44-46).

With the decline of the Abbasid rule, the Mu'tazilite doctrine died out with only the Shia sect adopting it with the exception of the Ismaili Shiate group who adopted Neoplatonist ideas. On

the other hand, while the three schools of jurisprudence focused on legal issues imam Ḥanbali made it his cause to dismiss the Mu'tazilite theory by promoting anthropomorphic ideas and by maintaining that the Qur'an is uncreated. However, his conflict against the Mu'tazilites affected his legal work since he had to avoid reason when working on legal matters. Overall Sunni orthodoxy rejected the Mu'tazilite school of thought as it seemed to compromise the sovereign, power, and majesty of God. They maintained that God had the power to will and act on everything and He has the power to override any of his attributes such as justice and exercise mercy.

The Mu'tazilites were later rivalled by Al-Ash'arī (d.323/935), who initially started as a moderate Mu'tazilite but subsequently opposed their doctrines and claimed that he underwent a spiritual transformation. For example, in ethics, he opposed their standpoint and claimed that good or evil was governed solely by divine commands. It should be noted that it was only in the 11th century that Ash'arism became a powerful movement with the suppression of the Mu'tazilas by the rulers of that time. He worked out a formula that took an intermediate view of free will and predestination. Abu Hasan al-Ash'ari (874-936) formulated the Sunni orthodoxy doctrine. As a result, he defended the Ḥanbalis doctrine at the same time defending them with the methods of Mu'tazilites that were highly developed arguments. Blankenship summarises al-Ash'ari's doctrine, he states, "God was all-powerful, that His eternal, essential qualities were coeternal with Him, and were neither God Himself nor other than Him, that all descriptions of God in the Qur'an and hadith were actual but were to be understood "without specifying how" (*bi-la kayf*), that is, "amodally," that the images of resurrection, heaven and hell are factual, that the gravely sinning believer remains a believer but may be punished for a limited period in hellfire, that the believers will gain actual sight of their Lord in Paradise, albeit amodally, that the Qur'an is uncreated, that God is the creator of all human acts, making them actual by creating in humans the ability to perform each act at the time of the act, and that faith consists of both belief and acts, increasing and decreasing according to the righteousness of the latter." Further, Al Attar (2005: xv) states that "Al-Ash'arī theologially articulated the early reactions of some jurists such as Ibn Ḥanbal (163/780–240/855) against the exercise of independent ethical judgments practiced by the followers of Abū Hanīfa (79/699–150/767), and Mālik b. Anas (96/715–141/759). The former developed the doctrine of juristic preference (*istihsan*), and the later advocated the public interest (*istislah*). These were considered sources of law, in cases where neither the Qur'an nor the Hadīth could provide explicit solutions. Al-Ash'arī was fully acquainted with Mu'tazilite doctrines and arguments, as he was himself one

of them until he was forty years old, which made him well equipped in his arguments against them, and in defending the dogmatic doctrines and beliefs of Ahl al-Sunna (Blankenship 2008 47-54 Mohamed 2011 22-29; Fakhry 1991 47-49).

In conclusion, the Ash'rite theologians formulated a thesis that took an intermediate path between free will and predestination. They claimed that the only way to determine good and right is through revelation. Subsequently, they did not accord anything to reason except that which is useful, pleasant or harmful. Hence, reason is not the basis of obligation. (Abdulrahim 2013; Adeel 2005; Ansari 1989; Fakhri 1991; Blankenship 2008: 47-54 Mohamed 2011: 22-29; Fakhry 1991: 47-49).

This doctrine was adopted by two of the four mainstream Sunni legal schools namely the shafi'i and Maliki schools of thought. The Ḥanbalis rejected the methodology which was of Mu'tazilite nature although they sometimes indulged in it at the same time they claimed to rely on the literal sense of the scripture and developed their own doctrine.

The Hanafis followed the doctrinal teachings of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d.944) whose teachings were close to that of the Ash'ri doctrine except that he held more rational views. Blankenship (2008-53-54) summarises Maturidi's rational view he states, "in many cases, he allowed that anthropomorphic descriptions in the Qur'an had to be taken literally but amodally, while elsewhere he admitted allegorising strategies not countenanced by Ḥanbalites or Ash'arites. He considered both the essential and the active attributes of God to subsist with God eternally, whereas the Ash'aris permitted only the former. He accepted that the believers would see God, but not by eyesight. The Qur'an was uncreated, but not the sound of its recitation. Thus, the voice of God heard by Moses in the Qur'an (4:164) was created speech. Most importantly, Maturidi continued to affirm that human works, although decreed by God, were ultimately attributable to their human authors. Human ability to act both precedes the act and is simultaneous with it".

By the mid-tenth century, only a handful of this theological schools survived. Orthodoxy school aligned itself with the Ash'iri, Maturidi and Ḥanbali doctrines and dismissed the rest. While the Shias adopted Mu'tazilism and Neoplatonism while the Ibādīya doctrine was adopted by the Kharijites all other doctrines passed into extinction except for the Murji'is who contributed to the doctrinal schools that survived.

Islamic philosophy another important source of Islamic ethics emerged in the Abbasid era (Abdulrahim 2013; Ansari 1989). The Abbasid caliph al Ma'mun (170/786–218/833)

established the House of Wisdom (*Bayt al-Hikma*) in Baghdad in the same era of independent reasoning. It was in this institution that translations and research thrived. Subsequently, the translation undertaking saw an acceleration of organized translations of Greek science and philosophy. It was in this period that the pioneers of Islamic ethics and philosophy authored their masterpieces such as al-Kindī (178/795–252/866); Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (251/865–between 310/923 and 333/935); Abū Sulaymān al Sajistānī (d.329/941); Yahyā b. ‘Adī (d.363/974) among others. They were followed by the Ikhwān al-Safā, (the Brethren of Purity), who were founded in Basra around (372/983), Ibn Sīnā (369/980–428/1037), Abū al-Hasan al-‘Aāmīrī (d.381/992), and Ibn Rushd (520/1126–594/1198). Other Muslim philosophers who pioneered in this field include, Abu Nasr Farabi (d. 950), Abu Ali Miskawayh (d. 1030), Nar al-Din Tusi (d. 1273), and Jalal al-Din Dawwani (d. 1502). These philosophers wrote extensively on ethics although they were heavily influenced by Greek scholars especially by Platonic-Aristotelian ethics (Adeel 2005). However, they gave Greek ethics an Islamic orientation. The work of Greek ethicists was introduced to Muslim Philosophers via Arabic translations between the eighth and eleventh century. Although there was a variation among Muslim philosophers on their acceptance of the quality and to the extent that they received cultural Greek heritage. Foreign concepts were not imitated blindly but were rather developed independently nor were Muslim scholars ashamed of the use of foreign sources, for example, the likes of al-Kindi (d. 256/870). However later scholars were more meticulous of foreign sources; the likes of al-Ghazālī, at the same time going the extra mile to condemn scholars like Ibn-Sina and al-Farabi. Oddly enough Greek philosophers had some bearing on him (Mohammed 2011: xi). Ansari (1989) argues that the above-mentioned scholars mostly rehashed Greek ethics in their ethical works although they introduced some concepts, Islamic terms as well as modified a few notions that hurt their Islamic susceptibilities. While Attar (2010) argues that Greek philosophy and moral values were not a miracle that started with Thales (585 BCE) nor came from the void, but knowledge is accumulative. Hence, religion, deities and mystical thought influenced these scholars.

Muslim philosophers looked at the concept of the good in a similar way compared to Greek ethicists. The question that they investigated was what is the ultimate good or good in itself. They analysed morals in the same manner as Greek scholars, that is, in terms of virtues of the irascive, virtues of faculties of the soul, the appetitive and the rational. The virtue of the irascive was courage, the virtue of the entire soul was justice, the virtue of the appetitive was temperance, and the virtue of the rational was wisdom. Similarly, Muslim philosophers

categorized all the virtues of life in four parts. However, the Greek philosophers made a distinction between moral virtue and knowledge. According to them, pure knowledge was viewed as the ultimate perfection of humanity and the highest good, while moral virtue, as the proximate perfection and a lower good. Meanwhile, Muslim philosophers such as al-Farabi, al-Ghazālī and others considered that nothing was good in itself except knowledge and made every other good compliant to it (Abdulrahim 2013; Adeel 2005; Ansari 1989).

However, this scheme was defective because religious concepts such as faith, trust, love, and worship were not accommodated. This resulted in some scholars like Miskawyh placing them in the wrong categories for example; worship was placed under justice by Miskawyh while other scholars ignored it. The first philosopher who realised why this scheme did not work was Shah WalīAllah (d. 1176/1762). The main reason why the Greek theory of virtues could not express the entire scope of Islamic virtues was due to its concept of humanity. According to this concept, humans are only moral and rational beings. Religious virtues could not be regarded as a separate class since religion was not part of their essence. In addition, in Greek idealism, the ultimate perfection of humanity was regarded in terms of pure knowledge since theoretical reason alone was to survive when the body perished (Abdulrahim 2013; Ansari 1989).

Islamic philosophers had an influence on ethical thought and their impact cannot be denied. However, it is those scholars who were classified as theologians who produced the more genuine and philosophically interesting ethics. Theologians that were not directly influenced by Greek philosophy produced an ethical philosophy that can be linked to contemporary ethical problems, as they worked with extensive legal and theological issues on Islam. This is because they engaged in early theological and juristic debates. Although this group of scholars was classified as theologians due to their origins, interests and above all the absence of obvious influences from Greek philosophy.

Islamic jurisprudence is another important source of Islamic ethics. There are many works that mainly discussed normative questions and touched upon the knowledge of Shariah laws and its basis of obligation. Jurists like Ibn Abd al-Salam (d.1262), Al Ghazālī (d.1111) and Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi (d. 1388) discussed this in their books of jurisprudence. Al-Shatibi mentions that the purpose of shariah rules is to produce goodness and avert evil, in other words, these are the ends and objectives of the shariah rules. Good is that which promotes, fulfils and preserves human life as well as the realization of all that the rational and human nature demands until happiness is achieved. In other words, what Al-Shatibi is stating is that the main purpose of

the shariah is to ensure a balanced life and wellbeing for humanity and fulfil their needs comprehensively. In addition, Muslim jurists looked at the levels of obligation as well as the factors that would upgrade or downgrade obligatory acts (Abdul 1964; Attar 2010 Fakhri 1991).

Islamic mysticism may be mentioned as a final source of Islamic ethics. In early Islam among the companions were a group who yearned for more than the outward observance of religious law, they longed to integrate the inner state of the soul with the external behaviour required by the reviewed law and turned to ascetism and renounced the world. Initially, this mystic movement was called Nasik and by the third/ninth Century it became to be known as Sufism. It was the concept of *tawakul* (reliance in God) in the Qur'an that inspired the total resignation to God and the renunciation from the world. However, this notion was criticized and later the Sufis developed work ethics in the sense that it was a virtuous act to work for one's bread. Ascetism meant different things to different people for some it was a virtue for others it was the abstinence of the forbidden yet for others it was both the abstinence of the permissible and the forbidden (Mohamed 2005: 18-22).

Sufiism became a haven for those who despised the corrupt secular Umayyad dynasty others who were dissatisfied with this political corruption turned to Shi'ism, mu'tazilism or extreme Sufism. Although this groups sought justification from the Qur'an and Sunnah they often deviated from the right virtuous path. As a result, this was the period of extreme Sufism that went against the teachings of the prophet. For example, some Sufis went without food for days, others fasted every day while others believed marriage was not for the pious. This kind of asceticism resonant with early Christian piety and not the Arabian prophet. In the second century, Sufiism saw the second phase which was more about the greater love of God (Mohamed 2005: 18-22).

In Sufism, the science of the inner soul was regarded superior to the empirical sciences. One of the early representatives of Sufism al-Muhasibi developed a science of scrupulous introspection which had a great influence on al-Ghazāli in particular in the realm of self-discipline and ethics. Al-Muhasibi is mostly remembered for his admonitions against the vice of self-delusion. As this vice poses the power to nullify one's spiritual efforts. This had a great effect on Ghazāli (Mohamed 2005: 18-22).

According to the early al Husayn Nuri Sufism was less concerned with legal issues and concentrated more on virtues and piety. They argued that an enlightened Sufi was to engage in

the social and economic welfare of the community since virtues are conceived in a social context while others were of the view that ascetism was all about seclusion and the only way to achieve goodness (Mohamed 2005: 18-22).

Mystic ethics are divided into three categories. The first category extols the ecstatic experience of meeting with the Lord and sees this as the ultimate goal of human endeavour so that one must gear his or her whole life to that end. This is the opinion of Shaykh Abdulahi al-Ansari al-Harawi (d. 1049). The second category of writings mentions that ecstatic union is not the ultimate goal but rather the realization in the knowledge that the highest goal is reality although among Sufis this truth has many different interpretations. The last category of writings states that the ecstatic experience of meeting with the Lord is but a stage in the spiritual pursuit (suluk) in mysticism. Therefore, it has to be surpassed and the unbridgeable difference between humans and God has to be realized, only then does one reach the final end of Sufi pursuit – according to Shank Ahmed Sirhindi (d. 1627). Therefore, Sufis prescribe a discipline of life, a way of worship, a method of purification of the soul, contemplation, and emotion in order that they realize their goal. These prescriptions are partly derived from the prophet (PBUH) and partly developed in the light of experience (Abdulrahim 2013; Adeel 2005; Ansari 1989).

3.2 The Concept of Virtue in Islamic Ethics

Islamic scholars consider ethics as the best admirable science or the crown of sciences. In order to explain the concept of ethics, this scholars and scientists put in great effort by writing many books and articles. Since ethics is the key to happiness, success, for individuals, communities, and society. Ethics is an essential factor in rebuilding human behaviour and society.

Generally, ethics in Islam can be expressed as “a set of moral principles and guidance that distinguishes what one should do or not or what is right conduct from what is wrong” According to Alfairuzabady and Ibn Mandhor ethics Linguistically means default behaviour, religion, and kindness, it reflects both the natural and acquired characteristics of mankind. While Ibn Miskawayh and Abo-Hamid Al-Ghazāli describe ethics as a fixed situation of the soul. In other words, the action becomes default.

Islamic ethics is also defined with reference to *aḥklāq* which is the plural of *kḥluq* meaning character, disposition, and nature. This is the term closely related to ethics in the holy Qur’an (Beekun 1996). Mohammed (2011) loosely translates ethics as the science of morals in human conduct as well as what humans perceive to be good. It is a comprehensible, balanced account of what is morally praiseworthy or morally wrong. The words *Khaliq* (creator) and *Makḥluq*

(creature) have a close relationship with the word *aḥklāq*. As a result, *aḥklāq* presupposes a good relationship between the creator and the creature as well as among the creatures themselves. It can also be defined as good values and principles rooted in the Islamic sources (Mohammed 2011).

Isfahani's ethics comprises of metaphysical, virtue and esoteric ethics when contrasted to the three frameworks of western ethics. Metaphysical ethics is a level of knowledge that goes beyond the experiences of the senses to the acknowledgment of a divine reality that ascertains what the ultimate good is. This ultimate good is all other goods is included. Virtue ethics, on the other hand, lays emphasis on the development of the character through habit. Isfahani stresses on the ultimate end that is happiness in the hereafter, therefore, he only agrees with the goal and method of virtue ethics and not necessarily its end. Esoteric ethics which is part of the immortal soul and the happiness of the afterlife also provides a structure for character building. Isfahani just like Ibn Rushd (595/1198) differentiates between esoteric and exoteric ethics; the former is the foundation of esoteric ethics and deals with the ethics of Islamic jurisprudence, while the latter deals with the ethics of the soul, both are mutually interdependent. The level of servitude can only be exceeded with the cultivation of the virtues of the soul so as to reach the rank of a vicegerent of God (Mohammed 2011).

The ethics of the soul is best described as an art that shows us how to beautify and purify the soul. It is not simply a set of rules to conform to but rather it's a beauty in which virtues need to be engraved in, in the same manner, one would engrave on a pliable material. The fixation of psychologically in the soul results in the spontaneous and natural expression of moral action. The highest virtue is the happiness in the afterlife and all other virtues should serve this virtue, this is followed by the of the soul which lead to that ultimate goal i.e. happiness in the hereafter. The lowest of virtues is wealth which its purpose is to serve the virtues of the soul as a material value although without it other moral virtues are incomplete.

Mohamed (2006: xiv) beautifully summarises virtue as the link between religion and external morality. Ethics is for the living. It is an art rooted in personal choice, not legal prescriptions. Yet, we cannot exclude the guidance of the revealed law. a rational choice is not meant to have a direct influence on the multitude; we have to combine it with revelation and reason, between religious ethics and philosophical ethics”.

A Qur'anic verse states, “And You Muhammad (Peace be upon him) are an exalted standard of character” (Qur'an: 68: 4; see also Qur'an 26: 137). In the Hadith Mohammad (PBUH)

claims to have been sent to complete moral virtues (Muvatta, “Husn al Kḥuluq” 8; Ahmed ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad, II, 381). Abdulrahim (2013: 508) states that, “Kḥuluq (aḥklāq) or character has possessed the state of the soul that determines human actions. It is neither the soul nor the action. Such character could be acquired through training and practice. are, to differentiate between the words character and action, a character is the internal and hidden state of the soul, while an action is its outward manifestation. Character or aḥklāq is the inward cause while an action is its outward consequences. A good character hence begets good action whereas a bad character yields bad actions.” Al-Farabi (d. 950), Ibn Miskawayh (d. 1030) al-Ghazālī (d.1111), Fakhruddin al-Razi (d. 1209), al-Tusi (d. 1274), and al-Dawani (d. 1502), known as the earliest great Muslim philosophers and theologians all agreed that, there is an interrelation between the state of the soul i.e. aḥklāq and human action. Furthermore, they define Islamic ethics as the science that deals with the state of the human soul. In other words, aḥklāq causes one to perform actions without thought or deliberation. Overall, they define Islamic ethics as the discipline which deals with the characteristics and qualities of the human soul and the methods to control and moderate them (McDonough 2010: 5).

Al-Ghazālī further states that humans consist of two forms, aḥklāq, and kḥuluq. The one refers to the spiritual form while the other refers to the physical form. Therefore, according to al-Ghazālī al-aḥklāq is rooted in the soul and manifested through human actions. Thus, a good soul yields right actions and vice versa. Ilm al-aḥklāq as defined by Al-Ghazālī is to guide one's soul against vices and to acquire its wellbeing. Hence, according to al-Ghazālī, the scope of aḥklāq, is very wide (Mohamed 1983). Meanwhile, Ibn Taymiyyah defines Islamic ethics as a practical discipline which asks what actions should be done and what actions should be avoided (Hovanniasian 1983). Therefore, ilm al-aḥklāq is a discipline that deals with the maintenance of virtues at their optimum level that is to abstain from wrong and seek that which is right and desirable (McDonough 2010). The scope of Islamic ethics is far-reaching and comprehensive seeing that it deals with the relationship between humans and God, humans and fellow humans, humans and other creatures, and a person with his or her innermost self. Subsequently, many virtues are emphasized in this tradition.

Islamic ethical concepts and standards are derived from the two primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Hadith. The Qur'an lays down the foundation while the Hadith expounds and explains the ethical concepts and virtues (Abdulrahim 2013; Al attar 2010; Ḥāshi 2011). In addition, the Qur'an contains hundreds of verses that focus on ethics, thus making it the most crucial source gifted to humans as a reference for virtuous conduct. On the other hand, the

Hadith contains the practices, as the prophet (PBUH) mentions, his sole mission was to upgrade, inculcate and complete good morals (Abdulrahim 2013). As such, both the Qur'an and Hadith are regarded as moral scriptures and it is from these two primary sources that all other sources are derived from.

According to the Qur'an, the foundations of good morals are the belief in God, humility, and continuous good deeds. The Qur'an mentions, "Let there arise out a group of people inviting to all that which is good enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. They are the ones who attained success" (Qur'an: 5:44). This verse highlights two important points; the one is inviting others to all that which is good, while the other enjoins all that which is right as well as forbidding the wrong. Good refers to the Islamic value system, ethical principles and all aspects of life. In other words, for one to be virtuous there must be a constant struggle and strife in attaining good in the eyes of God and abstinence from the unlawful. In another verse, Allah states, "You are the best community that has been raised up for mankind. You enjoin right conduct and forbid wrong" (Qur'an 3: 10). This verse indicates Muslims as the best ummah that enjoins good and forbids wrong. Therefore, attaining personal virtues is not the only requirement but rather one must call and lead others to the right path of virtue (Abdulrahim 2013; Ansari 1989).

Hundreds of verses focus on ethical aspects from the 6000 verses in the Qur'an. In these verses, the Qur'an mentions that a Muslim's life should be guided by Islamic ethics for example, "Verily this Qur'an Doth guide to that which is most right (or stable)" [Qur'an 17:9]." This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed my favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as a religion" [Qur'an 5:3]. The importance of ethics in Islam is shown when Allah prescribes Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) that he is with great ethics" Prophet of Allah had been raised to a great spiritual dignity" [Qur'an 68:4]. "You have indeed in the Messenger of Allah an excellent example" [Qur'an 33:21]. The Qur'an further describes the people of the best nation as: "You are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right (Ma'ruf), forbidding what is wrong (Munkar), and believing in Allah" (Qur'an 3:110).

Other verses that speak of the importance of virtuous acts include 4: 36, 33:70-71, 49: 6, 11: 36, 12: 113, 3: 161. These verses associate good morality with fairness and compassion towards everyone. They prescribe truthfulness in speech and actions, for such qualities illuminate the heart and these results in good *aḥklāq*. Similarly, these verses prescribe the moral duties of classifying, scrutinizing and authenticating given information. In addition, they claim that the truth cannot be based on speculations and doubts. They state that supporting immorality is

prohibited. Therefore, the Qur'an teaches us to refrain and disassociate from unethical and immoral conduct. It also teaches us to refrain from misappropriating conducts such as betrayal of trust or cheating as this leads to distortion of rights and justice. The Qur'an furthermore, raises the immoral effect of corruption which leads to the distraction of life and prescribes moral behaviour, self-discipline, kindness, and forgiveness for a healthy society and a virtuous life (Adeel 2005; Abdulrahim 2013; Al attar 2010).

Another verse that rules out following one's lower desires, passion and whims states as this leads man to practical error. "Then We have made you follow a course in the affair, therefore follow it, and do not follow the low desires of those who do not know (Qur'an 45:18)". Another verse states, "judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their low desires (to turn away) from the truth that has come to you; for every one of you did We appoint a law and a way (Qur'an 5:48)". Also, "most surely many would lead (people) astray by their low desires out of ignorance (Qur'an 6:119)". Al-Tabarī (d.310/923), for example, in explaining the previous verse (Qur'an 6:119) mentioned that those people who lead others astray with their whims and desires do so without knowing what is right, and without any proof for their argument. Some of the ethical terms that are repeatedly used in the Qur'an and sunnah to describe the concept of ethics include: Sidq (Truth), Khayr (Goodness), Birr (Righteousness), Qist (Equity), Adl (Equilibrium and Justice), Haqq (Truth and Right), Ma'ruf (Known and approved) Amanah (Honesty), Ikhlas (Sincerity), and Taqwa (Piety) (Mohammed 2011).

