

Major Social Impacts of a Vegetarian Diet on Vegetarians in Lebanon

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Introduction

A vegetarian diet focuses on plants for food. These include fruits, vegetables, dried beans and peas, grains, seeds and nuts. There is no single type of vegetarian diet. Instead, vegetarian eating patterns usually fall into several groups: - The vegan diet, which excludes all meat and animal products - The lacto vegetarian diet, which includes plant foods plus dairy products - The lacto-ovo vegetarian diet, which includes both dairy products and eggs. -The semi vegetarian diet which may include poultry or fish (pesco-vegetarian). Some people who follow semi-vegetarian diets are also called 'flexitarians' because of the occasional inclusion of meat products in their diet [3].

In India and in many other spiritual cultures or traditions, vegetarianism is a well-accepted and has universal recommendation. So people don't feel insecure in their orientation and traditional roots; only a few may feel uncomfortable when they live in a Western culture surrounded by non-vegetarian friends and colleagues. Although certain vegetarian diets are considered healthy, the primary basis for vegetarianism in Hinduism and Jainism is a moral one and based on the doctrine of Ahimsa (meaning nonviolence). According to this philosophy, one should minimize violence in thoughts, words, and deeds towards others as well as oneself. Since there is no meat-eating without violence (without killing another living being), this philosophy encourages veganism [18].

In the United States of America, vegetarianism is not that uncommon, yet very well heard of. A US study in 2007 presented the best estimates of various meat consumption segments, including vegetarians, semi-vegetarians, active meat reducers and health-conscious consumers:

1. Health-conscious consumers, 35-50% of US adults, or 73-105 million people. These consumers strived for a balanced diet and/or replaced 2-3 meals per week with meat free alternatives.
2. Active meat reducers, 22-26% of the US adult population, or 46-54 million individuals. Active meat reducers are those who report eating less meat compared to one year ago.
3. Semi-vegetarians are 12-16% of the US adult population or 25-33 million people. They eat any type of meat (usually fish) with less than half of weekly meals.
4. Self-described vegetarians comprise 4-6% of the population or 8-13 million individuals. These consumers said "yes" when asked if they are vegetarian, typically with no definition of the term.

Abstract

In a previous study, the reasons for adopting a vegetarian diet in Lebanon and its health impact on preventing and curing diseases was investigated. In this study, the researcher investigates some of the social effects of a vegetarian diet on the Lebanese vegetarians in some areas in Lebanon. The purpose of this research is to find out whether any type of vegetarianism could be easily accepted and adopted by the Lebanese market and society. This study researched the feasibility and social practicality of such a diet from a social perspective. A cross-sectional study of developmental research was used for this research which consisted of a quantitative approach that used a questionnaire filled by a random sample of respondents. The people surveyed, or the respondents, were individuals exposed (for any duration of time) to any type of vegetarian diet. The hypotheses were tested using frequency analysis, chart analysis and cross-tabulation using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Based on the results of this research and the tested statistical hypotheses, the researcher believes that the social life of vegetarians in Lebanon is minimally affected and could actually have some positive impacts on others. Most vegetarians (semi-vegetarians having it easier and more common than vegans) could enjoy any social event or family meal.

Key words: Vegetarian, Lebanon, Social, Mediterranean, Statistics.

5. Actual vegans and vegetarians make up 1-3% of the population, or 2-6 million US adults. They “never” consume meat, as described differently in various surveys [6].

In the Arab world and specifically the Islamic one, Islamic Sharia (law) in slaughtering prescribes using a well-sharpened knife to make a swift, deep incision that cuts the front of the throat, the carotid artery, windpipe, and jugular veins to cause the least amount of suffering to the animal. Animals are not to be subjected to others being slaughtered. Unfortunately, that is not always the case, especially in countries like Egypt. The case for vegetarianism rarely gets a sympathetic hearing in the region. Many Arab intellectuals and even animal welfare campaigners believe it is not a readily accessible concept. In Cairo, the sense was that vegetarianism is “too foreign” a concept to take hold in the near future - and they are probably right. When Ramadan is on the horizon, followed by the Eid-Al- Adha holiday, including the sacrificial slaughter of sheep by millions of Muslims worldwide, it is important not to underestimate the importance meat has, and has had, in Arab/Islamic culture. The ancient Egyptians, for instance, kept cows in one of the first massive domestication efforts [8].

