

"Healthy sleep habits between scientific theories and islamic sharia"

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How to cite this article: Ahmed Mohammed Ahmed Al-Haddar, Mohammed AbdulazizEltigani, Rabie Ibrahim Mohamed Hassan, Dr Rosmalizawati Binti Abd Rashid, Mohammad Ishaque Husain (2024). Addressing Economic Challenges: India's Strategy for Unconventional Monetary Policies. *Library Progress International*, 44(3), 25985-25992

Abstract

Islam encourages sleep habits that every Muslim should follow, and modern science and scientific theories have confirmed that these habits introduced by Islam offer health benefits, positively affecting the body, mind, and soul. In contrast, general sleep habits often negatively impact a person's health and mind.

Among the Islamic sleep practices are going to bed early after the evening prayer (Isha), sleeping on the right side, waking up early to start the day with vitality and energy, and avoiding long, uninterrupted hours of sleep. Instead, one wakes up for the dawn prayer (Fajr) and night prayers, along with other positive habits.

A sample of 159 female students from Umm Al-Qura University's Az-Zahir campus in Makkah for the academic year 1435/1436 AH (2014/2015) was randomly selected. The study relied on specific tools, including a sleep habits questionnaire and the Cognitive Abilities Test Battery (Derimen, Harman, French, Ekstrom), which assesses cognitive abilities, visual memory, and associative memory among students. The study focused on the main question: *What is the relationship between sleep habits and cognitive performance efficiency among a sample of students at Umm Al-Qura University?*

The sample results showed that those who followed Islamic sleep habits (such as sleeping at night and maintaining an average number of hours) had greater ability to focus, comprehend, and engage in daily activities without lethargy or fatigue, unlike those who followed general sleep habits.

Key Words: *Sleep Habits, Scientific Theories, Islamic Sharia.*

Introduction:

There is no doubt that a person's sleep habits impact their cognitive and behavioral practices, either positively or negatively. Psychologists have confirmed that mental, intellectual, and cognitive processes are closely linked to sleep patterns and timing.

Given that a large number of people are accustomed to sleeping during the day and staying up late at night, it has inevitably led to health, psychological, and cognitive issues. In many cases, sleep habits are influenced by

6. **Sleeping on the Right Side and Resting on the Right Arm:** As narrated by Al-Bara', "When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would lie down to sleep, he would lie on his right side" (Bukhari, 847).
7. **Avoiding Sleeping on the Stomach:** The Prophet ﷺ said, "This is a posture that Allah dislikes." In another narration, he said, "This is the way of lying of the people of Hellfire" (Ibn Majah, 883).
8. **Napping (Qailulah) after Zuhr, Not'Asr:** In the verse: "*And when you put aside your clothing for the noonday rest*" (An-Nur: 58), Islamic teachings encourage a brief nap after midday.
9. **Sleeping Early After the Evening Prayer (Isha):** This time is divided into three parts, as indicated in the verse: "*O you who believe! Let your slaves and slave-girls, and those among you who have not attained the age of puberty ask your permission (before they come to your presence) on three occasions: before Fajr(morning) Ṣalāt(prayer), and while you put off your clothes for the noonday (rest), and after the 'Ishā' (late-night) Ṣalāt(prayer)*" (An-Nur: 58), suggesting that sleep takes place at these times.
10. **Waking up after Dawn (Fajr) and Not Returning to Sleep:** Islam encourages beginning the day with activity, as the Prophet ﷺ said, "O Allah, bless my nation in their early mornings" (Abu Dawood, 855).
11. **Avoiding Long, Continuous Sleep:** A Muslim is encouraged to wake up to perform the Fajr prayer and, if possible, wake up in the middle of the night for the Tahajjud prayer. As Allah says: "*Their sides part [i.e., they arise] from their beds; they supplicate their Lord in fear and aspiration*" (As-Sajda: 16).

Figure 1: Islamic Etiquette and Habits of Sleep



Source: Author's own compilation

Second Section: Modern Scientific Theories Confirming Islamic Sleep Habits

1. **Performing Ablution (Wudu) Before Sleep:** Modern science, through microscopic examination, has proven that performing wudu purifies the nose from microbes and prevents germs from spreading to the respiratory system. In contrast, various microbial cultures have been found in the noses of those

who do not perform wudu. Additionally, wudu promotes peace, relaxation, and mental calmness, making it an ideal practice before sleep for achieving better rest.