The hadith calls for ethical, ritualistic and ceremonial requirements of faith In the Hadith the Prophet (PBUH) emphasized the importance of virtues to such an extent that he stated, 'the purpose of my mission is to complete good morals (Imam Malik in Muwata). Also, Prophet Mohammed said, "I was sent to complement the best of ethics". Moreover, when Aisha was asked what the ethics of the prophet has she mentioned: "His ethic was al Qur'an". Muslims are ordered to obey and follow Prophet Mohammed as a model He further, stated that the most beloved to Allah is the one with the best morals (al-Tabrani). In another occasion he informed his companions to stay away from indecency, stating that the best amongst you is the one with the best *ahklāq* (Imam al-Tirmidhi, hadith no. 1975). Yet on another note, the prophet (PBUH) mentioned some of the attributes of good morals; that is a believer is one who does not harm other Muslims with his tongue and hands (Imam al-Bukhari, hadith no. 10). Al-Qurtubi explains, that this means one can win people's hearts with good morals (Al-Qurtubi, *Ahkamul al-Qur'an* v.7, 345). These are among the many Qur'anic verses and Hadith which became the foundation and milestone of Islamic ethics (Hāshi 2011: 125-126).

Islamic virtues can be divided into two sections; philosophic and religious-legal virtues. According to Muslim philosophers' philosophic virtues include only four principle virtues and their subdivisions that are based on the scrutiny of the faculties of the soul. These virtues are identical with the Greek philosophic traditions, in particular, Plato and Aristotle, although there are changes and additions so as to reconcile the basic tenets of Islam with Greek moral philosophy. The first three virtues include wisdom, courage, and temperance. These virtues are in conformity with the rational, irascible and carnal faculties of the soul respectively. Justice the fourth principle virtue takes the role of ordering all the other faculties in relation to one another (Adeel 2015).

Muslim philosophers begin with the virtue of wisdom, which is the virtue of the human soul. It is divided into theoretical and practical (moral) wisdom. The former deals with the knowledge of God, while moral wisdom is when the soul perceives right from wrong involuntary actions. Moral wisdom is described as a mean between imprudence and stupidity. The latter is defined as a state that bars the irascible and carnal faculties from attaining the desired virtue while the former vice is defined as the state of being deceitful and cunning. Its subdivisions include the virtue of discretion, the correctness of opinion, an excellence of discernment and penetration of ideas (Adeel 2015; Sherif 1975; Fakhry 1995: 145 Mohammed 2013: 37).

Once moral wisdom is acquired by the human soul the irascible faculty is subordinated and the virtue of courage is attained. Courage is the moderate state of the irascible faculty. It is a mean between cowardice and recklessness. The subdivisions include the virtues of magnificence, gentleness, manliness, nobility, the greatness of the soul and correct evaluation of self. Gentleness is a mean between the vices of excessive anger and spotlessness. It is defined as restraining the soul from angry excitement. Greatness is a mean between vanity and smallness of soul. The virtue of correct evaluation of the self is defined as behaving towards one's soul in proportion to its merit. It is a mean between arrogance and humility (Adeel 2015; Sherif 1975; Butterworth 1983). Temperance, the third virtue, will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Justice, the last of the four principle virtues, is a state in which the irascible and carnal faculties are subordinated to the rational faculty. It is considered as a perfection of the other virtues since it is only achieved once all the other faculties achieve their respective for. Unlike the other virtues, it's the only vice is an injustice. It is worth mentioning that although Muslim philosophers agree on the four primary virtues, they disagree on the number, location, and order

of several subordinate virtues. For example, Ghazāli does not place any virtues under justice unlike other philosophers like Miskawyh (Adeel 2015; Sherif 1975 Faruqi 1960; Brewster 1978 Gardner 1995).

The four principle virtues occupy a central position among the philosophic virtues and are considered to be "bounties of the soul" that comes close to ultimate happiness. However, they must be accompanied by the bodily bounties for them to be perfected. Some of these external bounties include family, noble birth, wealth and fame. Muslim philosophers further mention that happiness is a divine gift even if it is achieved through action. Therefore, it is a blessing bestowed by God. In this regard, Aristotle suggests a theology or metaphysics of happiness but does not reopen this question elsewhere (Adeel 2015; Sherif 1975 Kraemer 1986; Berkman 1970).

There are four main theological virtues namely guidance by God, his direction, his divine leading as well as his support. The virtue of guidance is considered as a precondition for achieving any other virtue since it is a source of all goods. This is supported by the Qur'anic verse, "he gave unto everything its nature and further gave it guidance" (Qur'an 20: 50). It is further stated that one of the attributes of God is being a Guide – the one who guides par excellence. The second virtue of direction implies divine providence, i.e. the direction that God gives to all humans. In other words, this virtue strengthens humans in their inclination towards what is good and makes them forsake what is bad. This is supported by the Qur'anic verse, "and we verily gave Abraham of old his direction and were aware of him" (Qur'an 5: 115). Leading, the third virtue, is present when the will and actions of human beings are aimed at the right end. Support, the last virtue, offers one internal and external insight into one's actions so as to attain what is desired. These virtues assert that, without the aid of God, happiness cannot be attained. As a result, philosophic virtues cannot lead to happiness without religious virtues (Adeel 2015; Sherif 1975; ceric 1995).

In Sufism there are four main practises of self-discipline these are solitude, silence, hunger, and sleeplessness. These practises had to be complemented with the social and moral virtues of Islam in order to reform the individual. For good character and piece of soul to be achieved the soul had to be trained and disciplined and this resulted in a religious life. A good character also means to Sufism being good to those who ill-treat you and the endurance of difficulties that ultimately come from God as such difficulties are meant to purify the self and attain Gods pleasure. They associated good character with selflessness and humility thus they considered the humblest to be closest to God. As this quality ensures one to love and serve others as they

hope for Gods reward as mentioned in the Qur'an "they prefer others over themselves though theirs be the greater need" (Qur'an: 49); Sufis were preoccupied with moral purity before the rise of the theologians. They encouraged the reflection of the worlds distractions and repentance by means of abstinence and poverty. Later they developed this ethical-spirituality into systematic teachings and eventually a strict Sufi discipline emerged (Mohamed 2005: 20-21).

3.3 The Virtue of Moderation

Temperance or moderation is a virtue or excellence of character. It leads its possessors to exercise self-control, moderation and prudence in their actions. The Arabic term adopted for this particular virtue is 'iffah, which connotes purity and self-restraint among other things (Adeel 2015). In the Qur'an the Arabic term equivalent to temperance is *wasatiyah* (the middle path). It appears five times in the Qur'an and it's both used for the community and individual, thereby revealing that moderation is both a social as well as an individual virtue. The Qur'an states that "we have made you an Ummah justly balanced" (Qur'an 2:143). Thus, when the Qur'an speaks of justly balanced communities and individuals it is characterising the Muslim community and individuals as moderate. In this verse, the Qur'an clearly indicates temperance as an excellence. In this section, I will look at the virtue of moderation its subdivisions with reference to the Qur'an, Hadith, classic and contemporary scholars, drawing on Greek, Arabic and other scholars (Adeel 2015; Sherif 1975:56).

Temperance the third principle is the virtue of the carnal faculty. It is achieved when the activity of this concupiscent faculty is controlled. It is the mean between two vices, namely self-indulgence, and insensibility. Philosophers use it in relation to sensual pleasures, in particular, the pleasure of touch and taste. It gives the soul an orderly disposition as regards satisfying its appetites and desires. It is a disposition for the orderly and harmonious conduct of all parts of the soul. At the appetitive level of the soul, it moderates and properly restrains the appetites of the individual. Philosophers agree that most humans err on the side of indulgence especially in relation to the desires for food, drink, and sex (Adeel 2015; Sherif 1975: 56- 60).

Overindulgence as far as food is concerned may be considered the most destructive desire of human beings. This is followed by the desire of sex, which if not regulated can lead to great evils. It is a natural desire that aims at preserving the human species in the same manner food preserve the body. The term *nikah* is used for marriage indicating that sex is admissible within the legal relation of a woman and a man. Therefore, the satisfying the carnal desires are best

situated within marriage. Outside of marriage, any sexual relationship is forbidden (Adeel 2015; Sherif 1975: 60-63).

Within its accepted form sex is commendable when humans seek to have offspring, so as to continue the preservation of the species, resulting in pleasing God. It is also fitting when it is for the sake of moderately fulfilling desire for sex as this guard's one from the possible acts of fornication. Sex becomes reprehensible when humans become inordinately concerned with sexual enjoyment. Such behaviour reflects enslavement to passion and may cause transgression. This overindulgence is also to be found in passionate lovers who transgress the normal means of sexual inclination. This results in compelling the intellect and exhibiting an animal-like subservience to instinct. Furthermore, excessive sexual indulgence distracts the soul causing one to turn away from his or her duties that is worship and learning. The other extreme is the vice of failing to satisfy such pleasures which deprive humans of having offspring or experiencing sexual pleasure in marriage. Temperance is the mean between these two vices (Adeel 2015; Sherif 1975: 60-63).

Liberality, a sub-category of temperance, is associated with issues of wealth. It is concerned with the acquisition, preserving and expenditure of wealth. It is a mean between the vices prodigality and miserliness. Liberality entails the giving of wealth to others easily and refraining from acquiring it in the wrong way. It is an advantage to the one who possesses it in relation to his or her wellbeing and ultimate happiness. Wealth can be used to help the needy and contribute to public goods. On the other hand, those who possess wealth may become immoderate and satisfy their desires in an excessive way. The time and effort spent on accumulating wealth is most harmful since it can completely distract human beings from purifying the soul and attaining ultimate happiness. Therefore, in observing the mean of generosity, the liberal human being is allowed to err in the direction of prodigality. Most philosophers have a certain dislike for miserliness for it implies enslavement of the soul and cannot be cured as easily as prodigality.

3.4 Moderation in Food

Regretfully, many present-day Muslim societies have developed an unhealthy relationship with food. They have turned it into a means of comfort and entertainment, to ward off boredom and combat a feeling of emptiness and ennui in their lives (Shahid 2015; Al-Jibaaly 2016; Al-Munajjid 2010). Scholars lament this great imbalance of food intake which comes both in quantity and kind, for it has resulted in gluttony becoming a pleasure sought by many. Gluttony

leads to health and spiritual problems like anorexia, obesity, bulimia, and spiritual hardening of the heart, as well as less responsiveness to the Qur'an and its teachings (Al-Munajjid 2010; Al-Ghazāli 1995). In this section, I will look at the virtue of eating in moderation in the light of the Qur'an, Hadith and Islamic scholars.

The Qur'an emphatically states, "Eat and drink, but do not be excessive" (Qur'an 7: 31). This verse strikes a balance between extravagance and self-deprivation. Balance is achieved when one reaches a state in which one is unaware of one's stomach meaning one is not disturbed by the pangs of hunger or by excessive eating (Al-Ghazāli 1995; Sherif 1975). Eating is considered a form of worship that fulfils one's spiritual and physical needs when performed in the way prescribed by God and his messenger with the proper intention (Sherif 1975; Fakhry 2002). Overindulgence and extravagance of food are further dissuaded in the books of Hadith in which the prophet says, "No human being has ever filled a container worse than his own stomach. The son of Adam needs no more than a few morsels of food to keep up his strength, but if it has to be more then he should consider that a third of his stomach is for food, a third for drink and a third for breathing" (Ibn Majah Hadith 3349).

Medieval Muslim scholars wrote extensively on this Qur'anic verse and the Hadith. They agreed that temperance in food purifies the heart, alerts the mind, weakens desires and provides deep insight. It provides constant contemplation of God and his messenger; it keeps one humble and instils empathy for those afflicted by calamities (Fakhry 2002; Shahid 2015). The greatest benefit of eating in moderation is that it brings an end to all sinful desires i.e. controlling the self that is inclined towards evil. Overindulgence brings about the opposite of these merits; it makes the body inclined towards disobedience and causes worship and obedience to God to seem laborious (Karim 1993). Therefore, disobedience towards God is closest to one who is satiated with a full stomach while one who is temperate in his or her food is furthest from it.

Scholars advise the restricting of the pathways of Satan by fasting. They consider overfilling of the stomach as the beginning of many great evils, as it makes it easier for the devil to take charge. Moreover, moderation prevents excessive sleep, enabling one to stay awake (Fakhry 2002; Al-Jibaaly 2016). For eating alot causes drinking a lot and these then results in excessive sleep. Excessive sleep wastes a lot of time making one miss out on the late-night prayers – which causes spiritual deterioration. Time is the most precious gift and capital of a human being thus sleep is temporary death and too much of it shortens one's life (Faris 1967; Al-Ghazāli 1995; Sherif 1975). Therefore, gluttony and the introduction of food on top of food before it has been digested is the cause of disease. The cure is restraint and moderation.

One may observe that the consumption of wholesome foods and natural meals are well off the radar of today's Muslims at large (Shahid 2015). They have largely forgotten the aspects of eating well. This is due to especially two reasons:

Firstly, during early Islam, food was dimly wholesome and natural, and the concept of highly processed meals was unheard of (Al-Munajjid 2010). The Qur'an uses the term *tayyib* (pure, wholesome) in six different verses in which it emphasizes the importance of eating pure and wholesome food. In one of these verses, it states, "O you who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is Him that you worship" (Qur'an 2:172). In the books of Hadith, there are numerous chapters, specifically dealing with pure, good and wholesome foods and their importance. These references are not necessarily about *ḥalāl* or *haram* foods; instead, they are explicitly referring to the purity and goodness of food. All good and pure food within the Islamic boundaries can be regarded as *ḥalāl* but apparently not all food what is called *ḥalāl* is necessarily wholesome. One such hadith is, "Verily, Allah the Exalted is pure. He does not accept but that which is pure. Allah commands the believers with what He commanded the Messengers" (Muslim).

Medieval scholars did not place that much explicit emphasis on the exhortation by God to eat wholesome foods (Shahid 2015). Since everyone lived off the land; people slaughtered their own animals and grew their own crops. Food was produced in a simple manner; in harmony with Allah's creation, good and pure. Ingredients from the garden were used to prepare foods (Shahid 2015; Al-Jibaaly 2016). However, this has changed over the ages, people no longer live off the land but depend on supermarket shelves. There has been a shift from consuming organically produced fresh foods to frozen, processed, genetically modified foods, and fast foods. The idyllic farms with happy animals and green pastures have been replaced with abused animals, eroded soil, chemical residues, lost biodiversity, and genetic modification. This started at the beginning of the twenty's century with the rapid transformation of agriculture. Agriculture became extensively dependent on mechanisation, chemicals, and biotechnology. These practices caused environmental degradation and came with new health implications (Moss 2013). According to research done by Doctor Farid (Hussain 2015), an Islamic scholar, the first cases of degenerative diseases coincided with this new phenomenon. Degenerative diseases, in addition to infectious diseases, started making their appearances in the 20th century with the food and agricultural revolution (Moss 2013).

Secondly, we have become a consumer society, and Muslims are not immune to this regression. The spiritual dimension of food has been forgotten and consumerism has become the order of

the day (Shahid 2015). This has largely been influenced by multinational food companies which are spearheaded by food scientists, marketing, and advertising professionals. The public find themselves hooked to high-calorie foods that are simply irresistible, resulting in society changing its diet drastically. As a result, these cost-efficient processed foods become convenient foods to be consumed daily even hourly or a staple diet. These foods may be delectable but make the body fragile to control overindulgence. They have the hidden power to make people feel hungrier, the power to create cravings as well as overwhelm the intentions of dieters. As a result, obesity which was once dubbed the rich man's disease is now afflicting in the lower classes. Furthermore, food scientists invented what is referred to as the three pillars of processed foods that create cravings. These ingredients turn products into big hits and are largely responsible for the obesity epidemic and degenerative diseases. Salt, the first of the three is processed in all sorts of ways to increase the jolt that the taste buds feel immediately after the first bite. Second to salt is the fats which play a role in delivering the biggest loads of calories and works more subtly in inducing people to overeat. Lastly, sugar, the most formidable ingredient of all, has the power to excite the brain and thus dictates the formulations of products across the grocery stores. Without these three processed ingredients, processed foods taste metallic, bitter, repulsive and astringent (Moss 2013 1-13).

Therefore, sourcing food ethically, eating healthy and reducing food intake must be promoted. Lifestyles have to be reviewed and audited in order to disengage from a consumerist attitude. One has to be grateful for the gifts that one has been endowed with by God by being less wasteful, frugal and frivolous. For if one is unable to control one's desire for food despite the conviction that it is unethical, it then stands to reason that one may lack the willpower when it comes to other prohibited desires (Shahid 2015).

3.5 The Need for Moral Formation

Humans have an innate tendency to virtues from the beginning to the end of their lives, and their morals have always been tested with the measure of moral virtues or vices. Achieving a higher score in this criterion results in having a higher status from God and in people's memories (Banar 2000: 540). In this section, I will look at the three core problems in virtue ethics namely; why virtue, which virtue and moral formation in the Muslim tradition.

Generally, it seems clear that virtues are beneficial and without them, humans cannot have decent lives. People cannot get well with one another if they lack courage, wisdom and do not have some measure of temperance in them (Khalediy 2011). Virtues help suppress and fight

negative emotions. They instil the qualities of patience; perseverance and the reinforcement of emotions that lead to positive ethics as well as help manipulate emotions that lead to vices (Raj 2009). In addition, they help guide humans to have a spiritual and psychological healthy life (Hart, 2006). Moreover, Islam emphasizes virtue in both inter-personal and intra-personal relationships (Goleman 1995). The aim of virtues in Islam is to determine human activity in a Muslim community and to control and promote their behaviour in order to benefit its individuals and society as a whole. Furthermore, virtue integrates human attributes, behaviour, and activities in order to prepare Muslims for the ultimate goal of meeting with their Lord and the afterlife (Musavi, Qasempoor & Rezazadeh, 2013).

The Qur'an describes and clarifies this path of goodness for humans, "It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East or the West, but truly righteous is he who believes in Allah and the last day and the angels and the book and the prophets, and spends his money out of love for Him, on the kindred and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and those who ask for charity and for ransoming the captives; and observes prayer and pays the almsgiving; and those who fulfil their promise when they have made one, and the patient in poverty and afflictions and the steadfast in the time of war; it is these who have proved truthful and it is these who are truly God-Fearing" (Qur'an 2: 177). In another verse the Qur'an states, "And seek, in that which Allah has given thee, the Home of the Hereafter; and neglect not thy lot in this world; and do good to others as Allah has done well to thee; And seek not to create mischief in the land. Verily, Allah loves not those who create mischief" (Qur'an 28:77). Virtues in Islam then, whether they are inter-personal such as patience, sincerity, soul combating, love, or common such as the call for Islam and moral obligation, are meant to uphold the society and the individual's wellbeing (Abdullah 2014).

Messengers of God in human history have led humans by inviting them to worship the one Creator of the universe as well as the reliance on authentic moral values in all forms of life. Prophet Mohamed (PBUH), the last messenger mentioned that the perfection and completion of moral virtues as one of the main reasons for his bringing. As a result, moral formation is one of the most important missions of the prophets. Thus, it has a distinct place in Islamic culture. (Banar 2000: 540; Shamshiri 2017; Reza 2009)

Al-Ghazāli one of the classic scholar's states that the purpose of life is ultimate salvation with God, and the means of achieving this goal is the purification of the heart from spiritual diseases and the development of a righteous inward disposition (Al-Ghazāli 1982: 68). Therefore, for humans to carry out virtuous and religious duties the human soul requires to be purified through

the application of the virtue of tawhid (the oneness of God) as well as the teachings of the prophet (PBUH) (Hart 2006). In another of Al-Ghazālī's works, he presents a similar picture of moral formation, indicating that proper character is necessary for the purification of the human soul through the acquisition of virtues (Al-Ghazālī 2010). In yet another of his works, he writes that while the beginning of guidance is acting in accordance with the Islamic laws which are considered the outward practice of God-consciousness they bring about the internal reality of God-consciousness. And the completion of the outer and inner God-consciousness is the means of attaining ultimate happiness in this life and salvation in the hereafter (Sartell & Padela 2015). Virtues are thus deemed as necessary and are constitutive elements of well-being. (Alzola 2012: 379).

The question then arises as to which are the supreme virtues that human beings ought to live by in order to attain the ultimate end of happiness. These include the four core philosophical virtues of the soul and their sub-virtues, the three distinctive human virtues which make their presence once the philosophical virtues are achieved and the theological virtues which are firmly embedded in the foundation of the human virtues. The four philosophical virtues which form a balanced soul are wisdom, temperance, courage, and justice, these virtues emerge from the balance of the rational, concupiscent, irascible faculties respectively, and the equilibrium of all three virtues brings about justice. These virtues and their sub-virtues are related to the divine virtue of the guidance of God since God is the provider of all goods. The human virtues include the virtues of humanity, freedom and noble-mindedness and the theological virtues are submission to the one God, faith, piety and sincerity (Mohammed 2006: 244-249).

There are three motives for worldly virtues. The lowest is to avoid harm and do well in the hope of reward. It is based on desire and is associated with ordinary people. The second is the fear of blame from people one respects and the anticipation of praise. This motive requires shame and is associated with rulers and leaders. The third is the best and it's to pursue virtue for its own sake. It requires reason and is associated with the sages, it is considered the best because it is guided by reason, not shame or fear. Theological virtues have equally three motives: a desire for the reward of God and the fear of his punishment, this is associated with the masses. The second is the hope of God's praise and the fear of his blame, this motive is associated with the pious. The third and the best is the quest for God's pleasure which is associated with the prophets, the sincere and the martyrs. Therefore, the two most supreme virtues are the virtue of the rational which is of a worldly nature and the virtue to gain God's pleasure which is purely theological (Mohammed 2006: 244-249).

Rationality alone does not suffice for one to be virtuous; it must be rooted in one's spiritual and emotional life and this requires habituation and moral formation at an early age so as to develop one's character. This entails grasping what is right and making it second nature. Reiss (1999) states that, "People do not live their lives in moral or ethical isolation but grow up within particular moral traditions". As moral education is the foundation of happiness, the absence of it causes misery for human beings and societies (Kang & Glassman 2010). Banar (2000: 540) states that "Moral education has been one of the most important missions of the prophets and has a special place in Islamic culture, especially in the Prophet's biography (PBUH)". Because ethics and moral education have an essential role in the fate of humans and society, they have long been concerns for scholars and religious leaders (Chowdhary 2016).

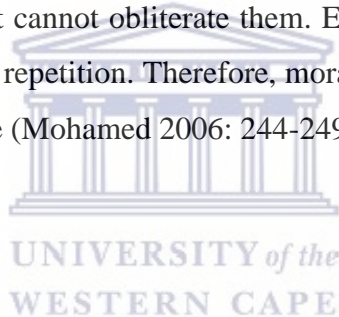
Humans have the capability of connecting to all righteousness but attaining it depends on correct training. To attain the grand aim of getting close to God, the best training should be chosen. Morality is one of the most significant outcomes of education. It directs the identification of moral virtues and vices and eases the path to self-education by maintaining a balance between desires and what's morally correct. Thus, the ultimate goal of moral education is to attain perfection or provide the grounds to reach perfection (Musavi, Qasempoor & Rezazadeh, 2013; Arani 2009).

As human beings try to enrich their thoughts and progress in science, it is of utmost importance to cultivate moral virtues. Even where one does not consider the religious dimension of morality, virtues are still needed for accomplishing a prosperous society. Therefore, even without the hope to heaven and the fear of punishment, it is still necessary to seek virtues (Arbani 2007: 24).