Although families may not force meat onto their vegetarian members, some make fun of such a decision and believe it to be a “phase” that will pass. For those who can afford meat, vegetarianism is a joke-while many of those in the animal welfare community try to actively ignore it. Vegetarians often decline azayem (banquet invitations), especially family gatherings, to avoid all the hassle about explaining their food choices. Generous by nature, Arab hosts have to force-feed anyone at the table and most dishes usually include meat or other animal products. Not tasting every single dish or refusing more food is considered an offense, let alone explaining a different lifestyle. On the other hand, many vegetarians find that friends are more supportive of the lifestyle shift. They actually find it strange, but when dining together, they show respect when their vegetarian friend is taking time to choose a meal. Another aspect of meat culture in the Arab world is social class. Meat is eaten daily by upper-class families, and so the poor see this as something to aspire to. Many Egyptians are vegetarians without even knowing it. Since more than a quarter of the Egyptian population live below the poverty line (CAPMAS 2013), there is no meat in their diets. This could be a reason why the majority of Egyptians are healthier than can be expected with everything else around - stress, sicknesses due to the garbage around. Nevertheless, they see vegetarianism in a cynical way when it's presented from an animal welfare perspective. Many mistakenly believe meat is the only source of protein. Some of these people who question vegetarianism might argue that plants have feelings like animals [17].

In Lebanon and Middle Eastern or Mediterranean Arab countries in general (like Jordan and Syria), some favorite dishes, and the dishes appealing to most vegans

and vegetarians are mezza, or rather a spread of small appetizers. Culturally, these dishes are served at the start of the meal and served family-style. Family-style is a bit opposite from the American meal mentality, where meals are plated and served individually. Instead, small dishes are spread throughout the table for sampling and chunks of pita are ripped off and dunked right onto the plate [16].

There are plenty of vegetarian mezzas or appetizers to choose from ranging from traditional salads (like Tabouleh and Fattoush), to filling appetizers like Hoummus (chickpeas with Tahini), Baba Ghannouj (eggplant and tahini), Balila (cooked chickpeas with oil and pine nut dressing), Waraq Arish (stuffed grape vine leaves), Falafel (fried chickpea and herb balls), Mhammarah (spicy red dish), Labneh or Shankleesh (varied traditional dairy appetizers), etc.. There are also full traditional meals that are basically vegetarian like Moujadara (lentils with rice or bulgur), Fasoulya bi zeit (red or white beans served with rice or bread), stuffed eggplants or stuffed cabbage leaves, certain traditional stews and soups. So availability of choices is not an obstacle in this region, especially in traditional restaurants or food stores. It's the fact that people choose these foods as side dishes and meat as their main meal; or they incorporate meat in their stuffing to make it their main meal. In addition, Beirut has witnessed in the past couple of years the opening and popularity of only a few upscale vegetarian restaurants [19].

In spite of that and beyond health, there is another factor to be aware of when it comes to placing your children on a vegetarian diet in this region. One thing is that it can be awkward for them socially. Although vegetarian diets are becoming more accepted, and they are more common in some areas than others, the fact remains that most of the children's friends will be meat eaters. This may become a problem for some vegetarian children at cookouts and parties if no or very little vegetarian options are served [5].

Materials and Methods

In this study, the researcher investigates the social effects of a vegetarian diet on the people in Lebanon: dining out, their relationships with friends and family, eating at work and its ease or practicality within a traditional diet. The research follows a quantitative approach which consists of a questionnaire and the analysis and interpretation of the generated data with the help of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

a. Research variables

The researchers covered the necessary variables needed in order to form a clear understanding about the subject. And as clearly stated in the analysis below, two or more of these different variables together with the help SPSS were linked.

