

Islamic Solution to The Effect of Shishing among Muslim Youths

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Abstract

This paper discusses the problem of *shishing* among Muslim youths and its solutions from the perspective of Islam. It provides the imperativeness of Islamic pundits on the light of Islam in handling problems concerning *shishing*. It is established that *shishing* in general is dangerous and hazardous, it leads to many incurable diseases; cancer, heart failure and lung damage inclusive, and it leads to *shishers* dying young. Allahu SWT has drawn the attention of the entire *Ummah* that they should abstain from anything that may endanger their lives leading to life termination. The Prophet SAWstrives to prevent his *Ummah* from falling into danger or doing something that will hurt them in their lives and religion. The paper highlights the dangers of taking intoxicants and *shishing* in particular. The paper employs majorly a qualitative method approach, mixed with some field work, in conducting the research. The research finds that illiteracy, lack of following the guidance of the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as lack of seriousness of government toward the *shishing* by youth fuels the problem, particularly in the developing countries like Nigeria and other African countries, and most of the Muslim populated countries. The research ends with admonition to the youths who are mostly affected by this immoral act to be conscious of Allahu SWT and follow Qur'anic and sunnah guidance in all their activities. It equally encourages government in all ramifications to discharge its responsibilities of securing the lives and properties of the as enshrined upon it by Allahu SWT, thereby fulfilling the vicegerency *Amanah*.

Keywords: Islamic Solution, Effect of Shisha, Shishing, Muslim Youth.

Introduction

The smoking epidemic is one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced, killing more than 8 million people a year, including around 1.2 million deaths from exposure

to second-hand smoke (Institute of Health Metrics (IHME), 2019). According to WHO International Newsroom, 24 May 2022, all forms of smoking are harmful, and there is no safe level of exposure to it. Cigarette is the most common form of tobacco use worldwide. Other tobacco products include water pipe tobacco, various smokeless tobacco products, cigars, cigarillos, roll-your-own tobacco, pipe tobacco, bidis and kreteks.

Islam is a merciful religion that always prevent its followers from falling into avoidable calamities. In Islam, human life is more prioritised even than the sacred house of Allahu (the *Ka'abah*). Prophet Muhammad SAWis reported to have said it could be easier in the sight of Allahu for the *Ka'abah* to perish than losing the soul of a believer. The detail of this narration is conceptually contained in the hadith narrated by 'Abdulahi ibn 'Umar that

I saw the Messenger of Allahu (pbuh) circling the Ka'bah and saying, "How pure you are and how pure is your fragrance! How great you are and how great is your sanctity! By the one in whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, the sanctity of the believer is greater to Allahu than your sanctity, in his wealth, his life, and to assume nothing of him but good"

(Sunan Ibn Mājah, 3932).

Furthermore, Islam prohibits shishing, because it is observed and discovered harmful to human life; it leads to death. There are numerous verses of the Glorious Qur'an and the *ahadith* of Prophet Muhammad SAWthat identify shishing as *Haram* (prohibited) as it hurts human and causes his death. Allahu SWT in the Glorious Qur'an, while drawing the attention of the believers to spend in His cause, says:

"Spend ye in the cause of Allahu and stretch not thy hands to that which causes thy destruction, for certainly Allahu loves the good doers"

(al-Baqarah, Qur'an 2, 195)

Shisha contains carbon monoxide and other toxic agents that increase the risks for shishing-related cancers, heart diseases and lung disease. And this problem of shishing among youth is according to WHO (2019 and 2021) globally increasing. And, according to the 2014 review in the New England Journal of Medicine, tobacco will, if current shishing patterns persist, kill about a billion people in the 21st century, half of whom are below the age of 70. The same studies show that a single shisha session is equivalent to smoking 200 cigarettes, even though cigarettes are the most common form of smoked tobacco. Doctors at institutions, including the Mayo Clinic and the study of Sónora et al (2022), have stated that shisha can be detrimental to one's health, the same way smoking cigarettes does. All these are confirmed on WHO's studies and findings. A shisha session typically lasts about 40 minutes; it consists 50 to 200 inhalations each of which ranges from 0.15 to 0.50 litres of smoke. In an hour long session of shisha, users consume equivalent of 100 to 200 times the smoke of a single cigarette. Various studies have clarified that people who smoke shisha have five times the risk of lung cancer of non-smokers. In a nutshell, the study concludes that heavy shishing, two to four times daily or three to eight sessions a day, substantially raises carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA) levels. Shishers were nearly six times more likely to develop cancer than healthy non-shishers. This, therefore, clearly indicates the reason why Islam prohibits shishing due to its effects on human health and well-being, as stipulated in surah al-Nisa that "Thou shall not kill thyself, for Allahu is to thee The Most Merciful"