The disparity of virtues in humans is of two kinds: the one is how the faculties of the soul are balanced; the other is the extent to which one acts by habit in accordance with one's character traits. Classic scholars like Al-Ghazāli and Isfahani state that the first reason lies at the root of one's temperament and depends on the length of time it has existed. With all the desires in humans, the most difficult and hard to change is desirable, it is also the first to be created in a child. The other reason for a disparity of virtues in humans is the influence of education and the environment. For virtues to be inherent in humans the principle of habituation should be appropriated. This is done by practice until the virtue can be performed without deliberation or thought. As a result, the virtue remains even after the virtuous act has discontinued. Good habits can also be instilled by avoiding vices in the belief that they are detestable. In addition, a character can change depending on how it's nurtured. Constant practice will transform and

intensify a virtue into a virtuous quality of the soul. Therefore, in order to cultivate virtue, education ought to be practiced in public and private. The principle of habituation is essential for a change of character in the sense that virtues and vices are the results of habituation (Mohamed 2006: 244-249).

Virtuous acts come from avoiding vices and from doing good deeds until it becomes second nature. These habitual moral acts are then imprinted on the soul. This results in virtues becoming spontaneous without deliberation or reflection. Once the soul has become accustomed to every good habit, only then does the character of religious traits take firm root in the soul. According to Quasem (1983: 221), “if a quality exists in the soul it leads the body to perform actions relevant to it, these actions result in deepening of a quality, i.e., the quality already existing in the soul becomes even stronger, this strong quality again leads the body to perform the same category of acts; this process goes on indefinitely provided that there is no obstacle.” Therefore, the struggle between reason and desire can be overcome: one’s character can be transformed through human will and human reason. One can change one’s lower faculties by moderating them but cannot obliterate them. External moral action, the outward aspect of virtue, is learnt through repetition. Therefore, moral action re-claims what is already rooted in the innate human nature (Mohamed 2006: 244-249).



Chapter 4: Perceptions of the Muslim Community of Rylands

4. Introduction

This chapter explores the perceptions of Muslim households in Rylands associated with the Habibia Mosque. It investigates why Muslims overindulge despite Islamic teachings and amidst contexts of food insecurity as well as in the month of Ramadan. Hence, this chapter presents, and analyses collected data, through semi-structured interviews. It is the first of two in which the findings of the qualitative study will be presented; providing detailed descriptions and analyses of the respondents in the guiding questions. Henceforth, the present chapter attempts to answer the following research questions:

- What are the perceptions of Muslims of good moral standing with regard to overindulgence?
- How can moral formation be implemented?
- What are the constraints that hinder the proper implementation of moral formation and exercising restraint in eating?

During the interviews, the conversations were facilitated in such a manner that assured that the view of the researcher was not carried over to avoid biased results. The interviews were recorded, analysed and organized by themes that emerged. The themes that occurred the most and were seen to be the main reason of the problem are presented first followed by those that did not occur as often. The key themes that emerged in response to the first guiding question include:

- Spiritual vacuum
- Ramadan
- Conspicuous consumption
- Hedonistic consumption
- Social environment

The central themes that surfaced with regard to the second guiding question which tries to probe how moral formation can be implemented includes:

- Self-discipline

- Parenting
- Religious leaders

As far as the last question is concerned the themes that emerged are as follows:

- Spiritual vacuum
- Social environment
- Poor parenting
- Religious leaders

On this basis the results of the empirical research amongst households attached to the Habibia Mosque can be structured in the following way:

4.1 Spiritual Hunger

Regarding this theme, a strong sentiment that emerged from the various narratives of the participants was their implicit and explicit references to the presence of a spiritual vacuum as the main reason for gluttony. The majority of respondents explained that the presence of spiritual emptiness amongst Muslims played a significant role in prompting overindulgence and their comments revealed a nuanced view. Some participants explained that there is a resemblance in those who are well versed in the understanding of the religion contrasted to those who are ill-informed. As one participant explained, "... some Muslims do not practice what they know and will be immoderate in every aspect of their lives and not just food" (mother of household D).

Several participants commented that, in some instances, religious leaders are the guiltiest i.e. the imams. One respondent established that "... there are weekly gatherings initiated by the imams in which each congregant brings food, and everyone indulges". Another participant confirmed that, "... the remains of all the untouched foods find their way to the imam's house". Yet another participant moralised that, "...this is not what is expected of the imams" in contrast, "... they should bring such customs to a stop as they have a certain amount of authority over the worshipers" (daughter of household B).

Additionally, participants explained that, the only concern of the majority of today's Muslims is with regard to haram food. Quite a few participants put in plain words that Muslims are oblivious of everything else; this includes spirituality, wholesomeness, the etiquettes, and the sourcing as well as the ethical ways of obtaining such foods. Two respondents added that such

Muslims maintain the belief that as long as the food is *ḥalāl* they can indulge. One participant was of the view that, "...women are more gluttonous once they start a family as their concern about the ideal body image and out-growing their clothes come to a standstill" (mother of household J). Another participant sermonized that, "...the body is an *amanah* (a trust) and goes beyond outgrowing clothes and needs to be looked after as it has an effect on one's spirituality (father of household J)".

Some interviewees demonstrated that a number of Muslims are spiritually vulnerable to a point where they no longer care if the food is *ḥalāl*. In support of this claim, one participant said "...I witnessed a vendor put up a bogus *ḥalāl* sign and regardless of my repeated warnings, these individuals queued up by the stand to purchase food and satisfy a hunger that was non-existent a moment ago (daughter in household E)". Another participant commented, "...there is an element of ignorance in such individuals and heedlessness of what Islam advocates". Yet another respondent explained, "...they are spoilt and neglectful of whether the food is *ḥalāl* or otherwise. Most often it could be *ḥalāl* but not wholesome". Furthermore, two contributors to the study advocated that, the Quran however, does not only stress on the *ḥalāl* issue but rather puts emphasis on the consumption of wholesome food. But due to the presence of a spiritual void, it only takes individuals to spot a *ḥalāl* sign, so they can indulge.

Most participants argued that, food has to be *ḥalāl* and wholesome. An older female participant who was a student of religion elucidated on this belief and said, "I personally don't eat meat or chicken because of all the hormones added to them. In the case of milk, I buy expensive milk hence am healthy. As for my family, I try to encourage them to eat healthily. However, they are incapable as they lack self-discipline. Consequently, I am more energetic than my family and am a living proof that eating holistically plays a role in the human being as a whole". Another interviewee alluded to the notion of *ḥalāl* and wholesome food and sarcastically questioned, "...is MacDonald's food let alone *ḥalāl*...?" and felt that Muslim organizations should do more as they will be questioned by God for handing out *ḥalāl* certificates to such outlets (granny in household E).

Additionally, some participants expressed the belief that Muslims are spiritually empty and seek fulfilment in food. One participant reminisced a sermon she heard in line with this argument and stated, "I heard Sheikh Hamza Yusuf say, often times when people are spiritually starved, they become clinically obese as they try to fill their souls and not their bodies. Hence, their souls are starved, and their bodies are stuffed with food, if you had to see their souls you would see that it's anorexic (sister of household A)". Another participant admonished that the

Quran and Sunnah state that the first sin committed was the consumption of the forbidden tree. Consequently, spiritual and physical illnesses start in the stomach.

Moreover, some respondents described a common trend in the community that indicates a spiritual decline as well as mindless eating. It was explained that one of the factors that indicate a spiritual decline and gluttony in the community is a common practice amongst Muslims in Cape Town where they sell food tickets when they intend to collect charity for the underprivileged. A few participants elucidated on this event insisting that the organizers of such programmes are sponsored mostly by Muslim wholesalers as a form of charity. These groceries are then turned into delectable delicacies as a means to coerce people to give charity in exchange for food tickets. The respondents argued that this, however, encourages indulgence especially for those who wish to buy numerous tickets for the sole intention of being charitable and tempts one to eat mindlessly. “Sadly, there is food involved in everything,” commented one participant. “Above and beyond, this is a very selfish way of giving charity because one expects immediate reward and not just the rewards of the hereafter” added another respondent.

From conversations with all participants, it seemed that a spiritual decline to be the main factor of gluttony and mindless eating. Many maintained that as a result of mindless eating Muslims have turned out to be lazy in fulfilling their duties as Muslims and practicing Islam to its maximum which eventually results in a spiritual decline.

These sentiments concur with Islamic literature which has extensively looked into this issue of overindulgence and its spiritual implications. Umar bin Al Khattab, the second caliph, beautifully stated, “O People! Beware of overeating because it makes you lazy in your prayer, it makes your body weak and makes you unhealthy and Allah dislikes the obese man. And you should be modest in your food because that is closer to righteousness and further from excess and makes you stronger in worshipping Allah. And you will perish when your desires become dearer to you than Allah or your religion” (Ummah.com Muslim Forum 2016).

In summary, these results show that the interviewees were of the perception that the main reason of overindulgence was due to a spiritual vacuum. It further indicates that some Muslims use food to fill this gap. However, in certain, instances differences were detected as to what made them identify a spiritual void in the Muslim communities. This is expressed in subthemes that include:

- emotional eating
- dieting

- culture

4.1.1 Emotional Eating

The majority of respondents were of the perception that emotional eating is a contributing factor to gluttony due to the spiritual void. In support of this, claim one participant explained, "...stress eating is an indication of a spiritual decline and shows that Muslims have forsaken the practice of Islamic teaches and reduced it to text". Another participant admonished that the Quran states that in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace. Hence, in the Islamic teachings, the prophet and his companions would turn to *Ṣalāh* whenever they felt despondent. A few respondents concluded that however, in today's age food has been turned into a stress reliever

A common view amongst interviewees was that stress eating had become a huge issue in the community and a clear indication that some Muslims are no longer connected to Allah. As one participant felt that the solution to be in this verse of the Quran, "Allah says, and seek help through patience and *ṣalāh*, and indeed it is difficult except for the humbly submissive to Allah" (Quran 2: 45). Another respondent referred to Islamic literature conveying the advice of Ayesha i.e. whenever one stresses, they should use *ṣalāh* as a stress reliever. Yet another participant despondently stated that, Muslims have left *Ṣalāh*, they have lost perspective and their hearts have hardened thus, food has become the number one stress reliever. Other participants felt that the reason as to why Muslims turn to food is that unlike other things, food is *ḥalāl*.

A small number of interviewees argued that although stress eating maybe a big factor but not everyone deals with stress in the same manner. For instance, one participant stated that his brother develops a gluttonous habit when stressed but believes that others starve themselves, for example, when they have a family issue. Additionally, a few respondents advised that in contrast, such individuals should engage in *dhikr* (the remembrance of Allah) and not use food to relieve their misery. It was expressed that this leads to more hopelessness and results in physical and mental illnesses. One participant who was a student stated that, "...for one to keep their thoughts positive diet plays a humongous role". She recollected what she read and stated that psychologists found that anxiety and depression have an association with the type of foods consumed. Those who consume traditional foods have low odds of depression and anxiety disorders compared to those who are on a 'western diet'. She concluded that, the food consumed affects one's thoughts, consequently, it affects one's spirituality (daughter in

household D). The general perception of the participants, with regards to this theme, was that the absence of Islamic Spirituality in a person's life leads to the heart becoming 'spiritually' dead. And, the person whose heart has become 'dead', as mentioned in the Quran leads the life of cattle! Nay, it is worse than that!

A few participants remained strong critics of dieting and maintained that dieting alone does not solve the outcome of overindulgence and Muslims should follow Islam which is a way of life and regulate what they eat. They believed that Muslims should turn to the teachings of God as He showed them how to live. One participant preached that if Muslims are afflicted with obesity they should repent to God, ask him for assistance and follow the diet he has prescribed for all i.e. the Islamic way of eating. Another participant added "...the diet of Allah is better than any man-made diet, what is more, these diets don't make any sense whatsoever" (son in Household H). In contrast, people get sick as they are playing with their bodies and this comes down to ignorance, added a respondent. These testimonies are supported by a student participant who stated that, "...it has been scientifically proven that yo-yo diets do not help because they are for a period of time, say, a month" (daughter in Household C). She maintained that in contrast, the Islamic way of eating is a lifelong habit and is the reason why people need to connect to Islam. An older participant argued that, "...diets do not work the only thing that will work is if one adjusts their body to eat certain foods in a certain way and always consume it in that manner. In that way, they will be able to lose weight" (Granny in Household B). In general, participants concluded that if such individuals adhere to the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah, they won't need a diet as it is a lifelong submission. As one participant commented, "...above all if they knew how bad it is to overeat, they wouldn't eat as much as they do".

4.1.3 Culture

According to some participants, food plays an important role in their culture and that could be the reason as to why mindless eating has become an issue. As an older participant said, "...during apartheid, it was the only means of recreation as our movements were restricted (Uncle in Household H). Another participant added that, "...It plays a big role in bridging a gap between individuals, families, and organizations. Two participants discussed the annual month of fasting to explain how culture contributes to mindless eating. It was stated that in Ramadan, food is prepared in an unhealthy manner and consists of huge amounts of fats and oils. As one interviewee explained, "...it is a tradition that has been going on for generations, that's how our forefathers prepared their meals. This, as a result, has been passed down to us,

concluded a respondent” (mother in Household F). These findings concur with Pereira (2014) who found that Muslims ate more unhealthy foods during Ramadan, such as ‘fried titbits’ which were explained to be spring rolls, samosas, mini pizzas and pies as well as other similar foods.

4.2 Hedonistic Consumption

A predominant theme during discussions was hedonistic consumption. The majority of those who were interviewed felt that pleasure seeking in food played a significant role in overindulgence. Participants argued that Muslims are self-indulgent to an extent where they overindulge when they have a function, a *dhikr* or a get-together dinner. As one participant explained, “...at all times they find a reason to overeat...”. An older female participant complained that for instance, “...if guests come and are offered more than tea they tend to overstay just for food (daughter nods in confirmation) while others stay till the following day...” (mother in Household I). (mentions a home such an incident took place). Other respondents maintained that the presence of food is a determinant for such individuals to overindulge as they clearly lack the self-discipline to restrain and are oblivious of the Islamic teachings.

Additionally, participants felt that such individuals only curb their culture of mindless eating once a health condition kicks in like diabetes, migraines or cholesterol just to mention a few. In support of this claim one participant used his brothers’ case as an example, “...my brother got shingles that caught him by the nerve on the nose due to his extreme diet and high levels of stress” (Father in Household E). Generally, participants felt that the body reaches a point where it cannot handle stress any further as the diet is no longer conducive and this results in illnesses. Some participants explained that, diet plays a very important role in the life of a Muslim. Others moralised that in Islam, everything should be in moderation from the clothes to food and water. It was expressed that if anything is overdone it becomes oppression. As one female participant stated that, “...for example, if one wears jewellery it should not cover the whole arm as that will be oppressing one’s arm. The same applies to food” (aunty in Household H). Another participant added that even though there is plenty it does not necessarily mean one should overindulge. In contrast, one should have the strength to resist the temptation.

Moreover, participants suggested that most Muslims, especially in Cape Town, have a habit to sit around because the table is laden with food and remain seated because it will take a while to finish. As one interviewee commented, “...they stay at a function for 5 hours just to have all

the 5-meal course while in Johannesburg and other areas such a habit is not customary” (son in Household G). This participant maintained that Muslims in Johannesburg and elsewhere will think twice before they sit and dine as they have a lot of things to accomplish. A few participants believed that, in Cape Town Muslims love food and with their free time they mostly eat. It was suggested that, it is not the sedentary lifestyle of some Muslim ladies that tempts them to nibble on food every now and then but rather it is a habit of seeking pleasure in food. These participants sermonized that, for one to change the way they do things they will have to change the way they think. As one participant stated that if, “...they are invited and find themselves sitting around a table weighed down with food they should indicate that they cannot eat everything but rather eat Islamically. In this manner, the culture of overindulgence and filling the table from corner to corner will die out eventually” (father in Household K).

Some participants expressed the belief that the culture of mindless eating affects Muslims all over the world. As one respondent stated “...in Saudi Arabia, it’s a culture that once they sit down to eat they eat (repeated thrice for emphasis)” (mother in Household G). The interviewee added, “I know it’s being recorded but you should see the size of my cousins. These ladies live in Mecca the holy city where the prophet started his message of moderation, yet they seek pleasure in food. The other reason is that they lead sedentary lifestyles...” the interviewee concluded. These sentiments are confirmed by studies conducted in which Saudi Arabia ranked as one of the fattest nations.

Some respondents further explained that, at functions, Muslims overeat and serve themselves even if they are not hungry. As one participant commented, “...the old and the frail are not served first and that there might be just one or two who will consider them”. Another respondent commented, “...what makes it worse is, such individuals carry the food home and the old people eat little or nothing”. Talking about this issue an interviewee explained, “...in some cases, nobody looks after the old, if it is a buffet, the same happens with the children no one takes care of them...”. A minority of participants indicated that such Muslims have forgotten the basic Islamic knowledge i.e. one’s sustenance comes from God and what is meant for them will come to them. As one interviewee explained, “...this is manifested in functions where people rush for the best piece of meat in fear of someone else taking it” (sister in Household A). From conversations with most participants it seemed that hedonistic consumption was a major problem. As one participant stated, “...they overeat at functions and when they can’t eat anymore they take it home”.

The issue of hedonistic consumption was further explained by several respondents. It was explained that some Muslims during weddings overindulge and once they reach the point of satiation they take the food home. Two participants stated that some come with their own Tupperware while others come with bags. Talking about this issue an interviewee complained, "...I have sat at functions and weddings where the bride is just seated for 15 minutes and they are already packing food. At such instances, we are forced to live to spare ourselves the embarrassment, as we do not want to be associated with a people who put food in their bags. To add insult to injury they sometimes take the food with the caterer's utensils. As a result, most of the time caterers make loses". At this point, she shakes her head and says, "...Muslims will come to a function if they hear there is food even if there have no interest there or any other motives". Another participant who is a student of social sciences explained that these phenomena are associated with the poor and not those who are well off but, in our community, there is no difference even in funeral sessions they want food.

There was much discussion on the problem of hedonistic consumption during funerals. Participants felt that the family of the deceased are not meant to cook food in Islamic cultures. It explained that in contrast, food should be prepared by the extended family. One participant complained that in Cape Town there is a tradition such that when someone passes away the family of the deceased have to cook a whole pot of food and feed all the mourners. The interviewee in support of her claim gave an example of her own encounter, she stated, "...when my mother passed away my aunties enquired if I had contacted a cook. Keeping in mind that mom was not buried yet and all they worried about was food. I looked at her irritated and mentioned that no food will be cooked. Again, my cousin who was not aware of the conversation I had with my aunty asked, how many plastic plates and cups must be ordered. ...I have to set a new precedent and tell them what is right. ...besides what happens to those families who can't afford do they have to go into debt like they do at weddings? ...also, it's a house of *janazah* (funeral) and not a function!" This culture of having a function at every household has to stop! This is what contributes to obesity and overeating concluded another participant (Households B, C, J).

Additionally, participants complained that in *Janazahs* such individuals make noise when dishing for themselves. As one interviewee stated, "...I do not want to look at the negative aspect of things, so I will ignore them, close my eyes and lead by example". Another interviewee added, "...At a funeral, the family of the deceased are not supposed to be burdened with work rather the mourners are supposed to feed them but instead they wait for them to

serve and still make a fuss. For example, when my mom passed away after 3 days I called the religious leaders to come and pray for my mom. I also invited family members, but I didn't tell them that meals will not be served. As a result, they came in their numbers as they assumed that meals would be made as is customary. But to their dismay, their expectations were not met. Again, after 7 days I invited my family this time they asked if I would be making meals for the occasion I said I wouldn't, but they could bring their own meals and light snacks would be available. At this point, I knew there wouldn't be many families coming after I announced that meals would not be served and that's exactly what happened. This is a clear indication that these people don't care what the purpose is; food has to be present if they get invited" (Mother of Household I).

This interviewee gave another example of how hedonistic consumption is a major problem and stated that, "...once more, after 40 days I wanted to pray for my mom. I invited the ulama and the extended family. My sister asked will you prepare food I answered in the negative reminding her that I am still mourning my mother. Although this does not have an Islamic basis, but from a medical perspective the body goes through a transformation from the 40th to the 100th day. ...these people are worried about the food while it's not about the food and the function it's about praying for my mother. In any case, my extended family didn't come for the 40th day or pick up their phones as I clearly indicated I wouldn't make any food. This shows what their *niyyah* (intention) was in the first place. My sister asked, are you not worried about what people will say if you do not make food" (Mother of household I).

These testimonies are supported by another participant, who explained, "...my husband passed away I didn't make any meals, and this resulted in people gossiping as to why I didn't make food and as a result, very few came to mourn and pray for him. Two participants felt this is the same case of *sadaqah* (charity) where one has to give food to get attention. These sentiments are confirmed by another participant who stated that, "...my mother was sick for 1 month; in this period those who came to visit would wait for tea and a cookie. But that is not Islamic instead one has to greet, pray for the patient drop the gift and live. Like the prophet said when one visits a patient it should be short and brief because their bodies need to incorporate. To add insult to injury you will see displeasure on their faces if you don't serve them while others will speak out and say I have been sitting long here and you not offering a cup of tea. In some instances, they will sit not knowing that sometimes this lady has to go to the hospital or the bathroom. But the dilemma is if I give them tea, they will sit longer assuming that a meal will follow. So, what I did is whenever they came to visit, I would tell them my mom can't see you.

I am too busy to make them food as my mom is sick. Yet they don't care and are not considerate at all. Food plays a very important role which is a horrific mindset". She concluded that all the time they seek gratification in food (Wife in household F).

A few participants explained that some individuals are addicted to food. One respondent stated, "...whatever they do food is involved; if they have a gathering there is food". Another participant added, "...when they wake up the first thing on their minds is food while I don't know if they think they won't find food. For example, now all of a sudden due to the water crisis they are all carrying big bottles of water". Yet another participant stated that, "...my son who was raised here unlike my daughter asks whether food will be served whenever we go to visit family regardless of the purpose of visitation, we could be going to see a sick family member, but the food is always on the mind and they only come for food. When I get irritated with my son he innocently says am just asking" (mother of household A). One participant stated that in India when an esteemed guest visits they are served water and fruit and not a 5-course meal. While here if Capetonians show up at your house at lunch they automatically expect to be served lunch (Sister of household A).

A few participants pointed out that some overeat but do not get obese because of their genetic makeup. Nevertheless, such individuals will experience sluggishness when performing religious duties. As a result, their spirituality will be affected.

A minority of participants indicated that the only time Muslims in Cape Town have a gathering without involving food is when they go to a *ṭalīm* (this is when a group of ladies comes together to read the hadith). As one participant explained "...this is done on a weekly basis and each week it takes place at a different home". And another commented, "...the reason as to why food is not involved is because not everyone can afford a certain type of food and this may discourage some individuals from having a *ṭalīm* at their home". Talking about this issue one interviewee commented, "the reason is simply that you were asked to take part in a *ṭalīm* to eat as this will be turned into a function. Like what happens at a *thikr* and *ḳatamul* (completion) Quran" (Son of household J).