The set of independent variables investigated in this study are:

1. Profession Occupation
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Marital Status
5. Number of Members Living in the Same Household
6. Number of Meals Consumed per Day
7. Influence of Vegetarianism on Accepting and Giving Out Invitations
8. Effect of Vegetarianism on Eating Out
9. Effect of Vegetarianism on Participating in Social Events
10. Effect of Vegetarianism on Relationships with Friends
11. Effect of Vegetarianism on Relationship with Family
12. Relationship Between Vegetarian Food and Traditional Food

b. Data Collection and Analysis

The most common source of data for such research is communicating with respondents. Thus, this study used a set of questionnaires filled by a random sample of respondents. Since the percentage population who have followed a vegetarian diet or have sufficient knowledge of it is small, only individuals who have been exposed to this diet were studied. A subject data-gathering technique would provide a deeper and wider range of information. For this reason, a one-on-one survey was used. In addition, the sample size was limited to 930 individuals. The samples were collected from a few supermarkets (near the organic and produce sections), universities, schools (staff) and at gatherings (church events, friendly lunches, etc...) between Beirut, Kesserwan and Northern Lebanon. These places have residents or frequent visitors of different age groups and from the main coastal cities or surrounding suburbs/villages.

c. Research Question and Hypotheses

Q1: How are vegetarian people in Lebanon affected from a social perspective?

All of the hypotheses discussed below are based on the surveyed sample of vegetarians in Lebanon.

H1: Less than 25% of the sample decrease the number of times eating out at restaurants.

H2: More than 50% of the sample change their food choices at their regular restaurants.

H3: Less than 50% of the sample manage to encourage friends or family members to consume more vegetarian meals.

H4: More than 50% of the sample believe that they can find many vegetarian traditional Lebanese foods during family meals or social gatherings.

H5: More than 60% of the students or employed vegetarians bring their own food to their occupations.

H6: More than 25% of the sample experience positive and/or no effects on their overall relationships with friends and family.

d. Scope and Limitations

There were several limitations to this study such as time and places from which samples were collected. The first major limitation of this study was the sample size. Choosing people exposed to vegetarianism from a random sample

of respondents to gather data from, and then checking/organizing the gathered data, the researcher was bounded with a set of 930 questionnaires. Another limitation was the fact that the researcher had limited places from which to gather information. The researcher gathered information from a few places from the coast of Beirut to the Northern coast passing through Kesserwan; yet trying to choose a diversified sample from most parts of Lebanon (targeting a sampled population residing, working in or visiting these districts from suburbs and surrounding villages). A third limitation was the integrity of the respondents, in answering the questionnaires which plays a good deal of importance in the efficiency of the model.

Results and Findings

The sample is composed of 930 respondents. According to the "normal distribution theory", the sample size lead to results that have a 2.8 % margin error and 95% confidence interval [1]. All the results are presented in charts and tables obtained from the output files of the SPSS software.

a. Data Analysis & Testing

As illustrated in the bar chart opposite:

- 73.6% of the sample makes certain food choices at social events, while only 3% don't eat at certain social events (Chart 1).

It is clearly illustrated in the tables following how vegetarians can convince other family members to consume more vegetarian food.

- During a family meal, 35.48 % of the sample managed to convince other family members to eat more vegetarian food, while 59.89 % consumed their own vegetarian food when other members were eating their non-vegetarian meal (Table 1).

b. Multiple Responses of Data

There were some multiple responses to several questions targeted. Thus, some information was drawn based on those responses, some of which are:

- Only 2% of the sample limited eating out at restaurants and 16% limited their invitations to their own home, while 79% of the vegetarians experienced no effect in their social life (Chart 2 - page 22).
- 26.04% of the sample had positive effects on their family and friends, whether by encouraging them to eat more vegetarian food or by simply making new friends that encourage or follow a similar diet. A good 53.44% were not affected by their vegetarian diet since much of the served food, including the traditional food and 'mezzas', had plenty of vegetarian options (Table 2).
- Only 5.1% of the sample had negative experiences such as small arguments and 15.42% simply limited their social relations (Table 2).
- 60.62% of the sample changed their food choices at their regular restaurants, while only 14.76% changed the restaurants (Table 3 - page 22).

