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Impact of Modern Lifestyle on Su-E-Mizaj and Development of Lifestyle Diseases

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Abstract | **Review Article**

In the 21st century, the rising prevalence of lifestyle diseases-such as obesity, hypertension, diabetes mellitus, and cardiovascular disorders-has emerged as a major global health concern. These conditions are primarily linked to poor dietary habits, physical inactivity, emotional stress, environmental pollution, and disrupted sleep cycles. From the perspective of Unani medicine, these deviations from natural living are considered direct disturbances of the six essential causes of life (Asbab-e-Sitta Zaruriyya), leading to the alteration of temperament (Su-e-Mizaj) and ultimately resulting in pathological states. According to Unani scholars like Ibn Sina (in *Al-Qanoon fi al-Ṭibb*), Jurjani (*Zakhira Khawarizm shahi*), and Nafis bin Awwali (*Kulliyat-e-Nafisi*), health is the outcome of a well-balanced Mizaj and the equilibrium of the four humours (Akhlaṭ Arba). Any persistent lifestyle imbalance disrupts this equilibrium, causing a shift in the natural temperament of organs or the entire body, referred to as Su-e-Mizaj, which is the root cause of disease manifestation. This review paper explores how modern lifestyle factors contribute to Su-e-Mizaj and consequently to the development of lifestyle diseases, through the lens of classical Unani philosophy. It examines the etiopathogenesis of diseases in terms of humoral imbalance, derangement of innate faculties (Quwa Tabaiyya), and disturbance in vital forces like Rooh and Hararat Ghariziyya. By critically analysing authentic Unani texts and correlating them with contemporary research on lifestyle-related morbidities, the paper highlights the relevance of Tanẓim-e-Maishat (lifestyle regulation) and Ilaj bil Ghidha (dietotherapy) as foundational strategies for both prevention and management of these conditions.Through this classical-modern interface, the study calls for the revival of Unani preventive doctrines and Mizaj-based individualized care in combating the global epidemic of lifestyle diseases.

Keywords: *Su-e-Mizaj,* Life style, Unani medicine, *Mizaj, Asbab-e-Sitta Zaruriyya*.

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INTRODUCTION

Unani medicine, a traditional system rooted in the teachings of Hippocrates, Galen, and later enriched by scholars like Razi and Ibn Sina, conceptualizes health as a dynamic balance of temperament (Mizaj), humors (Akhlaṭ), and vital faculties (Quwa). At the heart of Unani philosophy lies the principle of Mizaj, a unique combination of four qualities-hot, cold, moist, and dry-that govern the structure and function of the human body [1]. Health is defined as the preservation of a balanced Mizaj (EtidAl-e-Mizaj), while any deviation from this equilibrium results in Su-e-Mizaj, which is the earliest pathological sign of disease [2].

In classical Unani doctrine, disease progression follows a clear trajectory: Su-e-Mizaj disrupts the functions of organs, affects humoral balance (Imtila or Fasad-e-Akhlaṭ), impairs faculties like Quwwat-e-Hazima (digestive power), and ultimately manifests as chronic illness if unchecked [3]. Notably, these concepts remain relevant in the context of modern lifestyle diseases, which include obesity, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, insomnia, and stress-induced neuropsychiatric conditions [4].

The shift from traditional living to a modern sedentary lifestyle, characterized by processed diets, emotional stress, pollution, poor sleep hygiene, and lack of physical activity, has been strongly correlated with the derangement of Mizaj and progression toward chronic disease. Classical texts such as *Kulliyat-e-Nafīsi* and *Zakhira Khawarizmshahi* describe the harmful effects of these lifestyle derangements in terms of Mizaj, emphasizing how excessive intake of unnatural foods, mental unrest (*Harkat wa Sukun-e-Nafsani*), and inactivity result in Su-e-Mizaj *Barid wa Ratb* or *Har wa Yabis*, depending on the individual's constitution [2, 5,].

Moreover, Unani medicine classifies six essential factors (Asbab-e-Sitta Zaruriyya) that are fundamental to life and health: atmospheric air (Hawa), food and drink (Makul wa Mashrub), physical activity (Harkat wa Sukun Badani), psychological movement (Harkat wa Sukun Nafsani), sleep and wakefulness (Naum wa Yaqza), and retention and evacuation (Iḥtisas wa Istifragh) [1]. An imbalance in any of these due to modern lifestyle behaviors leads to the onset of Su-e-Mizaj and, if not corrected, contributes to the chronicity of disease [6].

This review attempts to bridge traditional Unani insights with contemporary observations by exploring how modern lifestyle choices precipitate Su-e-Mizaj and fuel the development of chronic diseases. It highlights the preventive wisdom of Unani physicians and suggests that reviving the principles of Mizaj regulation and Ḥifẓan-e-Ṣiḥḥat (preservation of health) could provide holistic strategies for managing lifestyle disorders in the modern age.

METHODOLOGY

This review paper is based on a comprehensive qualitative analysis of classical Unani texts, contemporary Unani literature, and modern scientific research to understand the relationship between modern lifestyle patterns and the development of Su-e-Mizaj (abnormal temperament), leading to lifestyle diseases.

Articles and texts were selected based on relevance to lifestyle-induced Mizaj changes and associated disorders. Data were categorized under each of the Asbab-e-Sitta Zaruriyya and synthesized to establish correlation between modern lifestyle factors and temperament derangement as per Unani philosophy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Mizaj (temperament) is the foundation of Unani medicine. It is derived from the equilibrium of four basic Arkan (elements)-fire, air, water, and earth-each possessing specific qualities: hot, cold, moist, and dry. Their combination forms the Mizaj of a person, which is established at the time of conception and generally remains stable throughout life unless altered by internal or external influences [7].