2. **Waking Up for the Fajr Prayer and Night Prayers (Qiyam al-Layl):** Numerous doctors and experts emphasize the importance of waking up at Fajr or during the night. When a person sleeps for long, uninterrupted hours, his heart rate decreases, leading to slower blood flow, which can result in the buildup of fats and salts on the walls of arteries and veins. Extended sleep may also increase the risk of coronary artery blockage. However, by interrupting sleep at night to pray or at Fajr time, a person reduces his risk of artery hardening, stroke, and heart attacks. Modern science thus stresses the importance of not sleeping for long, continuous periods, recommending instead that sleep not exceed 4 hours at a time, followed by at least 15 minutes of physical activity before returning to sleep (Einstein, 2008).
3. **Dusting the Bed Three Times before Sleeping:** Modern science has shown that when a person sleeps, some of his body cells die and fall onto the bed. If they return to sleep later, new cells fall, oxidize, and may reenter the body, potentially causing some illnesses. Attempts by scientists to remove these cells by washing the bed with cleaning agents proved ineffective; however, dusting the bed three times was shown to remove them (Borelli, 1984).
4. **Turning off Lights before Sleeping:** Modern science has also emphasized the importance of turning off lights while sleeping. Sleeping early at night and waking up early at sunrise require that the body not be exposed to excessive light during sleep, but rather receive as much exposure to natural light as possible upon waking. Studies have linked nighttime light exposure to numerous health problems, including premature aging, weakened immunity, and even cancer in some cases, among other ailments. Turning off lights is also beneficial for mental health, as it helps relax the nervous system, positively affecting a person's body, happiness, and well-being. This contradicts the once-common belief in early scientific studies that nighttime light exposure had no adverse effects on the brain. Recent decades have proven this harm through a Dutch research team's study on mice, which found that heavy exposure to light at night caused them various diseases (Ibrahim, 2006).
5. **Sleeping on the Right Side:** An American study confirmed that sleeping on the right side with the right hand under the cheek helps calm the body and allows for quicker sleep. People suffering from anxiety and stress could avoid sedatives and sleeping pills by adopting this sleep position (Al-Biblawi, 2010).
6. **Avoiding Sleeping on the Stomach:** Modern studies have shown that the most harmful sleeping position is lying on the stomach, as it places significant pressure on muscles, leading to discomfort and tension. Orthopedic specialist Andrew Bang has noted that the lower back is subject to stress throughout the day due to daily activities. The night should allow these muscles to rest, but sleeping on the stomach does not offer them a chance to recover, and it also poses risks to the spine and other muscles in the body.
7. **Napping After Noon:** Studies have confirmed that taking a nap after the Dhuhr (noon) prayer helps reduce drowsiness. It also contributes to emotional stability, enhances performance, prepares the mind for later learning, and strengthens memory. Other studies indicate that an afternoon nap protects seniors from dementia, Alzheimer's, or cognitive decline (Al-Husseini, 2010).
8. **Dislike for Sleeping After Asr:** Imam Ahmad stated that it is disliked to sleep after the Asr prayer due to fears of mental harm. The Prophet (peace be upon him) also disliked sleeping at this time. Medical studies have shown that sleeping after Asr can sometimes lead to physical and mental health issues, harming general well-being. It can lead to irritability, anxiety, and ailments related to excessive

moisture in the body, as well as affect the spleen, cause lethargy, muscle relaxation, reduce libido, and damage skin complexion (Asad, 2009).

9. **Avoiding Excessive or Insufficient Sleep and Maintaining Balance:** As noted in the commentary on Abu Dawood: "Excessive sleep has drawbacks, including indications of weakness, lack of insight, and intelligence. It also contributes to laziness, wasted time without benefit, and hard-heartedness." Modern studies confirm this, noting that more than nine hours of sleep in middle-aged people can lead to memory decline and severe lethargy. On the other hand, very short or inadequate sleep leads to fatigue and negative effects on memory (Buchman, 2004).
10. **The Importance of Sleeping Early:** French researcher Neris De confirmed that sleeping early helps a person stay healthy and wise. Sleeping an hour before midnight is equivalent to three hours after midnight. Approximately 70% of deep, dreamless sleep occurs in the first third of the night. Late sleeping, however, lacks quality deep sleep. Science has also shown that the highest emission of ozone gas occurs right after Fajr (dawn) and gradually decreases until sunrise. This ozone activates the nervous system, so those who wake up after sunrise, missing Fajr time, often feel sluggish and lethargic (Al-Husseini, 2005).
11. **Waking Up Early and Engaging in Morning Activities:** Science also confirms that ultraviolet rays are strongest at sunrise, promoting skin health and preventing osteoporosis. Waking up early protects against the buildup of fats on artery walls, thus preventing angina and supporting heart health, with a lower risk of heart attacks (Sharp, 2004).