Chart 1: Percentage of sample responses to social events of vegetarians

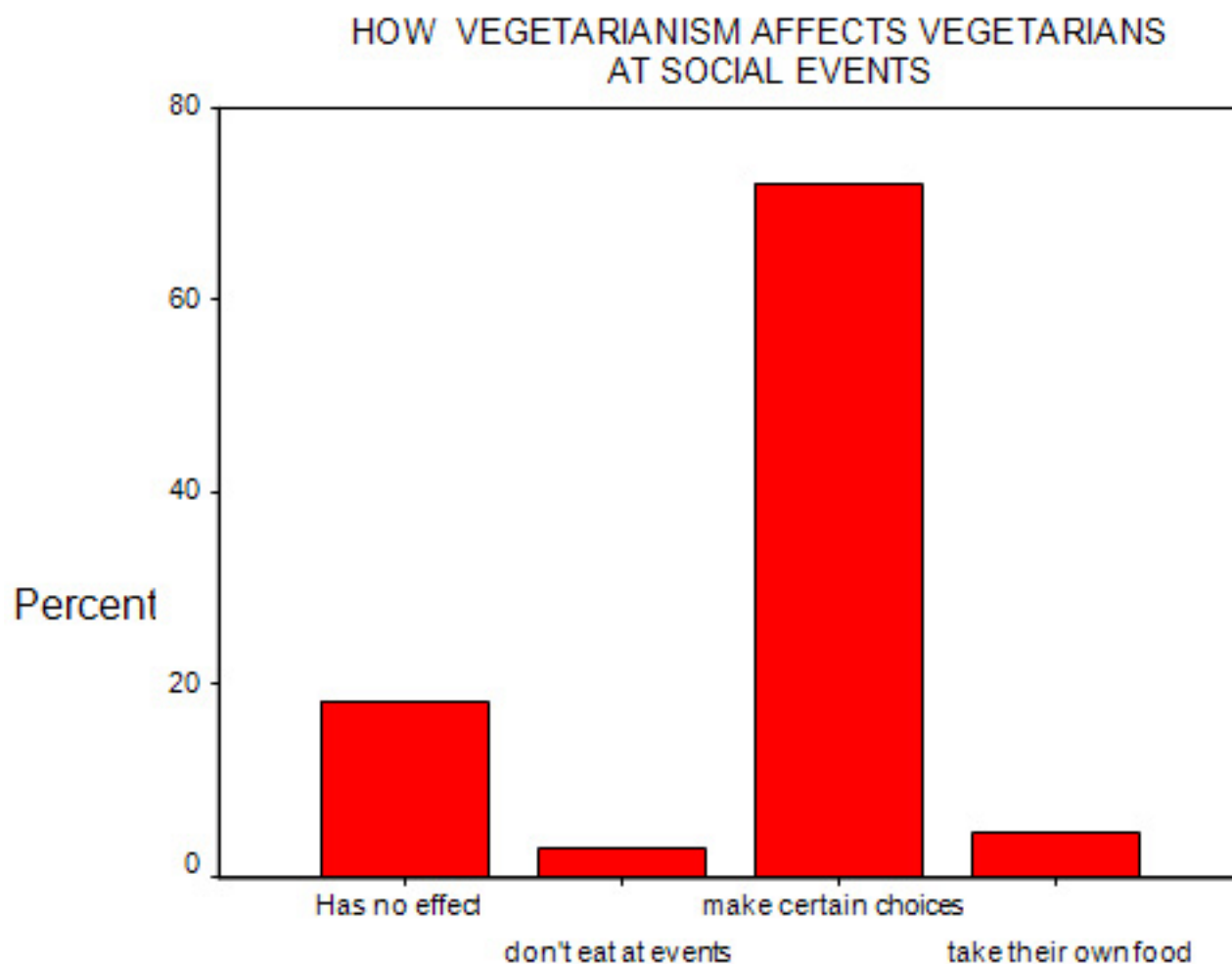


Table 1: Sample responses to the effects of a vegetarian diet on other family members while dining together

	Counts	Percent
Has no effect	31	3.33%
I stopped eating or dining with them	12	1.29%
Some family members started eating more of my vegetarian food	330	35.48%
When eating with the family, I eat my own vegetarian food	557	59.89%
Total	930	100.00

Table 2. Overall effects of Vegetarianism on relations between vegetarians and their non-vegetarian friends & family

Category label	Count	% Responses	%Cases
Has no effect (many traditional foods/mezzas are vegetarian)	513	53.44	55.1613
Negatively affects our relationship (arguments, not eating together)	49	5.10	5.26882
Positively affects (influencing others, making new friends)	250	26.04	26.8817
Limited my social relationships (frequency of going out, invitations)	148	15.42	15.914
Total responses	960	100.00	103.226
Total Cases	930		