(Qur'an 4, 29)

A brief on *Shisha*

Shisha, also called narghile, water pipe, hookah or hubble bubble smoking, originates from the Middle East and certain areas of Asia, but has recently become more popular in the UK especially with young people. It is a way of inhaling tobacco through a bowl with a hose or tube joined on. The tube has a mouthpiece that the shisher uses to breath in the smoke (British Heart Foundation, n.d). According to Collins English and Macmillan Dictionaries, Second Edition, *Shisha* is a flavoured tobacco or a fruit scented tobacco that is burnt using coal, passed through an ornate water vessel and inhaled through a nose. The word shisha is an Arabic word that is Romanized as shisha from the Persian and Turkish origin of *Shishe* meaning 'glass bottle' and is the common term for hookah in Egypt, Sudan and countries of the Ottoman Empire such as Arab peninsula (including Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, UAE, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Tunisia) (USA today, 2018).

In Islam, all forms of shishing are generally haram, because of the harms they cause to human life, and based on the primordial instruction of "Thou shall not kill thyself, for Allahu is to thee The Most Merciful" (Qur'an 4, 29), and that of "thou may eat, drink but thou shall not waste (Surah al-A'raf, Qur'an 7, 31).

Problems emanating from *Shishing*

The problem of shisha is a harmful situation that need to be dealt with or overcame. The problem of shishing among the youths, aged between 15 and 24, is increasing globally. It is becoming popular in Southeast Asia, Middle Eastern North African, and in West African communities particularly in Nigeria and Morocco.

Morocco has now become a cultural home of shisha in Africa, and Nigeria is not left behind. Shisha is gaining popularity in several countries in Arabian Peninsula Arab Muslims that tend to prohibit shishing. Numerous fatwas from notable authorities, such as Al-Azhar University in Cairo, consider shishing as *haram* (prohibited). The reason cited in support of the reclassification of shishing as prohibited include Islam law's general prohibition of all actions that result in harm, as clearly stipulated in "spend ye in the cause of Allah and stretch not thy hands to that which causes thy destruction, for certainly Allahu loves the good doers (Surah al-Baqarah, Qur'an 2, 195).

Additionally, jurists rely on the exhortations in the Qur'an not to waste money. Greater appreciation of the risks associated with second hand smoke has also led recent jurist to cite the obligation to avoid causing wilful annoyance, distress, or harm to other people. The Qur'an does not specifically prohibit or denounce shishing, but gives behavioural guidance, as in the previously quoted instance in surah al-Baqarah.

In recent years, numerous tobacco *fatwas* have been issued due to health concerns. One of the prominent scholars, Shaykh Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, argues that shishing is no longer an issue of dispute among Islamic scholars due to the knowledge of health risks. The reported juristic disagreement among Muslim scholars on the ruling concerning shishing is not usually based on differences between legal proofs, but rather on the difference in the verification of the cause on which the ruling is based. They all agree that whatever is proved to be harmful to the body and mind is prohibited, yet they differ whether this ruling applies to shishing. When a party claims shishing has some benefits, the other assures its harms outweighs its benefits, and yet another maintains it has neither benefits nor effects. This means that if scholars had been certain about the harmfulness of shishing, then they would undoubtedly have considered it prohibited.

The inclination to consider shisha prohibited does not mean it is as grave as major sin such as committing adultery, consuming intoxicants and engaging in theft. In fact, prohibited

matters in Islam are major, and each has its own ruling. The major sins, for example, have no expiration other than sincere repentance. However, the minor sins can be expiated by the five prayers, the Friday prayer, the fasting of Ramadan, and other acts of worship. They can also be expiated by avoiding the major sins.

Fatwas ruling that shishing is impermissible have been issued by the proponents of all four sunni schools of thought, namely Imams Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanafi, and Hambali. Undoubtedly, there are foods and drinks which are beneficial and good and there are those that are harmful and bad. And the whole world knows that the money spent on shishing is to be considered as wasted, from which no benefit is gained, as deduced from "thou may eat, drink but thou shall not waste by means of extravagance, for most certainly Allahu likes not those who waste by means of extravagance (Surah al-A'raf, Qur'an 7, 31).