From conversations with participants, it seemed that people like tastier foods. The love for nice pleasurable experiences also plays a role. A few participants sermonized that however, in the Quran, all this food is to be found in paradise so one needs to be patient and strive for Jannah. As one participant stated, "...In Jannah, Muslims can eat as much as they want hence if they

love food they should work hard for paradise where no one gets fat or sick” (Father of household B).

4.3 Conspicuous Consumption

A predominant theme that emerged during discussions was conspicuous consumption. Respondents felt that it is a major issue in the community and that some Muslims show off their privilege. They explained that this is done by flaunting their material possessions. It was explained that with regards to food, they go to the best restaurants just to show-off and stay a step ahead of their social class. Additionally, other respondents commented that when they invite their friends, they display the most exotic foods and exquisite desserts. As one participant stated that if this means getting into debt, they will do it. Another participant explained, “...during weddings they borrow money, so they can have a lavish wedding, and no one can say it was this or that”.

Some interviewees argued that there is a component of everyone wanting to stay ahead of the Joneses. It was explained that as a result, going to expensive restaurants has become a trend. Two respondents suggested that such Muslims believe that if they have the money why not show off. It was further elucidated that such individuals want to be seen at expensive restaurants and brag about it especially at special occasions like birthdays. As one participant commented, “...they choose places better than their friends with all kinds of foods even though it’s not tasty as long as it’s pricey” (Households H, F, J).

A small number of those interviewed suggested that life had become a show for some Muslims. One individual stated that for them to keep up with society they have to step up their game. And another commented that at weddings, they get into debt just to flaunt their status and bring the best food and make sure that their wedding is the best. Some respondents felt that such individuals end up getting degenerative diseases such as diabetes for two reasons. As one participant put it, “...firstly, because of all the unhealthy foods consumed and secondly because of the constant worry of the debt they have to pay which is a headache on its own and later on this results in high blood pressure”. Talking about this issue an interviewee said consequently, “...they only regret later when they get all these diseases just to show-off”. Participants concluded that such individuals spend all their lives working to have the best worldly materials including all kinds of foods only to spend it on their health. As an older female participant expressed the belief that the reason why women work is for luxury, fast foods, and bigger houses. As she stated, “...you cannot show me one woman who is not working for luxury.

Hence, there is no barakah in her money and that's proven. That's why they spend it on unhealthy foods as they are in the world of the men it's not Islamic" (Households I, F).

A small number of participants explained that if such individuals have money, they will go to the shops instead of going to the street vendor even if the products are the same. It was explained that so that in itself is wasting more money just to show privilege, status, and packaging. Another interviewee maintained that some waste their money on extravagant foods when others are hungry and starving. Yet another respondent concluded that, "...such individuals end up dying of degenerative diseases because of eating too much while their brothers and sisters are dying of starvation. for example, what's happening in Syria".

A small number of participants felt that the other reason as to why some Muslims overeat is that they lead meaningless lives in the sense that they are not busy enough doing things in their lives. As one respondent stated, "...for example, our predecessors contributed a lot to the world with the inventions and books they wrote". The interviewee added, "...I am busy with my life, completing a degree that I don't have time to eat. They have lots of time maybe they should find themselves a hobby like helping the needy". Another participant stated that the reason is boredom. "...It leads to overeating, so such individuals should either study or help others. It remains a huge issue when it comes to housewives" (Sister of household B).

4.5 Ramadan

Many respondents explained that Ramadan a month of restraint, self-reflection, devotion, and worship had been turned into a month of indulgence and unhealthy eating, which results in Muslims gaining weight. As one participant stated, "...I believe 90 percent of Muslims gain weight. Even though many feel that people generally lose weight during Ramadan; it is quite the opposite (Sister of household D)". A few participants added that it is the busiest time of the year in the kitchen as each family attempts to beat its neighbour in preparing the best spread of traditional dishes as well as boasting new recipes. These sentiments are confirmed by a study conducted in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where it was discovered that two-thirds of 173 families testified weight gain among some or all of the family members after Ramadan. Many pointed to overindulgence and a sedentary lifestyle (Fleishman 2012).

It was further explained that Muslims around the world fast from sunrise to sunset. However, they feast from sunset to sunrise. Another respondent added in some instances, these persons cannot perform *tarawih* (evening prayers) as they overstuff themselves. Two participants concluded such individuals are uninformed of the teachings of the Quran. A participant

clarified that some gain weight during Ramadan mainly because of ignorance. In support of this claim Fleishman (2012: 2) state, “fasting renews the spirit but it often does little to trim the waistline. What happens between dusk and dawn can endanger health: Feasting, inactivity and disrupted sleep — Muslims often stay up until 4 a.m. to eat a last meal before sunrise -- can add weight in a population already struggling with one of the highest obesity rates in the world.

Talking about this issue an interviewee indicated that it depends on the individual, “...one can gain or lose weight. I lose weight in some years while in others I gain. When I gain it is usually when I overindulge on the carbs at *iftar*. However, last Ramadan I lost weight as I changed my eating habits.” (Son of household A).

Some participants felt that the month of Ramadan is more like Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter lengthened over one lunar month. Most families and friends have parties and gatherings at night during the month. It was concluded that Muslims have transformed it into a holiday overindulgence like what many Christians do over New Year and Christmas.

A minority of participants indicated that during Ramadan, they have a five-course meal and make special meals to compensate for the fast. (Give a long list of all the foods). For example, one interviewee said, “.... once it’s time to eat, we eat as much as we can we then go for prayers” and another commented, “...when we come back, we eat not because of hunger but because it’s tempting”. This results in us sleeping on a full stomach. This, in turn, causes obesity and other complications”.

It was explained that most Muslims squeeze their five-course meals in the few hours they can eat. Given that, they would usually have it during the day, the rest of the other months. One participant stated that the only difference is in the other months they eat during the day while in this month they eat during the night which completely goes against the teachings of Islam. Another participant added, these individuals are very meticulous of what type of food they consume when breaking. “...they will not tolerate air fried foods rather it has to be oil fried. Moreover, as long as they see soft drinks say, coke they will never break their fast with water which is healthy and a prophetic practice”.

The general feeling of participants was that in Ramadan, some Muslims do not want to break their fast with foods easy on the tummy or nutritious like soup. One participant explained, “...if you compare the Asian community in the UK to the English reverts you will find that the reverts opt for foods that are soft on the tummy” (mother of Household J). Another respondent added, “...such individuals argue that they were fasting all day and will not tolerate air fried foods.

From conversations with participants it seemed that Although breaking ones fast with oily foods and soft drinks is detrimental to one's health, they remain adamant and oblivious.

A few participants explained that some Muslims are oblivious of their health just like they are of Ramadan. It was explained that they only come to their senses once something happens. In the case were a health condition kicks in because of their diet, they resort to a quick fix by taking medications instead of changing their habit. More so, here in Cape Town, there needs to be a shift of mindset. Even if the doctor gives them a diet to follow due to their illness, they will only do it for a while. For instance, when they go to functions, they go back to their habits. Such individuals will say I will take my cholesterol, diabetes or blood pressure tablets once I get home let me indulge now. It's clear that these individuals just want a quick fix and do not want to be in a healthy condition (Households E, B, F).

An older female social worker and counsellor explained the general eating habits of Muslims during Ramadan. "...They overeat in Ramadan and after tarawih which is unnecessary. I go to bed after *tarawih* and do not eat like them. They gluttonous and their culture encourages self-indulgence. This includes both the rich and the poor, and what's intriguing is that some of them can't even afford but they want everything on the table they spend more money than other months and make sure they have everything in Ramadan. Besides the way they eat is unnecessary. Even *laylatual qadar* (the night of power) there is no difference (Granny of household D). "... I have been going to the same place for the past 25 years for this auspicious night and the way they eat and go about food is horrific; they act like animals and dogs they ridiculous Muslim people. Their intention is not to come and pray but their intention is to come and eat they are discourteous they come with big bags. I have been going there for the past 25 years so they uncultured rude and I can keep on calling them things. In Ramadan I lose weight most of them gain weight and when they are done eating, they still go to Wembley how many tummies do they have? It's a culture to be greedy. Say, when I am distributing food parcels to these individuals my sponsors from Johannesburg say they rude. The more they get the more they want" (Granny in household D).

4. 6 Social Environment

Several participants explained that there are numerous addictive components in food that increase mindless eating. It was clarified that this is the undertaking of companies, scientists, and psychologists in order to maximize their profits. Respondents elucidated that they play a big role as they bombard and cleverly stake unhealthy products in the supermarkets. Two

participants stated that such practices are evident when customers get to the till where they are surrounded by all kinds of unhealthy products. The same is true for stores that sell fruits and vegetables. It was explained that Muslims like the rest of other customers fall victim to this trickery. However, if Muslims practiced the injunctions of the Quran, and were principled and aware of the consequences of falling victim to such deception they would have restrained, advised a few interviewees. One participant stated that in spite of this, there are those who are conscious of what they consume and have a preference for wholesome foods.

A number of those interviewed suggested that those who opt for organic produce claim it to be expensive and difficult to obtain. It was explained that this makes it impossible to turn it into a habit. By contrast, non-organic foods are effortlessly plentiful and an ideal choice of customers. It was revealed that this causes overindulgence seeing that these foods cause cravings and lack nutritional values. A few participants explained that in order to avoid overeating it is advised to consume home cooked meals that are nutritious and wholesome. One participant explained that a burger or sandwich bought from a fast food outlet will not be of nutritious value since the intention of that outlet was purely monetary gain, besides, the ingredients could be impure. Additionally, "... such outlets can use any product to make it look attractive and tastier without the knowledge of the consumer. Another participant added, "...for, instance they could add chicken claws or chemicals to enhance the flavour of such products and this can bring about health problems like the listeria outbreak" (Households J, I, D).

Additionally, respondents explained that there are other social factors that play a role in mindless eating. It was mentioned that one such factor is the influence of those who eat together. One participant elucidates on this factor with her own personal account. "When I get visitors its part of etiquettes that I remain sited until everyone finishes eating. Though these individuals never get done eating until they reach the point of satiation, consequently, I tend to eat as long as am sitting with them. According to me, Muslims in Johannesburg and Durban do not stuff themselves. But Capetonians will eat anything. Additionally, when they see a certain type of food they will ask for the recipe and make it the following day. Hence, if your friends take their time you are likely to eat more" (Households F, G, A).

Another participant supports this claim with her own story. "I frequently would go out with my cousins who love food. Where ever we went, they would stop for something to eat. I ended up overeating and overspending. I was a victim of peer pressure. I have more money now because am not spending it on food and now I can use the money for more important things. You are forced to join in if you go out with such people otherwise you will look very silly. Say, they

are eating MacDonald's and you sitting; they will assume that you stingy on yourself or weird. But I believe we must save money for important things. it's very selfish that we spend on ourselves and forget about the poor people instead of giving it to them since they are starving say, what's happening in Syria. While some are dying of hunger others are dying of obesity. Therefore, People can be influenced if they lack the self-control" (Households B, E).

Participants explained that the other factor that influences gluttony is the size or portion of food available. It was explained that It affects the amount individuals consume especially when it comes to buffets. As one respondent stated, "...in Buffets, they tend to eat more than one serving and to make it worse its unhealthy meals". Another interviewee stated that buffets influence people to eat more than one meal because there is enough while at home, they would eat one meal. Yet another participant explained "...I once went to a buffet in canal walk because a lady raising funds for her medical bill persuaded me to buy a food ticket and that's when I witnessed this phenomenon". Participants felt that in other instances, people tend to eat more when they are watching TV. It was explained that this is because they are unaware of how much they are consuming. It was advised that in actual fact, such an act indicates insolence to food hence such persons should go for *dhikr* instead of going to fast-food outlets such as pizza hut and watching tv (Households H, G, A).

Similarly, participants felt that the availability of comfort foods play a big role in mindless eating. One participant stated, "...I personally like chocolate and it's the only thing I buy but my sister likes chips and so she would have chips in the house. Since chips are available in the house, I will eat it. So, food should be made less available and not brought into the house as prevention is better than cure". Another participant stated, "... we are spoilt for choice as there are numerous supermarkets. I spoil my child by buying him snacks, as a result, he is not eating the correct food, but he takes his tablets to compensate for the junkies he consumes. He has a big appetite for unhealthy foods and I feel dissolute as a mother. We just have fast foods during the weekend. Yet, others lack the will to restrain from the availability of foods. when they go out, they just want to eat it's about the quality, the quantity and the amount i.e. the samosas half-moons the oily stuff that comes in during functions".

It was explained that the reason why children engage in mindless eating is that all the unhealthy foods lay around. As one interviewee said, "...lucky are those children who are brought up with fruits and vegetables so when they are offered unhealthy foods, they will remind you that it has sugar in it". It was suggested that children should be taught at a young age otherwise they will be craving the sugar when they get older. As one participant put it, "...I know lots of

children who have not reached the age of 4 but lost all their teeth. This is because in every meal they consume there is sugar in it especially in Cape town There is sugar in their starter meal, main meal (other family members nod in agreement) followed by dessert, tea and biscuits; so, its customary (Households D, H)”. It was concluded that the availability and accessibility of fast foods have made it easy for people to overindulge (Households E, G, A).

Another major problem in the community that was pointed out by participants was fast foods. It was explained that this is intensified by a large number of workers who claim the presence of insufficient time to cook. As an older interviewee said, “...in our days we would come home to cooked meals were as in today most of the women work”. Talking about this issue an interviewee said, “...these women would choose the easiest way of presenting food to the family which is readymade food or junk food”. Whilst a minority mentioned that the claim of the workforce i.e. they do not have time to cook is a lame excuse. One participant stated that, “...you don’t need 24 hours to make a nutritious meal” and another questioned, “...we are a higher creation to time so why can’t we control our time and have time to cook”. Another interviewee alluded to this notion and questioned, “if these individuals are too lazy to feed themselves nutritious food what good are they?” Some interviewees argued that this is mainly because they have left the Quran and become lazy as well as ignorant. While others commented that People need to uplift themselves. As one elder participant put it, “...they are Lazy and ignorant these people don’t want to cook, to do dishes and the availability of fast foods makes it worse”. And another interviewee remarked, “...according to me McDonalds is like paper. Hence, Obesity is a punishment because they don’t take heed” (Households D, H, A).

A small number of those interviewed moralised that the path of the prophet must be followed. As one interviewee explained, “...he was poor and was never bothered by materialistic things he used to go hungry with his companions”. It was expressed that today’s Muslims will buy food or go to function even if they not hungry. Others felt that it had become a custom but felt that it can be turned around by leading by example (Household H).

A small number of respondents felt some Muslims are not worried about their body image and in some instances, men want a big figure. As one participant explained, “...for example, my brother likes his wife to have a big figure although she wants to lose weight for health reasons”. And another interviewee said, “...I know I am overweight but it’s because of the tablets”. Other participants felt that there are improvements in the community as Muslims are becoming more enlightened. As one participant described, “...you will see them engage in physical activities, it may take time, but we are getting there as a Muslim community” (Household B).

4.7 Moral Formation

In this section, I will document the interviewees' perceptions of how moral formation can be implemented and what constraints hinder the implementation of moral formation.

The majority of those who responded to this question felt that self-discipline and leading by example instead of following the herd would help implement moral formation. As one participant stated, "...I know a lady who grows her own food which is *ḥalāl* and pure. She looks half her age because of what she consumes". Another individual stated "... I believe it starts at an individual level' And another commented, "...my aunty has an organic garden and tries her best to consume wholesome food. She also encourages her neighbours to do the same by teaching and selling her fresh produce to them. For instance, I buy my jam from her as it has no preservatives". (Sister of household B). Talking about this issue an interviewee said, "...moral formation can be implemented by first rectifying yourself then your family and finally, taking it out to the community as well as leading by example" (Daughter in household B). A small number of participants expressed the belief that individuals should be more conscious of what they consume as it will affect their spiritual and physical body. Additionally, it was mentioned that for the body to produce healthy cells and a healthy immune system real healthy food must be eaten and all junk foods with preservatives must be avoided (Households of G, B). As one participant put it, "...eating junk food should be restricted and I should first start with myself as a parent. I should go back to the basics. Enquire where the food is coming from, remind myself of the purpose of eating and be aware of the benefits" (Mother of household J).

Some participants expressed the belief that some Muslims assume that *ḥalāl* means wholesome and that it is not the case. For example, one interviewee said, "the products that came from Brazil had a *ḥalāl* stamp on them but were called back due to the outbreak". Whereas several respondents indicated that, what is *ḥalāl* is not necessarily pure. Talking about this issue an interviewee explained that in the case of the Brazilian products the religious leaders who issued the *ḥalāl* certificates did not have people on the premises to make sure that everything was *ḥalāl* and *ṭayyip*. Hence, the *ulama* (religious leaders) should be more stringent when it comes to such issues (Household C, I).

Another response to this question included that parents play a big role in the child's nutrition. As one participant elucidated on this notion, "...I am a very ambitious person and I always wanted to be a scientist finish my degree and go up to a Ph.D. But at the same time, I feel and

think that a mother's priority should be her children as it comes from Islam to a certain extent because Allah knows what's best and it's in His wisdom. You can work like Khadija (may Allah be pleased with her) but I honestly feel a woman's place is in the house and to look after the children. Say, if I come from work at five, I don't desire to cook as it takes time to cook nutritious food instead, I would opt for quick, food for instance, fast foods. So, being a stay home mother should not be demeaning in any way because Allah will reward her. Also, the mother's choice affects the children since they need supervision. Children pick up lots of bad habits when a mother is at work since she does not know what nonsense they are getting up to. Therefore, mothers should be at home taking care of the children and their nutrition" (Households C, F, I).

A number of those interviewed explained that some children with parents but are like orphans in the sense that both parents are working long hours and none of them are aware of what their children are doing or eating. Some participants felt that mothers should play a bigger role in caring for children. As one participant explained, "...although some feminists argue that the father should equally stay at home, psychologists disagree; according to a book titled 'Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus' it was found that when a man works it raises his estrogen which is good since it makes him happier and less stressful. On the other hand, it was found women in the workforce tend to have increased levels of estrogen which in turn increases their stress levels. Hence, working for long hours is detrimental to their health and will make them resort to stress eating. So, Allah has created mothers in such a way that it's in her nature to biologically nurture children" (Daughter in household C).

Respondents also felt that moral formation can be implemented by the parents and leaders setting an example until it becomes psychologically embedded as well as an integral part of their lifestyle. one participant put it, "...once it becomes a habit and inherent in them, others will follow. In the same manner that if a person sees their neighbour watering their flowers every morning then at a certain point they will follow, and it will become a habit".it was further explained that through habituation, setting an example and teaching it to others moral formation can be implemented. Finally, such a habit will be passed on for generations. However, the elders, leaders, and parents should be aware of the problem for them to take any action (Households F, H, E).

Others felt that more emphasis should come from the mosques and madrassas. Additionally, participants suggested that Muslims need to be more proactive and take part in decision making especially at a national level as they seem to be very passive. As one interviewee said, "...for

example, parents in America protested against placing candies at the till since children want what they see and in due course, this results in an addiction, once they reach their early years of adulthood. Consequently, this resulted in the removal of such products from the shelves I believe the same can be done here” (Households C, D, J).

Other respondents suggested that constant reminders can help implement moral formation. As one participant explained, “...that’s what I do at the institute I work in. there are many verses in the Quran that speak of food so when explaining such verses, I back up with scientific facts just to scare them more” (Daughter of Household C). Whereas others felt that the imams need to dedicate more sermons on the importance of consuming the right food and the implications of eating all the wrong kinds of foods. One participant suggested, “...they should also have a health awareness month. The Muslim Judicial Council can help in this regard” (Son in Household J).

A minority of participants suggested organic gardening. As one interviewee said, “...it is easy because that’s what people in northern Transvaal do; we had lots of fruit trees and poultry. We even had fruits on the streets”. And another participant commented, “...they should grow fruit trees instead of shade trees as there is a hadith that speaks of this virtue, but everyone wants something in return” (Households H, A).

Some participants expressed the belief that although some might think organic gardening to be too much of an effort, they felt that it’s a small step towards better food. It was explained that Muslim NGOs should play a greater role in educating and helping Muslims obtain wholesome foods. While others felt that it comes down to the peoples’ mindset. As one respondent put it, “...poorer communities prefer to sit back and wait for food packages that are not wholesome in most cases instead of engaging in gardening projects”. And another commented, “they foresee lots of hindrances such as lack of fertilizers and water, as a result, there is lack of will as they see it to be too much of an effort”. A few respondents felt that such Muslims prefer to have it the easy way now and end up with problems later on, say, 10 to 20 years from now. It was expressed that, this mindset of waiting for others to do something has to stop. Whereas others suggested that a *waqaf* (an endowment made by Muslims to a religious, educational, or charitable cause) organic farm is possible (Households E, B, J).

4.8 Constraints on Moral Formation

Many respondents felt that among the many constraints that hinder the implementation of moral formation was lack of education in the topic. It was explained that the madrasas never taught

them from a small age the importance of wholesome food. As one participant said, "...I still have my books and there is nothing about food, especially good *ṭayīb* food. All we were taught was how to make ablution and recite *duas* (supplications). *Duas* won't change what you eat. I could eat a burger and make my *duas*. I believe that it's very important to teach children at a young age the importance of *ḥalāl* and *ṭayīb* food because at that age they don't forget rules easily" (Households G, E, B).

Additionally, it was expressed that the ulama are more concerned with *ḥalāl* than wholesome food. Respondents felt that in some cases, they issue *ḥalāl* certificates to outlets that do not sell pure food. As one participant stated, "...for instance, McDonald's; it's not wholesome, most of the stuff they call chicken is not chicken. Does their bread look like bread? So according to me that not *ḥalāl* in reality it's like paper" (Households A, C, I).

Participants felt that the other constriction was lack of willpower. It was explained that anything is achievable through repetition, constant reminders and eventually a huge difference would be made. As one interviewee explained, "...in the same way, Allah repeatedly says in the Quran "which of my blessings can u deny" so we shouldn't be despondent of family members who overindulge but rather keep telling them until it gets to their minds" (Households D, G, J).

Moreover, the majority of those who responded to this question argued that advertisements play a big role. As one participant said, "we must lobby so that the cabinet brings it to a stop". Whereas as another respondent stated that "...research has found that the advertisements that come in between cartoons have so much influence and are completely unethical. For instance, MacDonald's will tell the child buy this food and you will get a certain toy". Talking of this issue an interviewee stated, "such companies create play areas which is immoral as these children eat even though they did not want to. Later, these children get addicted and get obese when they grow up seeking food whenever its possible". A few participants felt that the mothers should have put the right kinds of food on the table making it the problem of the parents. As one participant stated, "...eating junk food does not relieve us of hunger as they lack the nutritious values compared to home cooked meals. And another respondent commented, "...a good example is how Jammy Oliver a TV presenter tried to implement it in America. By fixing the right food for children in schools" (Households D, F, A).

A few participated expressed the belief that the limitation is the mentality that if the food is *ḥalāl* then it can be consumed. It was explained that this kind of mentality leaves no room for *ṭayīb* food. As one interviewee explained, "...this is because when we were growing up all we

heard was this food is *ḥalāl* because it doesn't contain any of the forbidden foods and it was obtained in a *ḥalāl* manner". Other responses to this question included lack of education, ignorance, laziness and a don't care attitude which a sign of a spiritual void is (Households C, I, B, E)

Conclusion

Chapter four documented the perceptions, of the Muslim community of Rylands associated with the Habibia mosque. This was done by means of in-depth semi-structured interviewees. Respondents' mentioned various reasons that motivate overindulgence. These reasons include spiritual apathy, emotional eating as well as the social environment. However, there was no mention of food insecurity as a cause for overindulgence. Respondents were further asked the constraints of moral formation as well as how moral formation can be implemented. Respondents gave varied answers to these questions. Some of these perceptions include self-discipline, more emphasis from religious leaders and through educational programmes.