Chart 2. Influence of Vegetarianism on the general social life of vegetarians

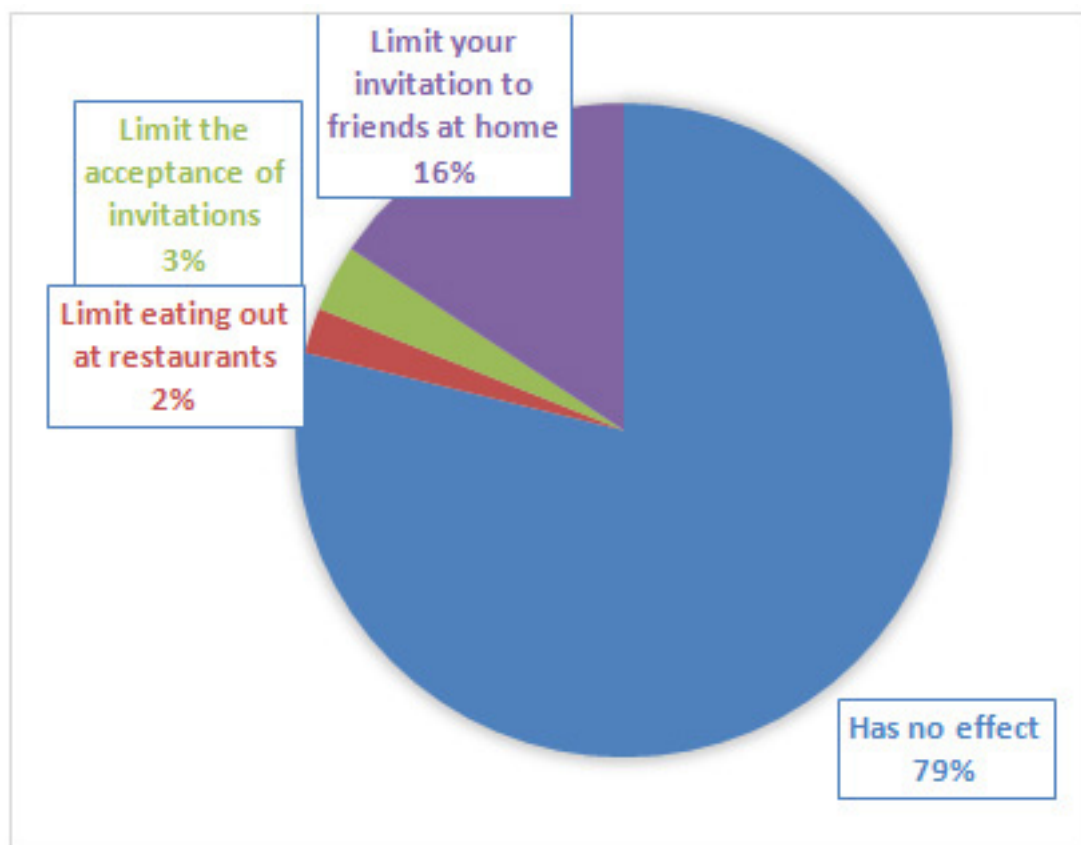


Table 3: Influence of Vegetarianism on eating out at restaurants

Category label	Count	% Responses	% Cases
Has no effect	212	22.51	22.80
Decreased the number of times eating at restaurants	20	2.12	2.15
Changed restaurant choices	139	14.76	14.95
Changed food choices at their regular restaurants	571	60.62	61.40
Total response	942	100.00	101.29
Total Cases	930		

c. Cross Tabulation of Data

Cross tabulation is extremely important, since it gives clear information and comparison between any two variables. The two tables below are used later on in the conclusions.

- Within marital status, both the married and single (a total of 70.23% of the sample) managed to convince family members to start eating more vegetarian food (Table 4).
- Within occupation, 85.78% of the students and 69.66% of the employed brought their own food to school, college or work (Table 5 - page 24).