In addition, the morning breezes (Saba winds) that blow at dawn help promote relaxation and a sense of mental well-being, enhancing both mental and physical activities. Waking up during this time interrupts prolonged sleep, which can cause arterial sclerosis in the elderly and increase their risk of heart attacks and angina.

Moreover, cortisol levels in the blood are at their peak early in the morning, ranging between 7-22 micrograms per 100 ml of blood plasma. At this time, a person is at their peak mental and physical strength. In contrast, cortisol levels are lowest in the evening. Cortisol is an essential hormone in the body as it enhances bodily functions and stimulates metabolism (Diab, 1982).

Table 1: Summary of Modern Scientific Theories Confirming Islamic Sleep Habits

No	Islamic Sleep Habits	health benefits confirmed by scientific theories
1	<i>Performing Ablution (Wudu) Before Sleep</i>	Purifies the nose from microbes, prevents germs from spreading to the respiratory system, promotes peace, relaxation, and mental calmness.
2	<i>Waking Up for the Fajr Prayer and Night Prayers (Qiyam al-Layl)</i>	Reduces his risk of artery hardening, stroke, and heart attacks.
3	<i>Dusting the Bed Three Times before Sleeping</i>	Helps promoting hygienic sleep, reducing the risk of skin irritation and allergies, enhancing sleep quality and rejuvenating sleep, promoting overall well-being, preventing potential health issues, reduce the risk of skin infections and respiratory problems.
4	<i>Turning off Lights before Sleeping</i>	Helps optimizing sleep quality, preserving long-term health, enhancing mental and emotional health.
5	<i>Sleeping on the Right Side with the right hand under the cheek</i>	Helps calm the body and allows for quicker sleep.
6	<i>Avoiding Sleeping on the Stomach</i>	Helps prioritizing optimal sleep posture, promoting spinal health and muscle recovery, enhancing comfort and relaxation.

7	<i>Napping After Noon</i>	Helps reduce drowsiness, contributes to emotional stability, enhances performance, prepares the mind for later learning, and strengthens memory, protects seniors from dementia.
8	<i>Dislike for Sleeping After Asr</i>	Avoid sleeping after Asr helps promoting vitality and well-being, preserving physical health, cultivating a balanced lifestyle and strengthening mental clarity.
9	<i>Avoiding Excessive or Insufficient Sleep and Maintaining Balance</i>	Prevents weakness and enhances cognitive clarity, reduces the risk of laziness and unproductive time, supports emotional resilience and compassion, mitigates memory deterioration and fatigue and promotes overall mental and physical well-being.
10	<i>The Importance of Sleeping Early</i>	Helps a person stay healthy and wise, experiencing quality deep sleep, enduring highest emission of ozone gas occurs right after Fajr (dawn) activates the nervous system.
11	<i>Waking Up Early and Engaging in Morning Activities</i>	Helps gaining ultraviolet rays, promoting skin health and preventing osteoporosis, protects against the buildup of fats on artery walls, supporting heart health, with a lower risk of heart attacks.

Chapter Two: Study Sample

Sample: The study includes 159 female students from Umm Al-Qura University, located at the Al-Zahir campus in Mecca, for the academic year 1435/1436 AH (2014/2015). The students were randomly selected.

Study Tools: The study utilized a Sleep Habits Questionnaire prepared by researcher Balsam Al-Hazmi, along with the Cognitive Abilities Test Battery (Derman, Harman, French, Ekstrom), which assesses cognitive abilities, visual memory, and associative memory among the students (Al-Hazmi, 2015).

First Section: Hypotheses and Questions

In recent times, negative sleep habits have spread among many in society, such as sleeping during the day, getting either too little or too much sleep, and other unhealthy patterns. Many people have adopted these habits, either unaware of their dangers or due to prevailing social norms.

If we assume that those who follow these negative sleep habits experience increases in issues like insomnia, staying up late, daytime drowsiness, and inadequate sleep, it logically follows that this will have a negative impact on a person's thinking, cognitive and behavioral patterns, as well as academic performance across various educational levels (Roberts, 2014).