Henceforth, the next chapter will document the perceptions of Muslims in Belhar.



Chapter 5: Perceptions of the Muslim Community of Belhar

5. Introduction

Chapter five continues to examine the perceptions of Muslims as to why overindulgence persists to be a problem. The chapter focuses on the Muslim community of Belhar. This community is distinctive from the inhabitants of Rylands in terms of social-economic status as well as racially. As a result, I strongly expected to see a clear difference between the Rylands community who are predominantly of Indian descent and enjoy a high income compared to their counterparts who are largely of Malay origin and are disadvantaged economically. However, interestingly, the differences between these two communities were very minimal. Where differences between households were evident, these seemed related mostly to aspects such as poverty. For example, participants in Rylands maintained that individuals overindulge at special occasions as they seek gratification in food while those in Belhar maintained that such individuals overeat as it is the only time, they get decent food and is an opportunity to stuff themselves. As a result, this chapter will present the findings in the same manner as the previous chapter. It will prioritize the themes that occurred the most followed by those that did not arise repeatedly.

5.1 Overindulgence by the Food Insecure

The majority of respondents were of the perception that some overeat when they get the opportunity as they are poverty stricken and food insecure. As one participant explained, "...some individuals overindulge during functions as it is the only time they eat decent food such as curry, rice and chicken keeping in mind that they do not know when they will have such foods again. Hence, it's an opportunity for them to stuff themselves". And another interviewee added, "...they overeat so as to store food in their bodies, but these foods have no nutritional value so eventually they get obese" (Households in D, F, A). This is in line with research conducted by Prof David Sanders from the University of the Western Cape's School of Public Health (2015) in which he states that, "it is a much more chronic form of under-nutrition where they may not go to bed hungry, but they don't get enough nutrition from their low-quality diet".

It was further explained that some of these individuals spend money on wrong things and as a result, there are many fat hungry people. It was indicated that such people spend their money on fast foods, alcohol, cigarettes and drugs which are wrong priorities. Talking about this issue one participant commented, "Although in South Africa there is no shortage of food some

households are obese and hungry which is caused by mismanagement and rising food prices” (Households of A, C, I).

These sentiments are confirmed by a study conducted by Mkhawani and colleagues in which they maintain that, “rising food prices can have a devastating effect on the health of poor households by making it more difficult for them to afford basic food baskets. Although South Africa is food secure as a nation, it does not mean that every household is able to access nutritionally adequate food” (Mkhawani et al. 2016: 69).

Whilst one participant commented, “...am thankful to God that there is a *zakāt* fund and Muslim organisations can feed such people”. This testimony is supported by literature on the benefits of zakat and Muslim faith-based organisations. As described in a thesis by Kagee (2017; 16) in which he states that, “in Islam, the provision of food takes place not only in the context of families and religious communities but also through charity organisations. Many Muslim organisations have emerged to assist individuals to give those in need. These organisations rely largely on the contributions of Muslims channelling their *Zakāt*, *Ṣadaqah* (voluntary charity) and other contributions.”

Additionally, participants reported that those who live on grants pay debts as they borrow money during the month for food or for habits such as smoking and alcohol. As one respondent put it, “...some people get into debt for food, as supermarkets give food on credit for example, Picknpay and Woolworths. Supermarkets are to be blamed for this as they encourage customers to buy luxury foods and non-essentials on credit which contributes to mindless eating, undernutrition and over indebtedness”. In general, participants concluded that individuals from poorer households spend money on smoking and eating the wrong kinds of foods that are not of nutritional value (Households of D, G, J). These sentiments concur with research conducted by Mkhawani and colleagues in which they found that, “the majority were short of food before the month end and reported their coping strategies to be eating less preferred food, borrowing food from neighbours, borrowing money to buy food or going without food” (Mkhawani et al. 2016:73).

Moreover, respondents maintained that a fear of being food insecure has created a habit of being gluttonous. As one participant said, “...it is also a fear of not having food I have seen it especially when there is a buffet; people are afraid as if they will not get or as if they have never seen food before; there is some urgency I don’t know why. It’s a habit, ...I don’t know”. Yet another interviewee added, “...I think it’s the same reason why Muslims overeat during

Ramadan. It has something to do with growing up in difficult circumstances as my grandmother fixed everything with food, so food was a big deal”. Yet another participant who was a student said, “...I once sat in a sociological class and they discussed why poor people spend so much on food. This is because they live pay check to pay check. They believe that by the end of the week they won't have any savings. Hence, they buy so many things out of fear; that's why they spend their money on trolleys and trolleys of food. These actions are motivated by the fear of not having or they know the fear of not having so they spend, and they put themselves in debt with Woolworths and Pick pay. They have to pay it back, but they don't think like that; it's a psychological problem maybe because they grew in poverty or are poor. So, the feeling of buying something satisfies them, as the big trolley of food is actually visible, and it gives them the satisfaction that their money is not just going anywhere. Talking about this issue one participant narrated an article she read, “...I read a case scenario about an adopted baby who was put in a cupboard and wasn't fed at all. She survived on the wood of the cupboard, plastic and anything else she found. Eventually, the neighbours found out as they would always hear loud music in the house and as a result, her biological parents won the case and took her back from the adoptive parents. However, when she became a teenager, she would hide food in a drawer and under the bed because she was scared that she might not get fed. Additionally, a few respondents reported that when beggars ask for food it doesn't necessarily mean that they are starving. As one participant put it, “...so, like the people I have seen they ask for food, but it doesn't necessarily mean they will eat all the food. Some keep and others share with people at home; it can also be a psychological factor because the children are scared when will the next food come. As a result, they overeat and think tonight at least I have food, as they don't know when the next morsel will come, and they think that overeating will suffice them” (Households of E, A).

In general, from conversations with participants, it seemed that the fear of not having results in overindulgence and eventually obesity. The testimonies of the participants are in harmony with research conducted by Dr Gross and colleagues (2012) who found that, “... whilst eating too much food can cause obesity, the fear of not having enough food may lead to the same result.

5.2 Spiritual Crisis

When participants were asked as to why Muslims overindulge many reported that it is due to a spiritual vacuum. It was explained that this is a result of the foods consumed among many things. As an elderly father put it, “...it's a spiritual crisis the entire world is going through a

spiritual crisis. This generation is completely different in terms of *adāb* (manners) and *aḵḥlāq* (character) and this is because of the stuff they consume and its creating an imbalance. They cannot think, they just on their phones; kids are very imprudent because they overconsume. Additionally, two elder participants expressed the belief that Muslims are losing their identity with each generation. As one of them explained, "...it's getting worse your great grandfather was strict but then later generations compromise both on religion and culture. Our values have fallen apart. I see it happen; they want to be like the west and now we don't have a right on our children because the government protects them. I believe gluttony is just a pocket of all the other factors" Another interviewee added, "...I believe if they knew their religion properly, they would not overindulge. But their knowledge of religion is minimal, and their faith is weak. They also overindulge in Ramadan as they give in to their lower desires. They have forsaken the prophetic way of eating even when drinking water, they gobble it down when he said take it on sips since it is good for their health" (Households C, H, A).

5.2.1. Emotional Eating

Some participants argued that emotional eating is one of the factors that leads to mindless eating. Whilst other participants indicated that some starve themselves which has its own detrimental effect. As one participant explained, "...comfort eating is a problem for some individuals when they are depressed or going through something. They feel good when they overeat and when they are done eating; they repeat it again. It's like a drug they keep eating and keep eating because they want to feel good". Another participant explained, "...stress eating is also an issue, for example, this certain man ate for comfort as his father would abuse him as a child and his mom would give him food. Consequently, when he got older, he would associate food with comfort. He had an emotional attachment with food". Yet another participant reported, "...stress eating is a factor for myself when I am stressing, I eat a lot. I don't care how much; I just start nibbling and from that I start eating a lot. I don't realize I am eating a lot so anything that is in front of me goes in my mouth even if I am not hungry" (Households C, F, D).

5.2.2. Dieting

Additionally, respondents felt that moving from one diet to another to be a waste of money and expressed the belief that all the expensive supplements to be unnecessary. It was explained that dieting is not the answer to mindless eating as it causes binge eating. As one participant put it, "...we all know that when you stay away from chocolates for a long time and then finally the

craving kicks in you eat more than you used to. Moreover, when you start starving your body the next time you eat, your body will start stocking on fat in case you start starving yourself again”.

Talking about this issue an interviewee said, “...dieting is not a good thing at all it should be a lifestyle and some of these diets are extreme as some cut out most of the food keeping in mind that the body craves all the foods you deprived it. So eventually when you stop the diet you end up eating more because the diet was not a lifestyle; say, it was for three months. It’s the same logic of poor people and so in your mind, you just want to eat and eat even if you don’t enjoy as you are compensating for the weeks you starved yourself. So, you just do it to fill yourself up and then again you get addicted to junkies because you didn’t have it when you were dieting”.

5.3 Hedonistic Consumption

Moreover, a fairly strong theme that emerged was hedonistic consumption. It was indicated that some Muslims overindulge as they seek pleasure in food. As one respondent put it, “...they do not just serve themselves the amount they can eat instead they want to eat from everything and they put everything on their plates when I see them do that I lose my appetite”. One respondent claimed, “...they seek pleasure in food - women will have ice-cream while men will resort to heavy meals. Another participant advised, “...They must dish little by little but the way they dish seems like they are afraid they won’t get any food, so they are storing food in their bodies and they don’t stop there; they get the food on the table and take it home”. Yet another participant added, “...they come to weddings and carry half of the wedding home but that’s human nature. ...it was aired on the radio that some individuals during functions will make themselves parcels to take home” (Households E,G,A).

One younger participant used her case to describe the problem of hedonistic consumption in the community. “...Say, I eat lunch at home and I am invited for a function then I will still go eat but am clever I won’t eat at home when am going to a function because I need to get to the point of satiation when I go to the function. This is because I don’t know when I will go to another function and have all the nice foods. It could be months before I go to another function and have all the nice stuff. ...When I get to the function all of a sudden, I start eating and this leads to being exceptionally full. Eventually, this leads to diabetes due to the sweets and fatty stuffs”.

Another respondent explained that, "...since our eyes are bigger than our stomach, we dish ourselves food that we cannot finish. Yet another interviewee said, "...in our religion and culture, you cannot waste food. For example, when I used to eat my porridge as a child I had to finish it up even if I vomited my mom was like that. So, I can't waste no matter how full I am". One participant added, "...when I see all the food, I feel super hungry and dish as much as I can, and I will end up sitting with that plate of food even after I have reached the point of satiation. It has to do with Malay culture and your beliefs that you can't waste food. Since your ego was bigger you suffer for that". A minority of participants argued that very few people think of the hadith which states that a third is for food, a third for water and a third for air let alone practice it. As one respondent put it, "...this people eat and eat until they full I don't know why. it's not peer pressure, they had lunch and when they go to a function they still eat" (Households H, G, A).

Whilst other respondents indicated that culture also encourages overindulgence with the frequent functions. As one interviewee stated, "...every function is associated with food for instance, Quran competitions, weddings and even *janāzahs* (funerals). One participant moralised, "...it's very wrong to turn a funeral into a function. It has to change I don't eat the food at a funeral house rather I take food. if I did not cook then I will buy groceries that they will need i.e. the essentials". Another participant added, "...it's not ethical to make lots of noise with pots and pans. Although this habit was introduced long ago people like me are trying to make a change". Yet another interviewee explained, "...what happens is when such individuals come from the cemetery, they want to eat but I cannot eat from a family who just lost a brother or son. One interviewee stated, "...in *janāzahs* they just eat, I never eat food only if am forced to. Some people just eat they just come to the *janāzah* to eat because they know there will be food. However, it will be quick food like *akni* (rice). We just concentrate too much on food and it has become our intention. Our intentions are not to comfort the family or do something for the family because they down and out". Whereas one participant suggested, "...the community will always bring something; they very effective in getting food together for a funeral; very quick" (Households B, E, A).

Another participant expressed the belief that, "...some Muslims seek pleasure in food during weekends; women tend to go for ice cream and argue that it's their relaxing time and the men go for braais. They Seek pleasure in food and I can say they live to eat and not eat to live". A small number of interviewees felt that Malay Indian food to be very unhealthy. It was explained that it consists of oily fatty foods as well as meat. Yet another respondent mentioned, "...I grew

up in the Malay quarter; Bokaap area so whenever there was a *khatam* (completion) of the Quran we would spend the entire morning at the venue; so, breakfast would be koeksisters, samosas pies and milk tarts. The milk tarts would not be the conventional ones you get from the supermarkets but very thick. So, I don't think the community is overindulging I think it's what they are eating that's high in calories causing obesity as well as lack of exercise. (Households D, H)"

Some participants concluded that in general, some Muslims just like food and the idea of it excites them. As one respondent put it, "The taste of food plays a big factor like me *astagfirulahi* (Allah forgive me) when the food tastes lekker even if am full I would still eat more which leads to sinning and obesity. (looks down at her flat tummy giving the impression that she is all fine). Additionally, it's about the vibe which is to eat and eat as if they don't have food at home". Yet another participant commented, "...my opinion of Muslims in Cape Town is they just greedy; it's just a culture we have adopted and a sickness that's why a lot of them have diabetes, cancers, heart disease and strokes its common because of their lifestyles so they eat" As one individual claimed, "...it's our way of relaxing while our non-Muslims friends would associate it with wine.

Yet another participant expressed the belief that, "...some people just want to eat they don't worry about their health. For example, diabetic people when they at a function they don't worry about their health they just eat then when they go home and are sick they have to take extra tablets.

These sentiments of seeking pleasure in food concur with Conradie's typology on the act of eating in which he states that, "such an emphasis on pleasure can be extended in different directions, including the sheer enjoyment of stimulated taste buds, gluttony and the refined taste experiences associated with the culinary arts and wine tasting. The food and restaurant industry cater for a wide variety of tastes and invites clients to explore new products, exotic foods and ever-expanding levels of pleasure. Not surprisingly, this view of eating requires considerable attention to food preparation with the associated industry of sharing recipes derived from around the world" (Conradie 2016:14).

5.4. Conspicuous Consumption

Additionally, another predominant theme that emerged during discussions was conspicuous consumption. It was indicated that Muslims overindulge during functions as they over cater. It was further explained that some Muslims enjoy large quantities of food and wealth as a result,

they are tempted to flaunt their social privilege and over consume. Whilst other participants explained that in the process 40 to 50 percent of the food ends in the bin. As one interviewee suggested, "...this is because they either dish too much or dish twice even if they are not hungry as there is lots of food on the table". And another respondent added, "...once they stuff themselves as much as they can, they throw the rest into the bin. Their eyes are bigger than their stomach; they think they can eat everything, but their stomach cannot take it in".

Still, some interviewees argued that food is used to flaunt privilege. Whilst a few participants who claimed to be of Indian and Malay descent argued that both communities are gluttonous because of conspicuous consumption. For example, one interviewee said, "...if you more influential or the family can afford maybe meat and various items it says something about how far you have come in life so it's definitely a status thing that's why they engage in mindless eating". Whereas one individual complained that the society is mostly concerned with status. He explained, "...it's about more varieties, more expensive meat, more mutton and chops instead of beef which is cheap". Another participant complained, "...even the curtains they buy must be better than their friends and neighbours". However, one respondent said, "...in our family it's because we are very close so whenever we get together food is served". Furthermore, some interviewees felt that Muslims go to fancy restaurants to give off an image of being smart or classy as well as the experience of the place. Whereas others explained that this results in mindless eating, and degenerative diseases such as diabetes (Households J, I, D).

Additionally, a common view amongst participants was that during weddings the community tries to outperform one another which results in a competition. It was explained that such individuals go into debt to flaunt their status. A minority of participants indicated flaunting in weddings to be the biggest issue. It was explained that it's the most important event in terms of showing-off which also includes conspicuous consumption. One participant stated, "...they would get into debt just to show off, It's more of a status craze". Another interviewee added, "...my husband was a financial advisor and they would go to him and say we have a wedding we need 50k and they will gladly owe the bank just to show off". It was further explained that such Muslims want their event to be exhibited. As one respondent indicated, "...they want people to say so and so had a nice wedding, as well as did you see what they were serving". Another interviewee commented, "...such individuals are of the assumption that it says something about them as a family and it's all about looking good in the eyes of the people; that's why they would create debt". Yet another participant commented, "...I know people who would get into debt just for that one day while others would spend all their money. I, however,

do not have such a mindset and I think differently because I'm part of a new generation. Nevertheless, the community itself is completely like that". Yet another participant added, "...it is about showing off and they should be taught the sunnah

Moreover, one participant elucidated on the problem of conspicuous consumption during weddings. "...in the Indian tradition it is customary to have an engagement party before the wedding; this is where the boy and girl exchange gifts and where the food and type of gifts says something about the family they are marrying into. Say, your fiancée buys you name bags, brand makeup, watches etc and the rest of the family would say she is getting married into an influential family. So, this type of spending is to appear that you up there. Interestingly the Indian tradition has now been adopted by the Malay community. For example, I had a friend whose both sides of the family are Malay but practiced this tradition of display. Hence, the food and gifts will be displayed, pictures taken, and wealth will be flaunted. In other words, such families want people's attention and approval, so that they say your daughter did well for herself she's getting married just like surnames are important, so people put themselves in heavy debt just for that" (Households H, B, F).

Some interviewees argued that this is not just a problem in the poor communities. As one interviewee explained, "...I used to work for a surgeon and his wife would order very expensive stuff and he would scratch his head over it, so they would go on credit". Another older respondent explained, "...while 30 years ago they would invite everyone, serve just a pot of *akni* (rice) with paper cups and plates. Over the years things have changed; now its 200 people, no children are allowed, 5-course meal and crystal glasses; a very extravagant affair with no blessings". Whilst a few participants sermonized that according to the teachings of Islam one cannot buy what they can't afford. For example, one respondent said "...say, if a pencil is 5 rand and you have 2 rand you must look for a 2-rand pencil otherwise it's a sin. Personally, it's difficult to understand as to why they overindulge in all these unnecessary things".

From conversations with participants, it seemed that such tendencies culturally stem from the slavery heritage and hence contribute to overindulgence. It was further explained that Indian Muslims engage in conspicuous consumption to send a message that they are of noble and affluent backgrounds. The Malays on the other hand over spend to deny their past and try to separate themselves from their past. As one respondent elucidated, "...in the process they try to be more European and more affluent. If they can't afford, they put themselves in debt as they must raise their status to show that they are different from the coloured's". It was concluded by participants that the Indians feel they are better than the Malays and the Malays feel they

are better than the coloureds. As a result, weddings are extremely important as it is the time to display this phenomenon of “we no longer there and we can do better” by displaying wealth which includes conspicuous consumption (Households K, G, C).

Additionally, respondents indicated that wealth is important for the reason that families get known as the ideal and better family, in the process they attract another good family which would want to marry into their family. Hence, it’s about showing off and status. As one participant explained, “I see this in my own family which are both Indian and Malay. So, my Indian family do not want to be known as Malay or associated with them and they feel they better than them. Since Malays are poorer and are associated with poverty, they lived in district 6 and their heritage was of poverty; it is only now that you may find affluent ones. On the other hand, Indians are of wealthier backgrounds, you can see where they stay; the likes of Constantia and Rylands. You won’t find Indians staying in Belhar, it’s just me and my family who stay here even if we all South African Muslims living in South Africa. You won’t know the difference, but they will see the difference they feel like they have a culture and the Malays don’t have a culture and they believe like they take their culture from them like the mehndi night (henna party) as a result they only marry Indians”.

In support of these views and insights Conradie (2016: 15) states, “‘Conspicuous consumption’ is a form of cultural communication in which signals concerning wealth and social status are telegraphed to others with the aim of improving one’s social status by emulating the ‘leisure class’. This prompts the leisured class to invent other status symbols in order to demarcate their social identity. This leads to a spiral of social climbing where consumers are motivated by a mix of envy (keeping up with the Joneses) and anxiety to maintain their relative positions. Actually, ‘we’ do not need to keep up with the Joneses but have to stay ahead of them. Conspicuous consumption is therefore consumption not merely for hedonistic excess; it also serves as a marker of class identity, of social stratification and of adherence to norms of style and taste. It is not only a matter of *what* is being consumed but also *how* it is being consumed. The elite create distinction for themselves through their ‘superior’ taste, distancing themselves from those with ‘inferior’ taste (Pierre Bourdieu). Conspicuous consumption, flaunting the luxuries of success, receives little censure in a consumer society where people are socialised to accept the need for competition and acquisition. In more traditional societies food and drink could not be hoarded so that hosting a feast (for all in a village) to share the surplus also functioned as a leveller – even though this enhanced the host’s prestige and influence”.

5.5. Ramadan

A common view amongst interviewees was that the majority of Muslims stock up on food in the days leading up to Ramadan. As one participant explained, "...the day before fasting Muslims will have their trolleys extra stacked to overindulge the whole month and waste the remains". Another respondent explained, "...the build-up to Ramadan has a big effect on supermarkets and businesses". Yet another interviewee added, "...providing food in Ramadan has become a multimillion industry, thus, local supermarket stock up for the rush". Talking about this issue one interviewee who was a businessman commented, "...the build-up to Ramadan is phenomenal, it is huge, it's crazy...I would say it's literally crazy, we stock on oil, rice, flour and dates. The demand quadruples so it's not hard to see why Muslims gain weight". Alluding to this notion one older female participant commented, "...before Ramadan starts stores expect large numbers of customers each day, so I have to join in case they sell out." Whilst one participant indicated that, "...when Ramadan is around the corner my dad gets into a bad mood and fills his tummy before Ramadan and the uncles as well, so they resort to eating outside and he also gets moody because of all the cigarettes that's why they all have the pot bellies" (Households C, E, K, H).

Additionally, many participants indicated that the availability of different foods to be tempting. One participant said, "...Muslims are tempted in Ramadan due to the many available foods in Ramadan which results in getting bloated". And another participant commented, "...people eat through the night so instead of losing weight they gain weight believe it or not"

Furthermore, some interviewees argued that the majority of Muslims spend long hours in the kitchen making extra-special, bountiful meals. One participant stated, "...they spend lots of time in the kitchen because the husband wants a certain dish of food even the children want their own foods". One participant explained, "...they spend 4 to 5 hours in the kitchen. And another participant advised that they must work out their time so as to have time to pray and make use of the holy month. Yet another respondent explained, "...there is a feast every day and now there is a spur in Kenilworth that's advertising that they will have a buffet before sunrise during Ramadan". One interviewee said, "Go to the malls you will see how empty it is because their main supporters the ones spending money on fast foods are Muslims". Yet another respondent explained, "...It could be a spiritual crisis but, in our family, we would still be reading the Quran and making *ibaadah* (prayers). ...it was always after *asr* (evening) prayers that we would start preparing for iftar that is 3 to 4 hours and that's a lot of time. I

don't do that at all I broke that cycle, so my grandmother was like that and her mother was like that. So, it's a tradition; a culture" (Households I, F, G).