Table 4: Cross tabulation between “Marital Status” and “How Vegetarianism affects one’s relationship with family members during a meal”

MARITAL STATUS	How Vegetarianism affects one’s relationship with family members during a meal					Total
	Has no effect	I stopped eating with them	Some family members started eating more vegetarian food	When eating with family, I eat my own vegetarian food		
Single	Count 13	Count 6	Count 67	Count 111	Count 197	Count 197
	% within MARITAL 6.60%	% within MARITAL 3.05%	% within MARITAL 34.01%	% within MARITAL 56.35%	% within MARITAL 100.00%	% within MARITAL 100.00%
Married	Count 14	Count 3	Count 259	Count 439	Count 715	Count 715
	% within MARITAL 1.96%	% within MARITAL 0.42%	% within MARITAL 36.22%	% within MARITAL 61.40%	% within MARITAL 100.00%	% within MARITAL 100.00%
Divorced	Count 3	Count 2	Count 2	Count 4	Count 11	Count 11
	% within MARITAL 27.27%	% within MARITAL 18.18%	% within MARITAL 18.18%	% within MARITAL 36.36%	% within MARITAL 100.00%	% within MARITAL 100.00%
Widowed	Count 1	Count 1	Count 2	Count 3	Count 7	Count 7
	% within MARITAL 14.29%	% within MARITAL 14.29%	% within MARITAL 28.57%	% within MARITAL 42.86%	% within MARITAL 100.00%	% within MARITAL 100.00%
Total	Count 31	Count 12	Count 330	Count 557	Count 930	Count 930
	% within MARITAL 3.33%	% within MARITAL 1.29%	% within MARITAL 35.48%	% within MARITAL 59.89%	% within MARITAL 100.00%	% within MARITAL 100.00%

Table 5: Cross tabulation between “Occupation” and “How vegetarianism affects one at work/school or university”

Occupation	Has no effect	I don't eat at work /school or university	I bring my own vegetarian food to work/school or university	I stopped sharing food with friends at work/school or university	Total
Student	Count	10	10	9	204
	% within occup.	4.90%	5%	4.41%	100.00%
Self employed	Count	7	8	2	62
	% within occup.	11.29%	12.90%	3.23%	100.00%
Employed	Count	15	11	28	178
	% within occup.	8.43%	6.18%	15.73%	100.00%
Housewife	Count	0	0	0	394
	% within occup.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Retired	Count	0	0	0	24
	% within occup.	0.00%	0%	0%	100.00%
Unemployed	Count	0	0	0	28
	% within occup.	0.00%	0.00%	0%	100.00%
Total	Count				890
	% within occup.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%

d. Hypothesis Testing

- **H1:** Less than 25% of the sample decrease the number of times eating out at restaurants.

According to Table 3, 2.12% of the sample limits eating out at restaurants. Thus, this hypothesis is accepted.

H1 -> accept

- **H2:** More than 50% of the sample change their food choices at their regular restaurants.

According to Table 3, 60.62% change their food choices at their same regular restaurants. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted. **H2 -> accept**

- **H3:** Less than 50% of the sample manage to encourage friends or family members to consume more vegetarian meals.

According to Table 1, 35.48% of the sample managed to convince family members to consume more of their vegetarian food. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted.

H3 -> accept

- **H4:** More than 50% of the sample believe that they can find many vegetarian traditional Lebanese foods during family meals or social gatherings.

According to Table 2, 53.44 % of the sample believe they can find and enjoy many traditional vegetarian foods and their relationship with others was not affected by their vegetarianism. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted.

H4 -> accept

- **H5:** More than 60% of the students or employed vegetarians bring their own food to their occupations. According to table 5, more than 85% of the students and 69% of the employees bring their own vegetarian food to work. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted.

H5 -> accept

- **H6:** More than 25% of the sample experience positive and/or no effects on their overall relationships with friends and family.

According to Table 2, around 53% experience no effects (because they enjoy some available traditional vegetarian food) and around 26% experience positive effects (like making new friends who share the same lifestyle or manage to convince others to adopt vegetarianism). Thus, put together, over 79% experience no or positive effects. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted. **H6 -> accept.**

Discussion of Results

Q1: How are vegetarian people in Lebanon affected from a social perspective?

This question is tackled in hypotheses H1 through H6. The social life of the Lebanese people represents a major facet in their daily lives. Therefore, the above research question (Q1) was elaborated on using 6 hypotheses to be tested.