Thus, the present study focuses on the main question: *What is the relationship between sleep habits and cognitive performance efficiency among a sample of female students at Umm Al-Qura University?*

From the main question, a set of sub-questions branches out, which are:

- Is there a correlation between the students' scores on cognitive tests (perceptual speed, visual memory, and associative memory) and their scores on the sleep habits questionnaire (general and Islamic sleep habits)?
- Are there differences in the students' scores on cognitive tests due to variations in the number of hours of sleep?
- Are there differences in the students' cognitive test scores based on their preferred sleep time?
- Are there differences in the students' scores on the sleep habits questionnaire related to variations in the number of hours of sleep?
- Are there differences in the students' scores on the sleep habits questionnaire related to differences in their preferred sleep times?

Second Section: Objectives

The study aimed to examine the relationship between the scores of a sample of female students from Umm Al-Qura University on their sleep habits questionnaire (general and Islamic sleep habits) and their scores on cognitive tests (perceptual speed, visual memory, associative memory). It also sought to reveal any differences in the mean cognitive test scores due to variations in sleep times and hours of sleep among the students (Ash-Shibini, 2012).

Third Section: Sample Results

- A statistically significant relationship was found at the 0.05 level between the digit and image test and both the Islamic sleep habits axis and the total score of the sleep habits questionnaire, while no relationship was found between the digit and image test and the general sleep habits axis.
- A statistically significant relationship was found between the first and last name test, the digit and topic test, and the total score of the sleep habits questionnaire in both its axes (general and Islamic).
- A statistically significant relationship was found at the 0.05 level between the shape memory test and both the Islamic sleep habits axis and the total score of the sleep habits questionnaire, while no statistically significant relationship was found between general sleep habits and the shape memory test.
- A statistically significant relationship was found at the 0.01 level between the map memory test and both the Islamic sleep habits axis and the total score of the sleep habits questionnaire, while no statistically significant relationship was found between general sleep habits and the map memory test.
- A statistically significant relationship was found at the 0.01 level between the constructional memory test and both the Islamic sleep habits axis and the total score of the sleep habits questionnaire, and a correlation was also found between the constructional memory and the general sleep habits axis at the 0.05 level.
- No statistically significant relationship was found between the three perceptual speed factor tests and sleep habits in both its general and Islamic axes.
- No statistically significant differences were found in the students' cognitive test scores due to variations in preferred sleep time or number of hours of sleep, except for the clear differences in the shape memory test for visual memory, where statistically significant differences were found at the 0.05 level between the preferred sleep time categories, specifically for those who sleep in the afternoon.
- There were correlational differences in the students' performance on the sleep habits questionnaire in the Islamic sleep habits axis and the total score, caused by variations in the number of hours of sleep, with the category of 4-6 hours of sleep performing better.
- No statistically significant differences were found in the students' performance on the sleep habits questionnaire due to variations in their preferred sleep time.
- Statistically significant differences were found in the total score due to variations in preferred sleep time between those who sleep in the morning and those who sleep after Isha prayer or after midnight, with better results for those who sleep after Isha prayer or after midnight.
- It generally appears that those who follow Islamic sleep habits (sleeping at night, with a moderate number of hours, etc.) have a greater ability to focus, perceive, and engage in daily activities without fatigue or exhaustion, compared to those who follow general sleep habits. (Hassan, 2012)

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it has become clear that the sleep habits encouraged by the Shariah are not merely religious rituals but can be considered a way of life that promotes both mental and physical health. These habits also enhance daily activity and improve the quality of sleep, giving individuals a sense of comfort and peace while reducing stress and anxiety. When practiced regularly, they contribute significantly to improving daily life and overall health. It is no surprise that modern science confirms the positive effects of these habits that Islam has guided us toward for centuries.

Recommendations:

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Based on the results of the study, I recommend increasing the number of awareness programs aimed at educating individuals about the importance of proper sleep habits through educational mediums, starting with the family, followed by schools and universities, and ending with media channels.

I also recommend intensifying programs involving specialists in the psychological, educational, and religious fields. These programs should be offered to university students through phased plans that emphasize the positive effects of Islamic sleep habits. Additionally, programs supervised by experts should be developed to show ways to improve students' cognitive performance during university.

It is essential to focus on creating specialized centers for healthy sleep habits, linked to universities with the necessary human and material resources, to conduct further studies related to these habits.

Furthermore, I recommend conducting additional studies similar to this one, exploring the relationship between cognitive performance and Islamic sleep habits.

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