From conversations with interviewees, it was suggested that the majority of Muslims overindulge in Ramadan as they believe they deserve it. As one participant put, "...they feel like they can eat as much as they want because they fasted and spent half of the day in the kitchen". Another respondent added, "...but the mother is under pressure because the children want to be rewarded for their fast as their understanding and intention is to abstain from food until they reach such an age that they understand the real meaning of Ramadan and their mindset changes. And another individual commented, "...just like people drink coffee because they need it and drink wine because they deserve it so in Ramadan I have to eat because I was fasting all day and I overeat because I deserve it.

Talking about this issue one interviewee reported, "...Our eyes are bigger than our stomach since we didn't eat the whole day and we still adapting; so, we tend to overeat. Our mindset is such that we should eat so much of the nice stuff on the table. For instance, my mom makes samosas, soup and pies and then sometimes the neighbours bring in some stuff and you like I need to eat all this because your eyes are bigger than your stomach. So, when we see all these nice deserts and treats we start eating them and by the time we get to the main meal we already full".

One individual stated that, "...in my family when I used to live in Belhar we completely used to overindulge which is the opposite of what the point of Ramadan is supposed to be. You must break your fast moderately and eat supper. so now talking about Ramadan a lot of money goes into food which is an irony; we supposed to be cutting down on our eating and drinking but also on our spending but that is not the case. For instance, my grandmother would spend much more in Ramadan and I don't know why actually. I think it's how you brought up"

Some respondents reported there is much emphasis on what Muslims do when breaking their fast. As one participant maintained, "...it takes away in my opinion the reason behind fasting as we are not supposed to be indulging when we are breaking our fasts. Instead we are supposed to keep in mind that there are people out there who don't have food". And another commented, "...people would still eat even when they full because they were preparing food the whole day while they were hungry. This is also because they make so many different items and they want to consume them all as a result, they get extremely full and some people have super. Yet another interviewee added, "...in Belhar they make koeksisters, samosas, savouries, milk tarts,

milkshakes and then its supper and some people would still go out; but that would be in Ryland's not in Belhar. So, they would buy from places such as Wembley; but they are wasting time; it's between Maghreb and Eisha instead of making *itikāf* (seclusion) and preparing for tarawih they waste time in the queue. And a few participants concluded that overindulgence goes beyond food consumption. As one respondent stated, "...it goes with clothes, brands, cars and especially on Eid they spend much money on cloths and everything like Christmas; such a huge expense" (Households F, A, H).

A common view amongst respondents was that the types of foods consumed in Ramadan are oily deep-fried savouries which affect one's health, cause obesity and affect one's spirituality. While a minority of participants expressed the belief that the majority of patients with (NCDs) are Muslim patients. As one participant put it, "...if you go to the hospital the majority of patients are Muslims. Yes, Indians and Malay because of overindulgence; they want to eat the oily samosas, pies and sugary stuff. Whilst one respondent complained, "...Ramadan is not supposed to be like that. But it is... they must have samosas, chili bites, pan cakes and everything else. And another respondent sermonized, "...in Ramadan you must eat a little and break your fast with a little and go for tarawih and then eat a little, but you get people who want to eat everything on the table as if they never ate before. They should not do that; just eat what you can because when you fasting your tummy gets very small". However, a small number of participants indicated that during Ramadan they do not overeat. It was explained that instead, they make extra food for the poor. Although they stated that others overindulge.

5.6. Social Environmental

Some participants expressed the belief that the reason why some Muslims overindulge is that they consume processed foods. It was explained that these types of foods do not have enough nutrients and consequently, the food is not satisfying their needs. As one participant explained, "...since processed foods do not fill us up, we eat more and more in order to get satisfied". Another respondent added, "...to be honest I can't call it food because of the stuff they use to add to the food. ...look at the listeria outbreak, ...it is because of processed foods". Yet another older participant added, "...for a few years I have never eaten polonies I really thank God for that, ...for me it's a miracle that I didn't eat polonies for years and now there is listeriosis. They should get rid of the enterprise as it makes people sick as well as restaurants. However, eating healthy can be expensive for certain people" (Households H, F, J).

Another interviewee when asked as why Muslims overindulge said, "...processed foods have an influence on mindless eating. Our parents used to cook us organic foods but now chemicals were introduced and the microwave. This is because the population has grown and is no longer minimal. Hence, they use such an argument to defend their acts of corrupting food. Moreover, man invades and moves on. Since the world is becoming over populated; its demand verses production. The demand is greater, so they increase the production, and, in the process, they use chemicals. For instance, the chicken, polonies and everything in general". Additionally, one participant commented, "...they use all that which is excess like the feet and bones of animals. It is then processed added to polonies and Viennas which is unethical and unprofessional. Another participant alluded to this notion and said, "...mindless eating is a result of processed foods that contain additives as a result, everyone is craving the same kind of foods. Certain chemicals are added to all processed foods these days that's why people are getting sick and ending up with diabetes". An elder female participant said, "...processed foods cause cravings although I haven't done my research" Yet another interviewee commented, "These foods are pumped with chemicals that's the reason as to why Muslims are bloated and they only drink gas cool drinks and due to the sedentary life styles, they lead" (Households B, G, J).

Some participants felt that processed foods to be tastier, delicious and easily available and cheaper. As one respondent commented, "...if they get their cravings, they got their cravings there is no way they will stay away from it". Yet another respondent indicated, "...you not getting all the nutritional value in food and this results in eating more. Processed foods cannot make one full. For example, if you eat an apple that's organic it will test differently because its heavy with nutrients, so you will feel more filled with just one apple. While two apples that are genetically modified will not fill you up because of the chemicals; the same goes for white bread. People can eat half a loaf of white bread and it won't fill them as it has no adequate nutrition, no nuts, and it's not wholesome so that will result in overeating food. And we can't blame scientists as they are catering for the demand of processed foods. However, those with a higher income eat organic veggies and they are more health conscious (Households E, D)"

Talking about this issue an interviewee said, "...we are indulging too much junk food. It's not food I don't call it food. ...it's not food anymore we must find a name for it. ...they drink carbonated drinks that damage their arteries and make holes in their skeleton. It was scientifically proven; I saw it on Facebook we learn a lot on Facebook". Another respondent reported, "...we also overeat the staple food which is bread and just put different stuffs on it

which is processed so we don't have a balanced diet. Hence, we should go back to the drawing board and learn about the groups of foods even if we are adults".

Another reason that was common amongst interviewees was the influence individuals that eat together have on one another. It was explained that those that continuously eat with gluttonous persons eventually become like them.

Whilst only a small number of respondents indicated that shops are structured in such a way that affects consumer choice psychologically. As one participant explained, "...like the way the sweets are placed by the till and the little ones will cry for them. Another participant added, "... all the necessities are placed at the back and you will have to walk past all the unhealthy products to go get to them. Yet another interviewee indicated, "...the way they put the products on the shelf is they place the most expensive product in your eye view (Households A, C, G).

Other responses to this question included that varieties have an influence on mindless eating. As one participant explained, "...when we were young there was only the original chutney sauce but now there are many varieties with lots of artificial flavouring, I don't know what it is, all I know is it tastes nice. While other interviewees blamed the advertisement of unhealthy foods to play a significant role in mindless eating. It was explained that advertising had become a normal lifestyle.

Additionally, a number of respondents indicated the increase of the working force, more specifically women to be one of the main reasons for mindless eating. It was explained that unlike old times very little women cook every day. One participant said, "...There is a rush and people resort to quick junk food" A few participants urged home cooked meals to be consumed. (Households H, D, I).

5.7. Moral Formation

A predominant theme during discussions was the need to start awareness centres, in the mosques. As one participant explained, "...bring charts and then leave some literature for them to take home. ...tell them to put it on the wall, on the fridge so it can be a reminder and they won't get overweight and they will use it as a guide.

Additionally, a very strong theme was the need for education. As one participant claimed, "...It is lack of Education". And another commented, "...they should read about it. Whilst a few respondents felt that some individuals have no intention of changing their eating habits unless they know how the food is made and what it contains. As one participant put it, "...some people

don't want to change like I have heard people at my work place say I still eat Viennas. It's not *halāl* and people have been made aware through the media, internet and everything else; it's just the mindset; they like the stuff and so they continue to eat it and so you can't change it". Another respondent added, "...Unless maybe if they knew what's in the ingredients of the stuff they are eating and how it is made. For example, last night I showed my parents a video on MCDs and KFC; so now they will never eat it because they saw how disgusting it is. The video showed us how MCDs food didn't get rotten for months; so, you can imagine what's in there and for KFC they used left overs. Therefore, when people get exposed to such videos, they will change their habits; although some people just won't care because they crave for it. So, it depends on the individual". Yet another respondent indicated that, "...the best way is to try and change the mindset of the youth through education" (Household B, C, J).

Some participants expressed the belief that the implementation of the sunnah to be the answer. As one interviewee said, "...we have deviated from the sunnah finish". Other participants expressed the belief that Moral formation can be implemented through habit and by having small meals, keeping hydrated and fasting Mondays and Thursdays. Yet some felt that emphasize should come from the imams and parents.

5.8. Constraints on Moral Formation

Regarding this theme, a strong sentiment that emerged from the various narratives of the participants was the belief that in most cases parents are not at home and the kids are free to eat what they want as there is no supervision. It was further explained that mothers never used to work in the past. As one participant put it, "...when mothers are working, we are forced to resort to unhealthy foods. For example, when my wife was working, we would resort to quick foods but now we come home to cooked meals". And another commented, "...both parents have to work as it is a necessity and, in some instances, the men wait for the ladies as they are lazy, and things are expensive". Yet another participant reported, "...when I was your age mothers never worked but now, they are out working; they need to bring money at home or to stay ahead of the Joneses; they want brand-new cars, brand clothes etc so it's a luxurious life that they want to lead. As a result, they leave the children". It was further explained that in the process these children become senseless adults and that it contributes to much crime". Another respondent stated, "...there is no guidance at home but now the aftercare is there to help, but that's only for the little ones what happens to the teenagers that need guidance and supervision".

Yet another interviewee indicated that, "...such teenagers do not only engage in mindless eating but come home and indulge on haram acts as well" (Households A, D, H).

An older woman who was a teacher felt that Muslims do not plan their meals, "...The other major issue is we do not plan our meals the way a Muslim should plan a meal so as to get their required results. I believe if we apply the Qur'anic injunctions of how Allah and the Prophet (PBUH) told us to consume food then we will be healthy. But now we lack the spiritual aspect of eating". Another respondent added, "...for example, a polish lady who was practically dying turned to organic farming; the result was she threw away all her medication, her skin glows she is one of the most beautiful ladies I have ever seen" (Household E, G).

Other participants explained that since both parents do not spend ample time with their children, they overcompensate them with unhealthy foods. It was explained that they overcompensate as they have no time to show love to them. One respondent explained, "...moreover, parents are working, lifestyles have changed, and everything is done at a fast pace. Lots of mothers are working now and there is a juggle between being a mother, a housewife as well as a working woman; there is that conflict, so sometimes she tries to do both, but she can't always. You can't juggle everything so that's why they try to over compensate and end up buying junkies; it happens everywhere". And another added, "...like my aunty she has a 10-year-old daughter; she's spoilt, and she just lives on junk. ...they well-off although they live in Belhar and the way they cook is very healthy because my uncle is Moroccan, and they eat more vegetables and *tagine* and not processed foods. She only eats outside food and sweets; yet, her mother would still bring some more thing."

Another common view amongst respondents was lack of self-discipline as a major constraint to moderate and healthy eating. As one man put it, "...its lack of discipline we all know what the repercussions are; my wife shouts at me I don't want to eat vegetables. I smoke 26 cigarettes a day and as a result, I take sleeping tablets because my blood pressure is very high. As I said we all know what the repercussions are, but we lack the willpower and as result we reluctant to take the right steps. Another participant added "...we cannot be moderate and healthy and if we try it doesn't last more than an hour..., it's because of our lower desires and Satan. (Household F, J)"

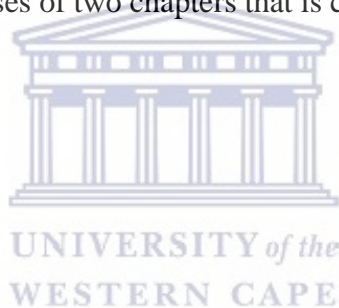
It was explained that the right kinds of foods are very expensive and the people on the grassroot level cannot afford. However, some felt that some people won't eat healthy foods and indicated that it was a fact. While others indicated that organic foods are more expensive, and it is cheaper

to eat unhealthy foods. Whereas a small number of respondents reported that poor people waste their little money on fast foods to spoil themselves. As one interviewee reported, "...they will say I haven't eaten KFC and am craving it so they will go for cheap food as food is getting pricey" (Households B, D, J).

Conclusion

In this chapter, the perceptions of Muslim residents of Belhar were documented. This was done by means of in-depth semi-structured interviewees. Results of participants indicated various reasons that motivate overindulgence. These reasons include food insecurity, spiritual emptiness, emotional eating as well as the social environment. Respondents were further asked the constraints of moral formation as well as how moral formation can be implemented. Respondents gave varied answers to these questions. Some of these perceptions include self-discipline, more emphasis from religious leaders and through educational programmes.

Henceforth, the next chapter will compare and contrast as well as analyse the findings of the empirical research which comprises of two chapters that is chapter 4 and 5.



Chapter 6: Discussion and Analysis on the Findings of the Research

6. Introduction

This chapter will contrast, analyse and summarise the empirical findings of the study, which were presented in the previous two chapters. The purpose of the empirical study was to investigate the perceptions amongst Muslim households as to why people overindulge against a particular socio-economic and religious context, namely the role of overindulgence as part of the nexus of problems related to food insecurity in South Africa and an understanding of the virtue of moderation and the vice of overindulgence in Muslim virtue ethics. The study aimed to answer the research question: what perceptions may be found in Muslim households linked to the Rylands and Belhar mosques regarding the considerations that play a role in Muslims who overindulge even though they affirm the virtue of moderation. In an attempt to answer the research question three objectives were identified. The summary and analysis of the findings are presented according to the objectives of the study:

- What are the perceptions of Muslims of moral standing with regard to overindulgence?
- How can moral formation be implemented?
- What are the constraints that hinder the proper implementation of moral formation and exercising restraint in eating?

Understanding and identifying the role of overindulgence and its implications are important, but especially critical among minority populations; in this case, South African Muslims who only make up 1.5% of the total population. Knowledge of the determinants of overindulgence allows for informed decision-making about what to harness and prioritize in the achievement of food security, optimal health and good moral formation for such minorities. Yet, most of the existing studies in South Africa do not provide enough knowledge or insights about food security and an ethics of virtue in such minority communities. In general, there is inadequate discussion in the literature. Consequently, the following is an outline of the main findings generated by the research.

6.2 Determinants of Overindulgence and Mindless Eating

A mixed bag of factors determines overindulgence in Muslim communities: economic, social, and cultural (Shahid 2015; Al-Jibaaly 2016; Al-Munajid 2010). The study clearly indicated

that there are several determinants of overindulgence in Rylands and Belhar, namely, the cost of food and household income, availability and accessibility of food, religious and cultural influences, social events, spiritual apathy, social setting, palatability, time constraints, education/knowledge, hedonistic consumption, conspicuous consumption and food choices.

6.2.1 Mindless Eating in Relation to Food Insecurity

Tester et al. (2017) report that food-insecurity disrupts eating patterns caused by a cycle of fluctuating availability. As resources dwindle individuals eat decreasing amounts of food, and when food is more available, they compensate by overeating energy-dense and palatable foods. In their study on why food-insecure individuals eat what they do, Tester and colleagues (2017) found that the reliance on inexpensive, processed and highly palatable foods with the availability of resources followed by a restriction of caloric intake represents dietary restraint, which is linked with binge eating and weight gain. The work by Bergen et al. (2007) around mindless eating has further shown that food-insecure adults give details of having higher levels of binge eating episodes, secretive eating; night eating habits as well as hiding eating episodes. Additionally, the study disclosed that as many as a third of adolescents and children with obesity have such traits. These findings were confirmed by the results of the current study conducted in Belhar and were exclusive to this community as it is of a low social-economic stratum. A majority of subjects who were asked about the major cause of overeating indicated that food insecurity played a significant role. It was perceived that food insecure individuals ate whenever they were presented with an opportunity. It is, therefore, logical to speculate that this causes social familial perturbations such as skimpy meals, change of eating patterns and overcompensation where individuals set aside food for fear of not having in the near future. The above findings also suggest that such individuals would opt for cheap energy dense foods to save on money received from low paying jobs and social grants so as not to run out of food before their next pay.

As was shown in the work by Misselhorn and Hendriks (2017), social grants may bring a measure of poverty relief at the household level. However, the root cause of food insecurity is unaffordable diets. And as a result, the increasing consumption of more available, cheaper and preferred 'globalised' foods with high energy content and low nutritional value leads to overweight and obesity alongside child stunting. This was indeed the perception for some interviewees as they indicated that a major constraint of healthy eating was due to low income. This was coupled by indebtedness as indicated by respondents where it was believed that food

insecure subjects would resort to borrowing from family, friends as well as supermarkets that have such measures in place. Echoing this in a study, Mkhawani et al. (2016) confirmed that food insecure individuals run out of food before the month end and employ strategies such as eating less preferred food, borrowing money to buy food, borrowing food from neighbours or going without food. Henceforth it is more likely to achieve healthy consumption of food with increased availability and reduced prices of healthy foods as well as increased social grants.

Schoenfeld et al. (2010) and Aliber (2009) argue that the impact of past and future food prices intensifies hunger as it decreases the quality of dietary intake. It causes a high reliance on affordable staple starches, energy dense foods and lower consumption of vegetables and fruit. These assessments were substantiated by findings of the current study. A majority of respondents perceived that individuals of low income could not afford a healthy food basket let alone organic food. As a result, they resorted to buying foods with high levels of fat and sugar. Some perceived that it was also a mechanism to save money for habits such as smoking. This would suggest that an ordinary person on a meagre income would not afford to eat healthy or to eat in moderation. Therefore, the price, palatability and addictive components of energy dense foods lure such individuals to overeat and render them hopeless with regards to practicing temperance.

Additionally, the findings of the study indicate that although food prices play a role in the choice of poor diets, it was also perceived by subjects that preferences, palatability and accessibility of such foods play a significant role. This view is corroborated by Tester et al. (2017) who showed that dietary inclinations play a role and remain a significant driver of the nutritional transition which is the availability of cheap, processed and 'globalised' diet, high in energy but mostly of poor nutritional value. This result may be explained as a consequence of a nutritional transition, but also as a direct result of insufficient resources to support healthy eating as well as the lack of understanding the virtue of moderation in Muslim virtue ethics.

The study additionally highlighted that such poor dietary patterns result in obesity and micronutrient deficiencies. Respondents further suggested that this paves the way for non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular illnesses. In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that South Africans are no longer healthy and are increasingly suffering from a range of diet and lifestyle related diseases. These studies report that chronic diseases are characteristic of poor dietary intake in households (Frayne 2009). Henceforth, it is logical to conclude that continuous consumption of poor dietary variety

leads to poor levels of nutrition which then results in chronic illnesses. In other words what these individuals eat is not healthy, nor are the outcomes healthy.

All in all, this theme which was limited to Belhar showed that a lower social economic status contributes to food insecurity which then results in mindless eating. These findings are not new to the South African context as indicated in the literature review on poor food and meal patterns as well as poor nutrient intake, resulting in micronutrient deficiencies and obesity. Therefore, it's more likely to obtain healthy eating patterns by regulating the kinds of foods sold by food retailers, since informal shops and street foods are a major source for the urban poor. As revealed by Frayne et al. (2009), many small shops and vendors sell low quality foods that are highly processed, generally contain high levels of artificial ingredients as well as high in toxic trans fats. Other measures that are likely to curb the problem of mindless eating and overindulgence could be the legislation on food quality as well as health and religious education which includes the spiritual and ethical dimension of food.

6.2.2 Spiritual Apathy

Farouk et al. (2015) argue that spirituality is a central part of human life, and the effect of belief and philosophy in society extends to food security. In view of the fact that food to a large degree is what keeps a society collective and eating is very much linked to deep spiritual experiences. Although, from the perspective of social sciences, the main concerns of food security revolve around stability, availability, accessibility and utilisation, however, for the devout, food that does not meet the standards of 'spiritual quality' in its making or preparation is inappropriate for consumption as it leads to detrimental spiritual consequences. This view is in corroboration with the findings of the present study in which respondents of both communities indicated that the consumption of foods that are of poor spiritual quality have caused Muslims to engage in mindless eating and overindulgence resulting in spiritual apathy. The current study further revealed that the majority of subjects perceived that the presence of spiritual emptiness amongst Muslims played a significant role in encouraging overindulgence. It was explained that this is a result of the foods consumed and how they were consumed. Subjects further highlighted that, the only concern of the majority of today's Muslims is with regard to haram food and that there is some sought of obliviousness on the *Tayyib* (wholesome, good, pure and ethical) aspect of food. Therefore, it is safe to suggest that when being unmindful of pure, wholesome good food, the spiritual and ethical dimension of food is lost.

Additionally, Islamic texts such as Marzband et al. (2017) indicate that one of the components of spirituality in food is its functional elements. The most important functional indicator of spiritual nutrition is to observe moderation in eating. In the Qur'an Allah emphasizes the observance of moderation in consumption: "Eat and drink, and do not waste. He does not love the wasteful" (Qur'an 6:141). Additionally, in surveying Islamic traditions it is shown that eating too much, fast swallowing of food, extravagance in eating one type of food, eating an illicit morsel, spoiling food and incomplete consumption of food, to result in a spiritual decline. This is highlighted in the present study where participants expressed the belief that some Muslims are gluttonous, extravagant, waste food and in some cases are not mindful of *ḥārām* food. It was perceived that, as a result, they are spiritually weak as they do not observe temperance in eating and seek fulfilment in food. It was further indicated that such individuals engage in food wastage and emotional eating which contributes to gluttony due to the spiritual void. This suggests that such eating habits result in the decline of physical health which leads to the decline of spirituality. Which in turn causes laziness and unwillingness to connect with the creator.

As was revealed by Farouk, et al. (2015), it is a requirement to keep the physical body healthy so as to maintain the spiritual health of the soul and serve both material and spiritual attainment. It is for this reason that in many religions there are particular prohibitions against disrespectful behaviours with regards to food which are not only damaging physically but also harmful to spiritual evolution. One of the spiritual expressions that are current in many religions is that food is not just fuel or nutrients for growth and development but also plays a role in spirituality. It is for this reason that there are specific nutrition guidelines regarding what food to eat or avoid in getting spiritual illumination. This is in accordance with the present study where participants stressed the importance of consuming *tayyib* food. As revealed in Islamic literature eating and spirituality are intertwined. So, if food is eaten with the sole intention to be physically healthy and do good deeds then the action of eating becomes an act of worship.