According to Chart 2, only 2% of the sample limits eating out at restaurants, 16% limit inviting people over to their homes and 79% of the sample's general social life was not affected at all by their vegetarian diet. According to table 3, of those who dine out, 14.76% changed restaurants and 60.62% made different food choices that suit their vegetarian diet at their same regular restaurants.

In regards to how a vegetarian diet affects ones' relationship with others while sharing a meal, 3.3% of the sample weren't affected at all, and only 1.29% of the sample stopped eating meals with the rest of the family. Over 59% of them eat their own vegetarian food while seated with the rest of the family or friends, while 35.48% were able to convince family members and friends to eat more of their vegetarian food (Table 1). Only around 34% of the single and 36% of the married vegetarians were able to encourage and convince other family members to join them in eating more of their vegetarian food. While around 56% of the single and 61% of the married enjoy their own vegetarian food while other family members are eating non-vegetarian food (table 4). Over 53% of the sample believe that they can find many vegetarian options among the served food, including in the traditional food and mezzas. Fortunately, most vegetarians (over 79%) experience either no effect or positive effects in their general social life, attend regular social events and make certain food choices that suit their vegetarian diet wherever they are.

Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion

Vegetarians have many reasons not to eat the flesh of animals. In addition to religious beliefs, there are health-based, ecologic, ethical, and philosophical reasons[10]. To maintain or retain good health, the consumption of an individually optimal diet is recommended [9]. The term preventative diet has been used recently to underline the possibility of avoiding nutrition-based diseases [11]. The aggregate of most studies suggests that the consumption of plant-derived foods (grains, vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts) should be increased and that the intake of animal-derived foods (meat products, dairy products, and eggs) should be reduced [15,21]. Adherence to vegetarian principles and practice may be narrow or wide depending on the person's understanding and condition. Many people who identify themselves as vegetarians occasionally eat foods generally excluded from the typical 'healthy vegetarian diet' in a temperate climate such as meat, poultry, dairy, eggs, sugar, chemicals, and simple carbohydrates. They consider themselves to be semi-vegetarians or "flexitarians". Because we have all abused

food at some time, we need to find variety within balance. Ideally we need to regain the center on a daily basis. There is always variety, never narrowness. This requires simple eating [13,14].

In spite of the positive results from this research, the researcher prefers to simplify vegetarianism and address it to the Lebanese as a healthy nutritious lifestyle. People who get involved in vegetarianism are coming to it from a compulsion to heal, philosophical interest or because of celebrity driven PR that promotes well-being. That's all fine and well, but ultimately, the most inspiring factor that can sustain vegetarianism will be truly healthy converts that do not become fanatical, condemning or arrogant about their philosophy or other healing modalities. Some people in this region do not like to be labeled as "vegetarians", causing confusion, or discouraging people around them. Just follow a healthy lifestyle and be a good and happy example to others. Being an example can influence others, hopefully to also let go of the many sugared, processed, 'chemicalized' and other ways 'adulterized' foods. An individual could just start with his/her household by easily avoiding meat, poultry and processed food and enjoying a well balanced diet rich in seasonal fruits, vegetables, grains legumes and some fish and dairy products or alternatives [7,12]. The researcher believes that organic food has to be made more accessible and affordable in the region, to encourage following vegetarianism or any other healthy lifestyle. Now is the time to do so, since the media has been highlighting recently the negative effects and health hazards of consuming some of Lebanese agriculture (fruits and vegetables using loads of chemical fertilizers, herbicides, etc...).

Very few social and practical drawbacks of following a vegetarian diet include the requirement of extensive home cooking, conflicts with family and friends, difficulty finding balanced meals in restaurants, and the awkwardness of refusing certain food when invited to a meal at someone's home [2,4].

For people who eat out frequently when traveling, busy or on social events, making the best available food choices is crucial. The researcher believes that vegetarians can't always get away with this for an extended time. They might start to develop small symptoms that may be adjusted by fasting and chewing well. Vegetarians can enjoy restaurants only a few times a week, but vegans in particular, should rely mostly on cooking well balanced meals. They should always try to choose the best quality restaurant and the most appropriate, balanced and varied food when eating out.

