

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-Ghazālī 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-Ghazālī 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).

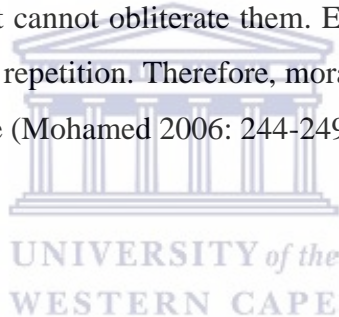
Humans have the capability of connecting to all righteousness but attaining it depends on correct training. To attain the grand aim of getting close to God, the best training should be chosen. Morality is one of the most significant outcomes of education. It directs the identification of moral virtues 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 *ṭayīp*. 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, MacDonal'd'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 leave 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)"

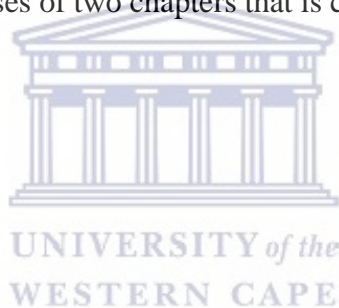
It was explained that the right kinds of foods are very expensive and the people on the grassroot level cannot afford. However, some felt that some people won't eat healthy foods and indicated that it was a fact. While others indicated that organic foods are more expensive, and it is cheaper

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 where 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.

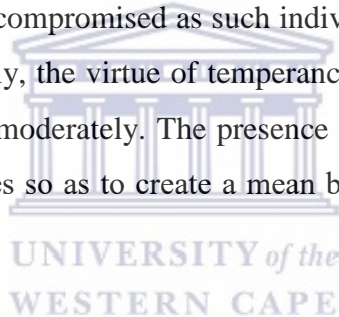
In other words, such families want people's attention and approval, so that they say your daughter did well for herself she's getting married just like surnames are important, so people put themselves in heavy debt just for that". This is substantiated in a study conducted by Rao (2001) in which he states, "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 its 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's 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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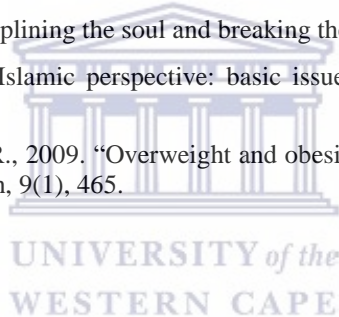
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Addenda

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 ...