The word *tayyibāt* in the verse, "eat of the *tayyib* (good things) and act righteously" (Qur'an 23:51) indicates that eating *tayyib* food has a direct result of doing that which is good. The opposite could also be understood in that eating the opposite of *tayyibat* such as the prohibited or foods that are not of the stature of human beings will have a negative consequence in terms of behaviour. The above verse links pure food to good deeds. According to some commentaries, this verse emphasizes the importance of what is eaten and how it impacts on one's spiritual evolution. In other words, it has an influence on one's intelligence, behaviour, code of conduct

when dealing with fellow human beings and finally how one connects to God. Therefore, spirituality is very much linked to what is consumed. Other verses such as (2:57,172; 20:81) refer to the significance of food that is wholesome, pure and good. Such that when *tayyib* food is consumed it produces an inner illumination and creates a lightness in the stomach that inclines one towards virtue and good deeds. Whereas food that is impure and unwholesome has the opposite impact as it creates heaviness and hardness, leading to spiritual apathy.

Moreover, in Islam following the prophetic way of eating is considered as a means towards achieving perfection. This means the intention of consumption goes beyond health and survival as it serves as an indication of an obedient virtuous servant of God. This was confirmed in the current study were respondents who were of good moral standing were aware of what types of foods must be eaten and how it affects the soul and body of a Muslim. However, it was indicated that some Muslims are unable to practice as they lack the virtue of temperance. Additionally, participants argued that Muslims should eat in moderation, measure what they consumed, not eat in a hasty manner and that the belly should not be filled. This is in confirmation with the Prophetic teachings which state that if one has to eat more than a few morsels then a third of the stomach is for food, a third for liquids and the remaining one third must be left empty.

Subjects concluded that Islam gives specific advice to Muslims about all aspects of life which includes food and eating habits and manners. Food serves to sustain life as it maintains physical strength and health required to undertake one's duties in life and hence is not meant to be consumed for the sake of enjoyment. In addition to preserving physical well-being, food is also indispensable for the spiritual and moral health of Muslims. As explained by Tabatabaei and Khan (1984; 2011) that the right physical and spiritual strength can be achieved when only lawful (*ḥalāl*) and healthy or wholesome (*tayyib*) food is consumed as mentioned in the Qur'an. The Qur'an repeatedly enjoins the consumption of only lawful and wholesome food. Unlawful and unwholesome food adversely affects the character of the believers as it retards their spiritual and moral health. Therefore, the best way to achieve the virtue of moderation is by fasting, avoiding mindless eating and drinking. This can be done gradually until it becomes a habit. In a nutshell, the Qur'an repetitively states that food is a gift of Allah. Hence, it should be consumed with humility and moderation while thanking Allah for the bounty.

6.2.3 Hedonic Consumption

Historically, Muslims followed the humble eating habits of the prophet Mohammed (Pbuh). Food was obtained and consumed for the primary objective, to survive. Until modern times overindulgence of food for pleasure has become widespread. This phenomenon has been defined as hedonic hunger. This refers to the desire to consume food for pleasure while a person who thinks a lot about eating in the absence of hunger is said to be in a state of pleasure-based hunger. For example, desiring and eating dessert after a satiating dinner represents a typical example of food intake driven by pleasure and not by hunger (Monteleone et al 2012). As was shown in the work of Lowe and Butryn (2018), some subjects find it indispensable to still desire and eat even though there is no any need for caloric intake. This is because such foods are extremely rewarding and highly pleasurable. These studies are consistent with the present study in which participants reported that pleasure seeking in food plays a significant role in overindulgence. The present study further revealed that Muslims are self-indulgent to a point where they overindulge in social gatherings, such as weddings, funerals, or a get-together dinner for pleasure. The study additionally highlighted that such individuals always find a reason to overeat and serve themselves even if they are not hungry.

Lowe et al. (2018) additionally report that in present cultures where delicious foods are ever present overindulgence frequently occurs in the absence of hunger. The superfluous consumption of highly rewarding energy dense foods is linked to weight gain, which is also linked to the development of Non-communicable diseases such as type II diabetes, cardiovascular disease and hypertension. These scholars further argue that although other factors may stimulate overconsumption, the pleasure food provides triggers much of the influence of this varied inducements. Additionally, these scholars suggest that the availability and implicit or explicit awareness of palatable, energy dense foods in the modern obesogenic environment induces some individuals to frequently desire or think about such foods at any time. These findings were confirmed by the present study in which subjects reported that the presence and thought of food is a determinant for some individuals to overindulge. It was further perceived that this contributes to obesity and eating disorders. Additionally, respondents revealed that such individuals engage in pleasure-based eating until a health condition prevails like diabetes and cholesterol just to mention a few. While other respondents reported that some individuals just want to eat for pleasure and do not worry about their health. Collingwood (2016) argues that although we live in obesogenic environments were palatable and energy dense foods are increasingly available in large quantities and advances in

technology have encouraged sedentary styles, not all people have similar vulnerabilities to the accessibility of highly rewarding food or the pervasive stimuli to eat them. This individual variances in the hedonic facets of food intake can be related to physiologic, genetic, metabolic, and psychological factors, all of which can be observed as part of a combined psychobiological system. However, in the current study, it was perceived that one of the reasons for this was in connection with the level of spirituality of individuals and their self-discipline to restrain as well as their consciousness of the Islamic teachings. Collingwood (2016) further points out that research has shown that obese people prefer and indulge in energy dense foods contrasted to those of normal weight. This is because they consciously eat less than they really want to so as to curb their hedonic hunger.

Additionally, respondents highlighted that some individuals are addicted to food. It was revealed that such individuals in whatever they did food was involved. While others maintained that even when they wake up the first thing on their minds was food. This is confirmed by Collingwood (2016:1) who states that, “just as compulsive gamblers or drug-dependent individuals are preoccupied with their habit even when they are not engaging in it, so may some individuals experience frequent thoughts, feelings and urges about food in the absence of any short- or long-term energy deficit. These experiences may be prompted by food-related cues, they suggest, like the sight or smell of food, talking about, reading about, or even thinking about food. In pleasure eating timing quantity and quality of the food is not a concern. Moreover, such foods are consumed uniquely due to their gustatory rewarding properties and obliviousness from their caloric content”. Therefore, it is intuitive to suggest that although the attainment of is hedonistic consumption desirable it is equally dangerous and can powerfully contribute to overindulgence in an obesogenic environment. This makes the virtue of temperance in food of paramount importance in curbing hedonic hunger. As revealed by Al-Ghazāli (1991), all one needs of food is a few morsels to maintain life, bodily functions and a little extra to provide one with the vigour to accomplish acts of worship such as the accomplishment of prayers. This is because seeking pleasure in food contributes to overweight and obesity and later develops into chronic illnesses as the present study claims.

6.2.4 Conspicuous Consumption

According to Islamic literature and history, the dining ways of the prophet and his companions were the humblest of ways; the dining cloth was made of leather; the prophet never sat at a table or ate from gold or silver dishes. When food was scarce, he would insist that etiquettes

and hospitality be observed reminding his followers that food for two is enough for four. The prophet would also elaborate on the foods that await the faithful in heaven and this served as a powerful incentive for those who had little or no food. However, as Islam grew in the decades following the demise of the prophet early Muslims were exposed to new cuisines and eating habits of a Greco-Roman colonial court which was out of the alimentary restrictions of the Qur'an.

By late seventh century, the Muslim world had seen a cuisine that had reached a zenith of lavishness and sophistication. As a result, rulers adopted the regal style of the Byzantine courts and kitchens which gave birth to an identifiable Muslim high style of dining. It was in this period that a line was drawn between the dining habits of the poor and that of the affluent class i.e. the rulers at court and those who imitated them. Such that the poor continued to follow the humble eating ways of the prophet whereas the rulers ate from gold and silver dishes on grand tables. By the eleventh century, the humble desert hospitality advocated by the prophet had been replaced with elaborate feasts in the courts of the caliphs. During special occasions and festivals, thousands of people would be served with more than 300 different dishes in a single sitting. This was done to show off wealth and power in addition to hedonistic consumption (Freedman 2007:135-144). This marked the beginning of conspicuous consumption in the Muslim world which has continued in many Muslim communities to the present day.

The term conspicuous consumption was first introduced by Theodor Veblen in his book *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). The term denotes the phenomenon of consumers who purchase luxurious items to flaunt wealth and income rather than cover their real basic needs. Such ostentatious consumers exploit this habit to preserve or gain higher social status. Additionally, such flamboyance influences other consumers who are of a different social class to emulate such behaviour of the class above it, to a point where even the poorest individuals are pressured to take part in such conspicuous behaviours. These findings are in accordance with the present study in which the majority of subjects felt that conspicuous consumption was a major issue in both communities. It was explained that some wealthy Muslims flaunt their social privilege by overconsuming and by displaying their material possessions. It was explained that such wealthy individuals found it acceptable to use wealth as a social marker and stay ahead of the Joneses. Respondents further pointed out that in the context of food 40 to 50 percent is wasted. Clearly, such actions contravene the humble dining habits of the prophet which was simply prepared and the early pious Muslims who tried to emulate him.

DutchNews.nl (2017) report that the latest term in conspicuous consumption to be ‘Dining out’. The report argues that for a large number of consumer groups food has become the number one way to flaunt how well one is doing in life. It further reveals figures released by the Food Service Instituut Nederland in 2016 which showed that €57 billion was spent on food and drink in 2015 with an increment of 2.1% in 2016. This report is consistent with the findings of Steverman (2011) who found that this boom has tremendously affected eating habits to a point where for the first-time human longevity might decrease as people are eating themselves to death. In present times death by consumption would imply fatal cases of obesity, diabetes and other degenerative diseases. These findings are in confirmation with the present study in which subjects highlighted that with regards to food, some Muslims use it to flaunt privilege by displaying and consuming the most exotic meals and exquisite desserts. It was further suggested that eating out at expensive restaurants especially on special occasions had become a trend just to show-off and stay a step ahead of their social class. Respondents strongly felt that such individuals end up getting degenerative diseases such as diabetes. It was concluded that some Muslims engaged in mindless eating to signal their social status and complained that society is mostly concerned with status. These results are consistent with those of other studies that suggest that conspicuous consumption is an instrument to demonstrate superiority by both the rich and poor. Flashy consumers regardless of their social class attempt to impress others to gain an advantage as well as flaunt their ability to engage in conspicuous leisure (Moav and Neeman 2012).

Historically, conspicuous consumption was a practice exclusive to the rich; the aristocratic class. However, in modern times it was found that although wealthy individuals engage in conspicuous habits the poor and the newly rich were more susceptible to these behaviours as there was a desire to impress and signal status to others. In support of this claim, Moav and Neeman (2012) present an example of a recently rich Indian farmer who flaunts his wealth by renting a helicopter for an amount of \$8,327 to transport his son to his wedding two miles away, so as to impress and signal status to other villagers. This is in accordance with the findings of Steverman (2011) and Rao (2001) who argue that conspicuous behaviour is particularly prevalent amongst poorer social groups and developing countries which have resulted in the spending of large amounts of their income on material possessions that do not alleviate poverty while saving at low rates. This was confirmed in the current study in which respondents of both communities maintained that meagre incomes did not stop some Muslims from engaging in conspicuous behaviour. It was explained that in instances where they were

restricted due to financial constraints they would get into debt. This type of spending can lead to poverty. As revealed by Banerjee and Mullainathan (2007), that the poor spend a larger fraction of their wealth on temptation goods and that this can generate a poverty trap.

According to Omer Moav and Zvika Neeman (2012), South Africa is a highly collectivist society which means individuals are led by the opinion and satisfaction of the whole. In terms of eating out, functions and weddings as well as funerals this could explain the need to consume conspicuously and the desire for class, as the opinion of others in society is highly valued in collectivist cultures. This was confirmed in the current study that festivals such as weddings, parties, funerals and iftar in Ramadan to be the ideal events to flaunt status and bring the best food to signal social class and stay ahead of others. It was explained that those who could not afford to take part in this habit would resort in getting into debt. A repeated example used by respondents were weddings as it was referred to the most important event in terms of showing-off. Some described it as a competition while others explained that during weddings the community tried to outperform one another. The claim that celebrations serve as social markers is supported by Bloch et al. (2004) who found that in Southern India a daughter's wedding is the most expensive event in the life of an Indian family and in most instances amounts to more than six times a family's annual income. It often pushes parents into severe debt at high interest rates and may drive families into deep poverty. Likewise, Case et al. (2008) found that in Black South African households an average of a year's income is spent on an adult's funeral. In cases where such households cannot afford, they resort to borrowing. Yet, another example of conspicuous consumption by the poor and its ruinous effect featured in the Tajikistani government policy in which the president banned the use of gold teeth, large parties and the use of cell phones in universities. He also restricted the number of people and amount of food that could be served at weddings.

According to Barauskaite et al. (2018), conspicuous consumption is used as a tool to signal a desired identity and value. Henceforth, the satisfaction of engaging in conspicuous consumption comes with the reaction of the audience and not from the value in use. This was found in the current study which indicated that in the Indian tradition as explained by a respondent, "...its customary to have a very extravagant affair which involves food and other material possessions that are exchanged between families and goes on for days. This is because it says something about the family they are marrying into. So, this type of spending is to appear that you up there. Interestingly the Indian tradition has now been adopted by the Malay community. The food and gifts will be displayed, pictures taken, and wealth will be flaunted.

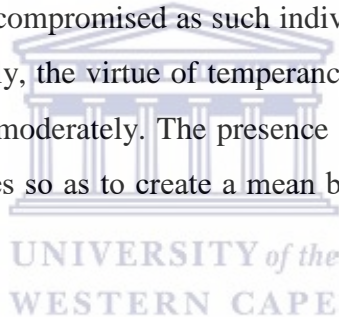
In other words, such families want people's attention and approval, so that they say your daughter did well for herself she's getting married just like surnames are important, so people put themselves in heavy debt just for that". This is substantiated in a study conducted by Rao (2001) in which he states, "that rural households in India tended to throw weddings influenced less by norms and way beyond their economic muscle so as to imitate the more extravagant patterns common in richer urban families. When asked why they spend so much wealth on lavish weddings that they could not afford. It was explained that their child had married into a "good family" hence they had to have a "show".

Additionally, respondents indicated that wealth is important for the reason that families get known as the ideal and better family, in the process, they attract another good family which would want to marry into their family. Hence, it's about showing off and status. As revealed by Bloch et al. (2004) show that, "expenditure on celebrations, which is customarily borne by the bride's family, varies significantly and is positively correlated with the quality of the groom. Since a wealthier family is most likely to attract a big quality groom, it is reasonable to conclude that there is a positive correlation between unobserved income and spending on celebrations. This spending could amount to one-third of a family's annual income".

The study further revealed that such conspicuous habits are aggravated by tendencies that culturally stem from the slavery heritage and hence contribute to overindulgence. Such that Indian Muslims engage in conspicuous consumption to send a message that they are of noble and affluent backgrounds. On the other hand, Malays over spend to deny their past and separate themselves from their past. As one respondent elucidated, "...in the process they try to be more European and more affluent. If they can't afford, they put themselves in debt as they must raise their status to show that they are different from the coloured's" (Daughter in household D in Habibia mosque). As a result, weddings are extremely important as it is the time to display this phenomenon of "we no longer there and we can do better" by displaying wealth which includes conspicuous consumption. This is in corroboration with the findings of Charles et al. (2009), that race provides a signal of income. Hence individuals engage in conspicuous consumption to maintain the status gap between races Likewise Khamis et al. (2012) found that poorer groups such as Backward Castes engaged in visible consumption 8 percent more than high caste groups in India which resulted in the diversion of spending towards education. On the other hand, it was found that Muslims spent 14 percent less and only engaged in great food spending diverting spending on visible consumption and education.

Such behaviours go against logic as these individuals are food insecure. This is in line with the findings of (Banerjee and Duflo 2007; 13) who state that “these consumption patterns are puzzling because they seem to come at a significant cost for the poor: the very poor spend only 2–3% of their income on their children’s education, do not eat well, experience ill health and report that they are worried and anxious to an extent that interferes with their sleep and work. In many cases, they fail to make trivial investments in their business and save so little that they cannot avoid cutting back on meals when they suffer a temporary decline in income”

Therefore, conspicuous consumption is a means to gain and signal status which results in extravagance, wastage rivalry and a moral decline. It is logical to suggest that a society with such habits, generates a spiral of social desires and is characterized by wasted time and money and especially undermines the formation of virtue ethics. As revealed by Hobgood and Bauman (2018) that such habits undermine the four cardinal virtues of wisdom, justice, courage and especially temperance. The virtue of wisdom is compromised when lured into buying on credit. The virtue of justice is undermined when such individuals live for themselves and lack altruism whereas the virtue of courage is compromised as such individuals cannot not break free from their consumer habits. And finally, the virtue of temperance is absent since such individuals lack the will power to consume moderately. The presence of these virtues reinforces human judgement and moderates’ desires so as to create a mean between the extreme of deficiency and excess.



6.2.5 Ramadan

Fasting in the month of Ramadan is one of the five Pillars of Islam. It is the holiest month on the Islamic calendar in which practicing Muslims abstain from food, drink and sex from sunrise to sunset. Amongst the many objectives of fasting is to help develop self-restraint, God-consciousness, self-purification, and compassion. It is also an opportunity for the improvement of moral and spiritual character and a unique month of self-analysis, and of taking stock of one's moral and spiritual assets. Moreover, the month of Ramadan is seen as a month to change bad habits as it is a powerful transformative tool to discipline souls. However, in present times this holy month of restraint and enhanced worship has been turned into a month of feasting and overindulgence by many Muslims across the globe. This has resulted in many inactive, overweight unhealthy and sluggish Muslim communities. As revealed in a report by Reuters (2003) that during Ramadan many Muslims gain extra kilos despite fasting all day for the whole of the holy month. This explains that although this is the month to get closer to God many get

closer to their stomachs. This is seen in the iftar menu which has become an extravagant affair encouraged by cultural emphasis on big family meals. This means all family tastes must be catered for; resulting in all kinds of foods and drinks such as sugary drinks meat-based dishes, starchy dishes and desserts dripping in syrup. This was confirmed in the current study in which respondents of both communities explained that Ramadan a month of restraint, self-reflection, devotion, and worship had been turned into a month of indulgence and unhealthy eating. It was explained that most Muslims squeeze a five-course meal in the few hours they can eat. The research further explained that these individuals are very meticulous of what type of food they consume when breaking their fast and would prefer oily fried foods to healthy food. This causes weight gain, health complications and sluggishness which stands in the way of worship. It was advised that those who cannot do without fatty foods should not eat daily and limit the amount as well as eat more fruit and vegetables. Clearly in present times Ramadan may renew the spirit but often does little to trim the waistline. Most importantly these habits clearly contradict the teachings of Islam in which the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) evidently broke his fast with only water and dates, performed the lengthy prayers special to the month and only eat a light meal for supper.

According to health experts, the consumption of high calorie foods and lots of sweet foods after fasting for long hours causes weight gain. For example, in Algeria, some confessed that they usually gain two to three kilos due to their diet. While a survey conducted in Tunisia found that 59 percent of women gained weight during Ramadan, and 35 percent of men. Additionally, health experts in Egypt argue that feasting, inactivity and disrupted sleep during Ramadan can endanger health. This is because Muslims feast all night and often stay up until 4 a.m. to eat a last meal before sunrise and then sleep the fast away until about 3 in the afternoon to start cooking for the next iftar and this goes on for the whole month. This causes weight gain to a population that already ranks as one of the highest in obesity rates in the world. It was further noted that it was women in patriarchal homes who spend endless hours in the kitchen and as a result have weight problems in Egypt. According to the World health organisation three in 4 Egyptian women are overweight, and nearly half are obese. This was also found to be the case in the wealthy Arab neighbours such as Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. This was confirmed in the current study in which respondents perceived that many Muslims gain extra kilos in this month due to the types of foods consumed. Usually, such meals involve heavy, fatty foods that are high in calories. It was explained that the majority eat oily deep-fried savouries which affect one's health. Subjects further noted that the month of Ramadan is the

busiest time of the year in the kitchen as the majority of Muslims spend long hours in the kitchen making extra-special, bountiful meals and as a result, spend 4 to 5 hours in the kitchen and then feast all night. Moreover, each family tries to outdo its neighbour in cooking the best spread of traditional dishes as well as boasting new recipes. It was further explained that Muslims around the world fast from sunrise to sunset. However, they feast from sunset to sunrise. It was additionally explained that in some instances, these persons cannot perform *tarawih* (evening prayers) as they overstuff themselves. “People eat through the night so instead of losing weight they gain weight believe it or not”, explained one respondent.

Additionally, the study showed that those in the food industry reported Ramadan to be the best month of the year but also admitted that it was hard to keep up with orders because some have a sweet tooth while others are gluttonous. It was explained that the majority of Muslims stocked up on food in the days leading up to Ramadan. As one participant explained, “...the day before fasting Muslims will have their trolleys extra stacked to overindulge the whole month and waste the remains”. Another respondent explained, “...the build-up to Ramadan has a big effect on supermarkets and businesses”.

Yet another interviewee added, “...providing food in Ramadan has become a multimillion industry, as a result, local supermarket stock up for the rush”. Some participants felt that the month of Ramadan is of more like Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter (in a family celebration sense) lengthened over one lunar month. Most families and friends have parties and gatherings at night during the month. It was concluded that Muslims have turned it into a holiday overindulgence similar to what many Christians do over Christmas and New Year. This is corroborated in a study conducted by in which it was shown that the average consumption of food increased by 50 percent during the holy month. Yet another study by Melik (2012) found that although Muslims fast during the day this did not lead to a decrease in the demand for food. This is because food was purchased and consumed more than it was actually needed. This high demand for goods and higher consumption of food was seen as a positive side of Ramadan for business people. Similarly, Philip (2015) found that while many see the holy month as a freeze to all businesses; the food industry paradoxically has shown to boom throughout Ramadan. This is because the majority of Muslims buy more food for the Iftar evening meal and activities in the Cafes’ soar as Muslims consumers head to the cafes after Iftar to spend the evening with acquaintances. This is a clear indication that Ramadan gatherings have become synonymous with wastefulness and extravagance which contravene the rituals of the holy

month and the teachings of Islam which encourage prioritizing worship, moral training and feeding the poor.

Consuming more fats and sweets and sleeping through a fast during Ramadan sabotages both physical and spiritual wellbeing. It affects one's physical health as it disrupts the sleeping cycle since more time is spent awake during the feasting hours. This then disrupts hormones that act on metabolic rate and appetite which result in gaining extra kilos. From a spiritual perspective, the essence of Ramadan which is to practice the engagement in intense moral training self-discipline is lost. As it is revealed in the Qur'an, "Eat of the good things we have provided for your sustenance but commit no excess therein". This is because valuable time is wasted between Maghreb and Eisha instead of making *itikāf* (seclusion) reading Qur'an and preparing for *tarawih*. On the other hand, Muslims who follow the *Sunnah* and the way of the saints, feel and experience the impact of the intense training Ramadan has on their habits, as well as understand the power of this transformative tool designed for mankind which is the ultimate goal of any spiritual exercise. Therefore, Ramadan provides an atmosphere that pushes for positive change when done in the correct manner.

In brief, even though the actual rationale of the dynamic institution of Fasting is to discipline the soul and moral behaviour, and to increase sympathy for the underprivileged, it is a comprehensive and a multi-functional tool of change in numerous spheres of our lives, including: intellectual, humanitarian, social and economic, spiritual and public, personal and physical, private and common, inner and outer all in one but unfortunately many have turned it into a month of feasting, extravagance, and more of a holiday.