It is not easy to practice any healthy lifestyle on your own. Some people are lazy and may not want to make the effort needed for vegetarianism. Nevertheless, the more "healthier" family members and friends one has, the easier to socialize. Learning how to serve appealing healthy appetizers and meals would encourage people to come over or socialize at eating events. If you are a long-time vegetarian or newly-turned vegan, you might find that

some social situations can be awkward. However, there are a few tips that can help fellow vegetarians get through such situations. As a guest, remember that when the host or hostess of a party does make a special vegetarian dish for you, be sure to thank them. Also, when someone offers you a non-vegetarian/non-vegan dish to try, you can simply say, "No Thanks". Make a point to mention how much you liked a vegetarian dish.

On the other hand, when you are hosting your event, try to make foods which are familiar to most people, such as seasonal or popular salads, pasta, hummus, vegetable soups, bean chili, salsa, Lebanese vegetarian mezza dishes, semi-vegetarian options (with fish or dairy) and vegan versions of common sweet-foods such as cookies and cakes. You could also welcome the thought of guests that bring their own dishes as well. While vegan and vegetarian meals are no different than regular meals (except for the fact that they don't have animal products) and are just as tasty, some people may not care for them or be open to trying them.

Finally, at a restaurant, choose convenient meals or just be polite and patient when asking the waiter about which dishes could be made without animal products. If you do ask a lot of the servers, tip them appropriately. It's important that you realize you may have to skimp a bit or make do. If all of their entrees use meat or animal products, it might be easier to just order a sandwich and a few "safe" side dishes instead of insisting they make special accommodations.

If only a few vegetarian choices are available, be gracious and simply order a drink and some side dishes. Remember that dining out should also be about the company, and raising a fuss can make for an uncomfortable if not ruined dining experience. Most of the time, two or three side dishes will be a satisfying meal [20].

In conclusion, the researcher believes that the social life of vegetarians in Lebanon is minimally affected and could actually have some positive impacts on others. Most vegetarians could enjoy any social event or family meal, simply take their own food to their work or school, or even dine out at restaurants as long as they make certain choices from whatever is available. It's actually a positive factor to be living in Lebanon, since many of their traditional foods and even mezzas (appetizers) are vegetarian. It's definitely easier to be a semi-vegetarian than a strict vegan, since you would have a wider selection of foods from the Mediterranean diet that are prepared with seafood or dairy products.

It is not as hard as many might speculate to be a vegetarian in Lebanon because of the availability of seasonal fruits, vegetables and simple traditional meals or appetizers. The only thing to pay attention to, is to be knowledgeable enough to make the right balanced choices (making sure the vegetarian gets his fair share of protein and key vitamins/minerals).

This research revealed that over 35% of the vegetarians were able to encourage or convince their family members during a meal to eat more of their vegetarian food. It is easier to encourage others to include more vegetarian food in their meals rather than convince them to become vegetarians permanently. From a social perspective, one of the major barriers is the habit of a lot of Lebanese to have weekend barbecues, especially in good weather (focusing on meat and chicken). This could be partly addressed using seafood and delicious vegetables from time to time.

The researcher believes that the most efficient method of "encouragement" is to be a living example. When a vegetarian naturally shows how easy, convenient, fun and practical it is, friends and family would be lured into trying. Looking energetic, happy and definitely at your ideal weight, will sure bump up their enthusiasm or at least curiosity to try. A vegetarian could imply simple changes like incorporating more fruits and vegetables, eating one vegetarian meal a day or 2-3 vegetarian meals a week and to see the difference. People, especially the Lebanese in the areas surveyed, are usually more enticed to try diet changes when they are trying to lose weight, especially before beach weather or an important event (like a wedding). It would be a good idea for a vegetarian to share delicious vegetarian food with people (without actually talking about it). Just cook for your family, your friends, etc. It may get many people to see that eating vegetarian can be fun, adventurous, interesting - and not as hard as they probably thought. Other than that, it is also advisable not to preach. Extend the courtesy of accepting others' lifestyles since vegetarians also do not appreciate being nagged about their choices too. People may or may not get excited about eating with you and eating vegetarian for many social, health or other reasons. While they may never totally commit, a vegetarian would at least kill some of the myths about vegetarianism and probably make a slight positive difference.

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