Allah SWT exalts the virtues of His sincere as "...those whom when they spend, neither extravagant nor short-spend (stingy), but hold a moderation between the two extremes" (Surah al-Furqan, Qur'an 25, 67). And in exemplifying the Prophet (s.'a.w), Allah SWT says:

"... he allows them as lawful *al-Tayyibat* (i.e. all good and lawful as regard things, deeds, believes, persons and foods) and prohibits them as unlawful *al-khabaith* (i.e. all evil and unlawful as regards things, deeds, beliefs, persons and foods)
(Surah al-A'raf, Qur'an 7, 157).

It was also narrated that the Prophet SAW said Allah SWT forbids trading gossip, asking too many questions and wasting money. We can thus finalise that spending on shisha is wastage and extravagance, according to the Qur'an and Sunnah of the prophet SAW.

Causes of Shishing among Youths

The overwhelming majority of adult shishers begin shishing before the age of 18 and many of them become addicted before finishing high school. So, why do youth pick up shishing in the first place? There is no 'yes' or 'no' answer to this question, it could be based on various factors, among which are the following

1. Shishing parents
2. Peer pressure – their friends encourage them to try shisha and to keep shishing
3. Seeing shishing as a way of rebelling and showing independence
4. Thinking that everyone else is shishing and that they should, too
5. The tobacco industry using clever marketing tactics to specifically target youth
6. Lowering price – in place where low tobacco taxes have kept the price down, it is easier for kids to afford shisha
7. Simply wanting to try new things, but they are not mature enough to think of the long-term consequences; and
8. Feeling Nicotine is a 'feel good' drug without intoxication.

Effects of Shishing on Youth

Shishing have lasting effects on adolescent brain development and also causes children to be short of breath and have less stamina, both of which can affect athletic performance and other physically active pursuits, reduced lung growth; and early cardiovascular damage, shishing has many disadvantages and harm on human life and some effects are long-term, while others are short-term.

Health Effects of *Shishing*

Shishing has predominantly negative effects on human health and concern about health effects of tobacco has a long history. Shisha smoke contains more than 70 chemicals that cause cancer. It also contains nicotine, which is a highly addictive psychoactive drug. When shisha is taken, nicotine causes physical and psychological dependency.

Shishing among youth is the single greatest cause of unpreventable death globally. As many as half of people who smoke shisha die from complication of tobacco use. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that each year tobacco causes about 6 million deaths (about 10% of all deaths) with 600,000 of these occurring in non-smokers due to second hand smoke. According to a 2014 review in the New England Journal of Medicine, tobacco will if, current shishing patterns persist, kill about 1 billion people in the 21st century, half of them before the age of 70. Allah SWT has drawn our attention to this when He says “Thou shall not kill thyself, for Allahu is to thee The Most Merciful” in surah al-Nisa’.

Immediate Effects of *Shishing* on the Muslim Youths

Some immediate effects of shishing on Muslim youths include, but not limited to stress, unwarranted divorce, cognitive dysfunction, terminal diseases, and prone to infectious diseases.

- (i) **Stress:** Shishers report higher levels of everyday stress. According to the United State Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2019), several studies have monitored feelings of stress over time and found reduced stress after quitting. And a positive relationship between psychological distress and slavery cotinine levels in shishing and non-shishing adults indicate that both first-hand and second-hand smoke exposure may lead to higher levels of mental stress.
- (ii) **Unwarranted Divorce:** The World Health Organization in 2019 opines that shishing in general is a predictor of divorce, and shishers have a 53% greater chance of divorce than non-shishers.
- (iii) **Cognitive Dysfunction:** Shishing can also create cognitive dysfunction. There seems to be an increased risk of Alzheimer’s disease (AD), although “case control and cohort studies produce conflicting results as to the direction of the association between shishing and AD”. Shishing has been found to contribute to cognitive decline, reduced memory and cognitive abilities in adolescents, and brain shrinkage.
- (iv) **Terminal Diseases:** Shisha smoke contains toxic chemicals, including carcinogens (chemicals that causes cancer). The toxic chemicals that come from the burning of the charcoal, tobacco, and flavourings can lead to cancer, heart disease, lung disease and other health problems.
- (v) **Exposure to Infectious Diseases:** Shishers inhale nicotine, which is an addictive chemical. A typical shisha shishing session delivers 1.7 times the nicotine dose of one cigarette and the nicotine absorption rate in daily is equivalent to shishing 10 cigarettes per day. Through this, shishers will be exposed to many contagious diseases.