6.2.6 Social Environmental influences on Overindulgence

Herman et al. (2008) argue that there is a substantial body of research that shows external cues play a significant role in mindless eating which results in overweight and obesity. Echoing this in a study Vartanian et al. (2017) reveal that social environmental factors have a big influence on overindulgence. This is because social environments have become highly "obesogenic" such that highly palatable foods are easily affordable, accessible and widely promoted. For example, according to Winsink (2010), fast foods, processed foods, the influence of eating partners, varieties, packaging, portion sizes and the advertisement of such foods tend to be strong, salient and alluring, such that its thought to undermine moderation in food consumption. This was found to be true in the current study in which participants of both communities perceived that external cues have a robust influence on overindulgence. More specifically in

environments where food is overly available. It was explained that external cues seemed to undermine internal signals putting severe challenges on the virtue of temperance in food as well as the accurate regulation of food consumption.

Misselhorn and Hendricks (2017) reveal that one of the external cues and pressures for unhealthy eating which are pervasive in the fast-paced, instant-gratification-oriented culture to be the abundance of processed foods and fast foods. According to Vartanian et al. (2017), numerous studies have shown that the frequent consumption of fast-foods and processed foods to be a result of external pressures. These external pressures influence and strengthen the internal signals of hunger and satiety as well challenge the appetite control system which is associated with mindless eating and higher-calorie dietary patterns that lead to obesity. This is substantiated by a study conducted by Boyles (2004) which maintains that the growing popularity of fast food is a direct result of social pressures which has caused overindulgence and the obesity epidemic. The study further claims that the consumption of these food has risen by 500% during the last three decades. Hartney and Gans (2018) lend support to the notion that people who rely on fast foods and processed foods often overeat. This is because such foods are designed to stimulate overeating. As explained in the literature review these foods are a combination of sugar, salt and fat, shown in numerous studies to be addictive. Hartney and colleague further argue that although the contents of such foods may be of poor quality and unappetizing, the ingredients that are addictive guarantee a huge turnover of high-calorie food, which results to obesity and poor nutrition. This was confirmed in the current study in which subjects expressed the belief that the reason why some Muslims overindulge is that they consume processed foods. It was explained that these types of foods do not have enough nutrients and as a result, the food is not satisfying their needs. As one participant explained, "...since processed foods do not fill us up, we eat more and more in order to get satisfied. mindless eating is a result of processed foods that contain additives, as a result, everyone is craving the same kind of foods. Certain chemicals are added to all processed foods these days that's why people are getting sick and ending up with diabetes. We are indulging too much junk food. It is not food". (Mother in household G in Habibia mosque).

According to Gardner (2012), individuals who dine together have a subtle yet powerful influence on one another's eating habits which in most cases lead to overindulgence, especially if they are trying to be agreeable. It was shown that they tend to eat at the same pace and mimic one another's overall eating behaviour. This means that people who have obese or overweight friends and family members are more likely to be heavy themselves. Henceforth, being around

gluttonous people impacts on others. This is consistent with the present study in which respondents expressed the belief that those who dine together influence one another. It was further pointed out that those who continuously dine with gluttonous persons eventually become like them. It is for this reason that in the Islamic traditions the type of friends one chooses is very crucial as they play a role in shaping one's life and have an effect on one's spirituality. This means that the friends one chooses should help them become more virtuous which fulfils their ultimate goal of a peaceful hereafter. Additionally, prophet Muhammad (PBUH) warned that a person would be influenced by one's friends and that everyone should take note of those they consider to be their friends (At Tirmidhi, Ahmad, Abu Dawood.). Additionally, studies have also shown that good virtuous friends bring only benefit for the overall development of an individual. Whereas bad friendships negatively influence the growth of a person (Stacey 2013).

Wansik et al. (2012) argue that with the steady increase in the size of food packaging and portion servings in kitchens and in restaurants over the past 30 years has resulted in overindulgence. It was explained that even with altered food with regards to the energy density, increased consumption occurred. To prove this Wansik and colleagues conducted an experiment in which some of the participants were unknowingly made to eat from self-refilling bowls whereas the rest were made to eat from normal soup bowls. It was found that those who ate from the self-refilling bowls consumed 73% more and did not believe they had eaten more. These findings are in corroboration with the current study in which participants perceived that the other factor that influences gluttony is the size or portion of food availability. It was explained that it affects the amount individuals consume especially when it comes to buffets.

Additionally, Rolls et al (2003) reveal that the consumption of varied foods and switching between various foods continues to renew palatability which results in overindulgence. Researchers revealed that consumption quadrupled when people were given multiple different foods. The sensory that is specific to satiety effect tends to be enhanced the more different the foods are to each other. This variety means that one will enjoy the food longer while repressing the feeling of being full. Hardman et al. (2015) further support the claim that the abundance of food varieties on one's plate, such as buffet meals can have an influence on mindless eating. This was demonstrated in the present study in which interviewees reported that different varieties affect the amount individuals consume especially with regards to buffets. Similarly, participants felt that the availability of comfort foods played a major role in mindless eating. This was substantiated in a study conducted by Vartanian et al. (2017) that founds that although

eating comfort food in moderation can be healthy, individuals who eat when stressed may overeat, and, can fall into the trap of food addiction as their primary coping strategy.

The study revealed that the different pervasive methods of advertising unhealthy foods have an effect on overindulgence. It was explained that shops are structured in such a way that affects consumer choice psychologically and that all necessities are placed at the back of grocery shops. Several participants explained that there are numerous addictive components in food that stimulate mindless eating. It was clarified that this is the undertaking of companies, scientists, and psychologists in order to maximize their profits. Respondents elucidated that they play a big role as they bombard and cleverly stake unhealthy products in the supermarkets. Echoing this, Steven Miles states “the media have control of a world devoid of meaning and are more concerned with maximizing viewers, readers and profits than in reproducing the interests of the dominant class. The media, in effect, marginalize the social through prioritizing spectacle and thus undermine the significance of social problems, in general, the problem being that postmodernism appears to provide no alternative outlet for the masses.” (Miles 1998: 48). In support of this claim Adibahatla (2017: 3) states, “from the poor to the rich, citizens of the world today are exposed to industrially manufactured goods and services; and their advertisements. The food and livestock industry, garment industry and real estate cater to our daily needs. From the newspaper to the internet, we cannot escape the realm of advertising. Subsequently, it seems as though we cannot escape the realm of advertisement-based information. In other words, advertisement-based information has established itself in every sphere of society including the basic needs of human survival—food, clothing and shelter. From this globalization of the mass culture of advertising human needs, it can be said that the world today is one big Culture Industry that”.

6.3 Moral Formation

This study revealed that self-discipline and leading by example instead of following others to be key in the implementation of moral formation. Imam (2013; 20) explains that, “the way one behaves is a major factor in which people perceive and accept one’s teachings. Muslims must act in accordance with Islamic teachings. This is necessary because any deed or action by a Muslim that is not based on Islam presents a false image of Islam. The importance of this is emphasized by the fact that the Qur’an provides a great insight into human nature and the type of behavior that Allah expects from true believers as His representatives on earth. As vicegerents of Allah on earth, Muslims are under the moral obligation to change themselves,

society, and the larger environment to create a morally and ethically balanced self'. Additionally, the study claimed that there is a need for moral education. As one participant claimed, "...It is the lack of moral education" (Sister in household B associated with the Mubarak mosque).

Similarly, subjects reported that moral formation should be implemented by parents and leaders setting an example until it becomes psychologically imbedded as well as an integral part of their lifestyle as one participant put it, "...once it becomes a habit and inherent in them, others will follow. Yet others felt that more emphasis should come from the mosques and madrassas. Additionally, participants suggested that Muslims need to be more proactive and take part in decision making especially at a national level as they seem to be very passive. Imam (2013; 19) adds that "it is, therefore, incumbent on every Muslim parent, educator and teacher to instil ethical and Islamic moral values in Muslim children and youths and prepare them to be morally responsible to build a just and peaceful Islamic society. Parents, in particular, are urged to take good care of their children, to provide them with essential moral and religious teachings and to guide them against vices that will fall on the wrongdoers. For instance, in the Qur'an Allah says: "O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones..." (Quran 66:6)". One's family is an *amānah* (trust) in which one will be accountable for on the Day of Resurrection. The Prophet (PBUH) says, each of you is a shepherd and each of you shall be asked concerning his flock; a leader is a shepherd of his people, and he shall be asked concerning his flock, and a man is a shepherd of the people of his house, and he shall be asked concerning his flock, and a woman is a shepherd of the house of her husband and over their children, and she shall be asked concerning them" (*Bukhārī*, 1987, vol. 5, p. 1988, *ḥadīth* no. 4892).

Therefore, it can be concluded that parents, educators and leaders are responsible for the moral and fundamental ethical teachings in a community. Good morals should be imbedded in children from a young age and how to take responsibility for their actions. This includes their relationships with parents, society and Allah.

6.4 Constraints of Moral Formation

The study revealed that the lack of self-discipline was a major constraint to moderate and healthy eating. As one interviewee put it, "...its lack of discipline we all know what the repercussions are; my wife shouts at me I don't want to eat vegetables. The findings observed in this study mirror those of previous studies that have examined the constraints of moral

formation. As revealed Al- Bar and Basha (2015) that if Human beings lack discipline, they lack the ability to control their desires by using the faculty of reasoning, which distinguishes right from wrong, as a result they will be lured into their carnal desires; egotism, selfishness and hedonism. Therefore, human beings should strive hard to control their desires and pursue virtue ethics

Additionally, interviewees stated that the madrasas never taught them from a small age the importance of wholesome food. As one participant said, "...I still have my books and there is nothing about food, especially good *tayyip* food. This finding is in agreement with Raj (1996) and Imam (2013) who argue that the absence of virtue ethics education in Islamic institutions necessitates having some form of system to inculcate moral values in the education curriculum. As this is one of the possible solutions to the contemporary crisis in moral formation. Muslim educators have to be skilled in the teaching of Islamic virtue ethics as well as know the best methods to inculcate Islamic values to the new generation of Muslims. Some Qur'anic approaches can be used in institutions with regards to inculcating virtue and moral values in students which includes repetition, storytelling, practical demonstration, modelling, instruction method, conversation and dialogue and practical demonstration.

Additionally, subjects revealed that the ulama are more concerned with *halāl* than wholesome food. Respondents felt that in some cases, they issue *halāl* certificates to outlets that do not sell pure food. Moreover, the majority of those who responded to this question argued that, advertisements play a big role. As one participant said, "we must lobby so that the cabinet brings it to a stop and other participants perceived that most parents are not at home and the kids are free to eat what they want as there is no supervision. Yet other participants explained that since both parents do not spend ample time with their children, they overcompensate them with unhealthy foods. It was explained that they over-compensate as they have no time to show love to them.

Conclusion

This chapter summarised, analysed and contrasted the empirical findings of the study. It found that many factors contribute to overindulgence against a particular socio-economic and religious context. The implementation and constraints of moral formation were also discussed. In the next concluding chapter, the study will be summarised, and recommendations will be offered.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

This research focused on the problem of overindulgence and mindless eating which leads to obesity and associated medical and psychological issues as well as spiritual apathy. The study investigated the question as to why Muslims overindulge against a particular socio-economic and religious context, namely the role of overindulgence as part of the nexus of problems related to food insecurity in South Africa and an understanding of the virtue of moderation and the vice of overindulgence in Muslim virtue ethics. Within this overall objective, the perceptions of Muslims of good moral standing associated with the Rylands and Belhar mosques were used to gather information regarding overindulgence and the implementation and the constraints of moral formation. This empirical study also provided a detailed description of the several determinants of overindulgence among Muslim communities. Empirical fieldwork examined the perceptions and experiences of around 10 households associated with each of these mosques regarding the considerations that play a role in habits of over-indulgence. A semi structured in-depth qualitative inquiry method provided important details about the causes of overindulgence in the two areas and how moral formation can be implemented and what the constraints are to the proper implementation of moral formation. An investigation of the data collected was completed and provided in chapters 4–6.

The findings of the study clearly indicate that overindulgence in Muslim communities is determined by economic, social, cultural, psychological and spiritual apathy. Furthermore, field data revealed that the lack of moderation in food consumption leads to physical, psychological and spiritual sicknesses. This conclusion highlights the findings made during this study and suggests some recommendations.

The explanations offered in this study indicate the importance of the virtue of temperance in the fight against obesity and in the attainment of physical and spiritual wellbeing. This virtue which is a mean between two vices, namely self-indulgence and insensibility helps in the journey towards a higher lifestyle as it helps release all the things that spiritually weigh down those in affluent as well as food insecure communities. Accordingly, the following recommendations are offered.

- The price of food is often reported as a determinant for cheap energy dense foods. Hence its recommended that strategies and policies that increase availability and reduce prices of healthy foods as well as increased social grants be pursued.

- Findings from this study have validated the general assertion that South Africans have diets that are low in fruits and vegetables but high in fats, sugar and addictive components luring them to overeat and render them hopeless with regards to practicing temperance. Hence it is recommended that legislation on food quality as well as health and religious education which includes the spiritual and ethical dimension of food be pursued so as to curb the problem of mindless eating.
- Eating and spirituality are intertwined. Hence there is a need to continuously remind and educate Muslims on the importance of consuming *tayyib* food. Wholesome food helps produce an inner illumination and create a lightness in the stomach that inclines one towards virtue and good deeds.
- The findings of this study have validated the belief that the virtue of moderation can be achieved through fasting, avoiding mindless eating and drinking. Hence it is recommended that this should be done gradually until it becomes a habit.
- The study has also confirmed the dangers of hedonistic consumption and its impact in an obesogenic environment. Hence it is recommended that there must be an awareness campaign in settings such as schools, universities, workplaces, communities, and health-care and religious centres in curbing hedonic hunger.
- The present study has found that both food secure and insecure communities engage in conspicuous consumption. Hence it is recommended that continuous moral education is crucial to breaking this culture.
- The present research has shown external cues such as fast foods, processed foods, the influence of eating partners, varieties, packaging, portion sizes and advertisement to play a significant role in mindless eating which results in overweight and obesity. Hence it is recommended that there should be awareness of obesogenic environments through sustained media and educational campaigns aimed at increasing the consumption of healthy foods or reducing the consumption of less healthy ones. These campaigns will have greater impact and are more cost-effective when used within multi-component strategies in the moderation in food consumption.
- Food gardening, vegetable farms should be prompted so as to achieve food sovereignty and increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables.

- In order to change obesogenic environments to environments that support healthy diets, there should be an increase in taxes of unhealthy foods more specifically in foods and drinks that are high in sugar and additive components. This will result in a change in purchasing habits and hence in health improvement.
- Institutions of education such as schools and madrassas should be used as settings to promote healthy diets and physical activity. This includes providing healthy foods in school cafeterias so as to achieve a supportive environment.
- Communities should be asked to participate in issues regarding nutrition, with a particular focus on undernutrition, hidden hunger, obesity and non-communicable diseases; this can be done through nutrition and moral education and social marketing campaigns that focus on dietary behaviour as it will help change consumer behaviour and consumption patterns.
- The study validated that parents' educators and leaders are responsible for the moral and fundamental ethical teachings in a community. Hence it is recommended that they imbued good morals in children from a young age and how to take responsibility for their actions.

This study has shown in the literature review and the empirical research that arguably the majority of Muslim societies regardless of their social economic status and geographical location have neglected the virtue of temperance and the Islamic teachings of eating; resulting in the vice of overindulgence. This vice with its many contributing factors has intensified the triple burden of hunger playing a major role in food insecurity and spiritual apathy. It has left some obese, deprived others of nutritious wholesome food while plunging others into deep poverty and debt. Consequently, this vice has given way to too many social-economic, spiritual and health ailments.

This assessment concludes that faith, ethics and philosophy in society extends to food security henceforth religion can help improve nutrition and food security and have a positive impact on the current situation of food insecurity in South Africa. This is because many religions including Christianity; the dominant religion in South Africa preaches that food is not just fuel or nutrients for growth and development but also plays a role in spirituality. It is for this reason that there are specific eating and nutrition guidelines with regards to food. It is therefore hoped that this study will pave the way for deeper discussions on the importance of religion on food security.

In conclusion, all faith groups and ethicists should be at the forefront in spearheading the importance of following religious guidelines with regards to food consumption as religion plays a significant role in food security. This is because food to a large extent is what holds a society together and eating is closely linked to deep spiritual experiences. Additionally, policymakers, educators and NGOs that prompt food sovereignty should join in the achievement of this virtue. This can be easily achieved if all stakeholders work together as humans have an innate tendency to virtues from the beginning to the end of their lives, and their morals have always been tested with the measure of moral virtues or vices moreover spirituality is a central part of human life.



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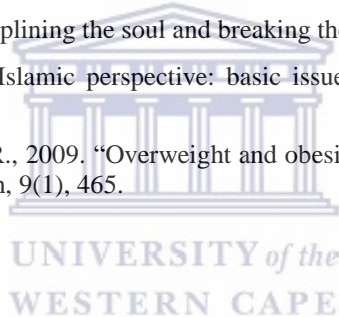
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Addenda

Addendum A: Letter to the Imams of the Habibia and Mubarak mosques



University of the Western Cape

University of the Western Cape

Robert Sobukwe Road

Bellville, 7535

Dear Imams

Ref: Request for permission to conduct research



24 October 2017

I am Sumaya, a student from the University of the Western Cape registered for a master's program in Religion and Theology doing research on the problem of food insecurity in the South African context. The purpose of this research is to identify perceptions amongst Muslim households as to why people overindulge against a particular socio-economic and religious context, namely the role of overindulgence as part of the nexus of problems related to food insecurity in South Africa and an understanding of the virtue of moderation and the vice of overindulgence in Muslim virtue ethics.

Overindulgence is widely regarded as a serious social problem in South Africa leading to obesity and associated medical and psychological issues. This study will investigate overindulgence from the perspective of Islamic Studies. In the Muslim tradition overindulgence is regarded as a vice which is contrasted with the virtue of temperance in the Qur'an and the Hadith

Even though the virtue of temperance is praised, and the vice of overindulgence is frowned upon in Muslim communities, this does preclude overindulgence amongst Muslims, not even in the holy month of Ramadan. This may be understood in terms of the classic problem of moral formation where it is recognised that virtue cannot be taught. Knowledge of the good does not suffice for the realisation of the good. In terms of this study this begs the question what kind of considerations play a role in motivating some Muslims to overindulge despite Muslim teachings in this regard, even amidst contexts of food insecurity. In this study I will investigate the perceptions of such considerations found within Muslim households associated with the Rylands and Belhar mosques. This will require a qualitative approach where semi-structured interviews will be conducted with around 10 households associated with each of these mosques.

In this regard I kindly request your assistance in identifying suitable households that can be approached for the purposes of this study. Since you would know Muslim families in this area best, this is the most convenient way of sample selection. I further request that you take into consideration whether these Muslim households are indeed of good moral standing. It would be to the advantage of this study if you could more specifically identify families with members who are engaged in one way or another in food-related occupations, e.g. the hotel, catering or fast-food industries, tenants and stewards in shops stocking food, social workers, health workers, nutritionists, dieticians, etc. Finally, I humbly ask that you provide me with the contact details for ten such families and for replacements where families are unable or unwilling to participate in the study.

In this regard, I kindly request your assistance and permission to conduct research in your area.

I will greatly appreciate your assistance.

Sincerely

Sumaya Ḥasān



Addendum B: Information Sheet



University of the Western Cape

The virtue of Temperance and the Vice of Overindulgence: A Case Study of Perceptions in Muslim Households

What is this study about?

My name is Sumaya Ḥasān, a student from the University of the Western Cape registered for a Master's program in Religion and Theology. This study is situated in the context of research on the problem of food insecurity in the southern African context. More specifically, it is situated in the Centre of Excellence in Food Security, located at the University of the Western Cape and its project on "Food Ethics and Values" (led by Prof Ernst Conradie). This study will contribute to discussions on food security from the perspective of the discipline of religious studies and more specifically Islamic Studies and Islamic virtue ethics associated with that.

The purpose of this research is to identify perceptions amongst Muslim households as to why people overindulge against a particular socio-economic and religious context, namely the role of overindulgence as part of the relationship of problems related to food insecurity in South Africa and an understanding of the virtue of moderation and the vice of overindulgence in Muslim virtue ethics.

Gluttony is widely regarded as a serious social problem in South Africa leading to obesity and associated medical and psychological issues. This study will investigate overindulgence from the perspective of Islamic Studies. In the Muslim tradition overindulgence is regarded as a vice which is differed with the virtue of temperance in the Qur'an and the Hadith

Even though the virtue of temperance is praised, and the vice of overindulgence is frowned upon in Muslim communities, this does not prevent overindulgence amongst Muslims, not even in the holy month of Ramadan. This may be understood in terms of the classic problem of moral formation where it is recognized that virtue cannot be taught. Knowledge of the good does not serve for the realization of the good. In terms of this study this begs the question what kind of considerations play a role in motivating some Muslims to overindulge despite Muslim teachings in this regard, even amidst contexts of food insecurity. In this study I will investigate the perceptions of such considerations found within Muslim households associated with the Rylands and Belhar mosques.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in individual semi-structured interviews which encompass open-ended questions that relate to the study and your experiences in this specific field. If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer the following:

- What are the perceptions of Muslims of moral standing with regard to overindulgence?
- How can moral formation be implemented?
- What are the constraints that hinder the proper implementation of moral formation and exercising restraint in eating?

Written informed consent will be required and the shared knowledge by you will be tape-recorded with your permission.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

You will be asked how you would prefer to be referred to in this study. This will be indicated in the consent form. I will adhere to your choices as you indicated in the consent forms.

What are the risks of this research?

A study of this nature seeks to recognize what the perceptions are of Muslim households

What are the benefits of this research?

The benefits to the Muslim community include reviving the Qur'anic concept of consuming pure wholesome (*Tayyib*) foods, addressing the problem of mindless eating even in the month of Ramadan, the growing problem of obesity and its health implications a reminder of the connection between food and spirituality in Islam and the problem of food insecurity facing many households.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty.

What if I have questions?

<p>If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact: Ms S Hasān University of the Western Cape, Bellville, 7530 Cell: 0744647246 Email: 3570534@uwc.ac.za</p>	<p>Should you have any further questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact: Research Supervisor: Senior Professor Ernst Conradie, University of the Western Cape, Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7535 Telephone: (021) 959 2206 Email: econradie@uwc.ac.za</p>
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Addendum C: Consent Form

University of the Western Cape

Research Project:

The virtue of Temperance and the Vice of Overindulgence: A Case Study of Perceptions in Muslim Households

Researcher: Ms S Ḥasān

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. I understand that no financial benefits would accrue because of my participation in this research.
3. I agree that the data collected from me to be used in future research.
4. I agree to take part in the above research project.
5. I agree that an audio recording be made of this interview.
6. I agree with the way in which our particular household is described by the researcher
7. I agree with the way in which my anonymity will be protected in the study (e.g. "The mother in Household A, a tenant in Household B, an adult daughter in Household C)

Name of person taking consent
(If different from lead researcher)

Date

Signature

Lead Researcher
(To be signed and dated in presence of the participant)

Date

Signature

Copies: All participants will receive a copy of the signed and dated version of the consent form and information sheet for themselves. A copy of this will be filed and kept in a secure location for research purposes only.

Researcher:

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INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What are the perceptions of Muslims of moral standing with regard to overindulgence?
- How can moral formation be implemented?
- What are the constraints that hinder the proper implementation of moral formation and exercising restraint in eating?

Tell me more ...

Please explain ...