Classification of the Effects of *Shishing* on Muslim Youths

The effects of shishing on the Muslim youths can be majorly classified into two broad categories, the short-term health effects and the long-term health effects.

- (i) **Short-term Health Effects:** Carbon Monoxide (CO) in shisha binds to haemoglobin in the blood to form carboxyhemoglobin, which reduces the amount of oxygen that can be transported to organs including the brain. There are several case reports in the medical

literature of shisha smokers needing treatment in hospital emergency rooms for symptoms of CO poisoning including headache and fainting. This is sometimes referred to as 'shisha sickness'.

- (ii) **Long-term Health Effects:** Current evidence indicates shisha causes numerous health problems. Shishing is associated with increased risk of several cancers, pulmonary diseases, prenatal problems, and larynx and voice changes.

The Effects of Second-Hand Exposure to *Shishing* on Muslim youths

For non-shishing youths who associate with shishers, second-hand smoke from shisha contains significant amounts of carbon monoxide, and respiratory particulate matter. Study have found that concentrations of particulate matter of shisha bars in the air are unhealthy and hazardous. This is contained in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Standards. In a typical one-hour shisha session, a user expels into the air 2–10 times the amount of cancer-causing chemicals and other harmful chemicals compared to a cigarette smoker. A second-hand shisher therefore could experience respiratory symptoms such as wheezing, nasal congestion and chronic cough.

A Fair play on *Shishing*

In the spirit of the relationship between harms and benefits, there is nothing beneficial without its harmful effect, and there is nothing that is harmful without its own benefits. Ironically and idiomatically, *Shishing* too has got its own benefits, and below are three ridiculous benefits followed by adverse reasons

1. Shishers seldom grow old
2. Shishers seldom get bitten by a dog; and
3. Shishers are seldom attacked by thieves in their sleep.

The question to be raised here is why won't shishers grow old, get bitten by dogs, and get attacked by thieves, and the response is quite very simple.

The above benefits are justified with the fact that Shishers seldom grow to their prime age, they die younger than others due to lungs damage, as warned by the Ministry of Health. They rarely get bitten by dog simply because when their lungs are damaged they walk on three legs every time, and dogs fear people with a stick in their hands. And, burglars won't break into the house of a shisher at night because they are always awake coughing uncontrollably. It is only one's likeness to the three ridiculous benefits that could embolden one's preference to *shishing*.

Conclusion

Islam sees shishing as one of the phenomena that endangers human life, and most of the times killing. According to the teaching of Qur'an and Sunnah it is prohibited for a person to do anything of any sort that may endanger or cause him death. This is strictly contained in "spend ye in the cause of Allahu and stretch not thy hands to that which causes thy destruction, for certainly Allahu loves the good doers (Surah al-Baqarah, Qur'an 2, 195), "Thou shall not kill thyself, for Allahu is to thee The Most Merciful" (Qur'an 4, 29), and "thou may eat, drink but thou shall not waste (Surah al-A'raf, Qur'an 7, 31). This is equally featured in the Prophet SAWsaying Allah SWT forbids trading gossip, asking too many questions and wasting money. People should therefore be conscious of Allah SWT and follow all the teachings of the Glorious Qur'an so as to live a healthy and successful life in the ephemeral temporal and the permanent spatial lives. The study thus concludes that shishing among

Muslim youths is both harmful and hazardous, as it has both short-term and long-term effects to the human life.

For a long-lasting solution to curb this menace, and based on the findings and considering the Islamic teaching, the study recommend that parents should be highly conscious of Allah SWT in discharging their duties of upbringing their children in accordance to the teachings of Qur'an and Sunnah for they will be held responsible in front of Allah SWT. The government should discharge its duties of guiding the behaviours of its citizens as it will be queried on the day of resurrection about the *amanah* given. The Law enforcement agencies, especially the National Drugs and Law Enforcement Agencies (NDLEA) should be very vigilant of their duties and do what is required to maintain law and order in the society. Youth orientation programmes should be emphatically organised regularly by government, NGOs, Islamic-Muslim institutions and all concerned agencies on the harmful and hazardous effects of shishing. The government is advised to impose heavy tax on tobacco companies, introduce policies that discourage all forms of shishing, as well as enforce the tobacco companies and shisha houses to compensate second hand shishers and the communities in which they operate.

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