Unani scholars like Ibn Sinaand Razi classified Mizaj into four primary types: Damwi (hot & moist), Balghami (cold & moist), Safrawi (hot & dry), and Sawdawi (cold & dry). Health is seen as a state of Etidal-e-Mizaj (balanced temperament), while disease results from Su-e-Mizaj (imbalanced temperament). This disturbance may be simple or compound, localized or general, and may or may not involve derangement of the Akhlaṭ (humours) [8].

Su-e-Mizaj

In the Unani system of medicine, Mizaj (temperament) is considered the foundational principle governing human health. It represents the qualitative balance of the four Akhlaṭ (humours) - *Dam, Balgham, Safra,* and *Sauda.* When this balance is disturbed, it leads to a pathological state called Su-e-Mizaj, which is the primary stage in the development of diseases [9,13].

According to Ibn Sina, Su-e-Mizaj is the earliest and most subtle form of derangement in the body, which, if not corrected, predisposes the individual to the accumulation of morbid matter (Mawad-e-Fasida) and eventually to organ-specific diseases [13]. Razi and Jurjani also emphasized that timely diagnosis and correction of Su-e-Mizaj is essential to prevent further pathological progression [10,11].

Types of Su-e-Mizaj

Unani scholars classified Su-e-Mizaj into two major types:

1. Su-e-Mizaj Sada (Sazij)- *Qualitative derangement without Madda (matter) involvement*

This form involves a functional or qualitative imbalance in the temperament without any abnormal accumulation of morbid matter. It is based on the alteration in the heat, cold, dryness, or moisture qualities.

Subtypes:

A. **Su-e-Mizaj Mufrad Sada (Simple qualitative derangement):** In this case, only one quality (like heat or cold) is predominant, e.g., *Har (hot)* or *Barid (cold)* temperament.
B. **Su-e-Mizaj Murakkab Sada (Compound qualitative derangement):** This includes two qualities together, such as *Har Yābis (hot-dry)* or *Barid Ratb (cold-moist)*. Such conditions reflect more complex physiological imbalances [13].

2. Su-e-Mizaj Maddi- *Qualitative derangement with involvement of Madda (morbid matter)*

In this type, the temperament is disturbed along with accumulation of pathological matter (*Mawad*). This matter could be *Fasida (morbid)* or *Ghair Tabai (unnatural)* and leads to structural or symptomatic manifestations of disease.

Subtypes:

A. **Su-e-Mizaj Mufrad Maddi (Simple material derangement):** One quality is deranged with associated material accumulation- for example, increased cold temperament with presence of Balgham.
B. **Su-e-Mizaj Murakkab Maddi (Compound material derangement):** More than one quality is deranged with material involvement- e.g., Barid Ratb with excess Balgham, or Har Yabis with Safra. Such cases often lead to more severe clinical presentations [13,14].

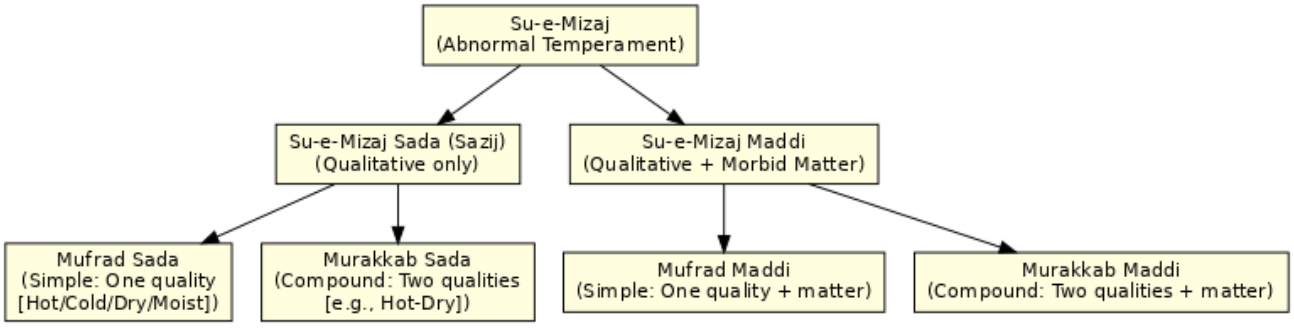

Figure 1: SUE MIZAJ

Understanding the type and nature of Su-e-Mizaj is crucial for diagnosis, prevention, and treatment in Unani medicine. Modern lifestyle disruptions- such as excessive consumption of fast foods, mental stress, sleep disturbances, and lack of physical activity- often lead to both Sada and Maddi forms of temperament derangement. These ultimately cause chronic metabolic and lifestyle disorders, a correlation now validated by modern research on inflammation, neuroendocrine imbalance, and metabolic syndrome [20–23].

Chronic Su-e-Mizaj, if left uncorrected, weakens the Quwa Tabaiyya (natural faculties) and disturbs the process of Imtizāj (proper blending), which can lead to various chronic disorders. For example, a cold-moist Su-e-Mizaj is often linked to obesity and slow metabolism, while a hot-dry Mizaj may manifest as irritability, insomnia, or hypertension [9].

Asbab-e-Sitta Zaruriyya

Unani medicine emphasizes that such imbalances often result from mismanagement of the six essential lifestyle determinants known as Asbab-e-Sitta Zaruriyya, which include:

1. Ḥawa (air and environment)
2. Makul wa Mashrub (food and drink)
3. Ḥarkat wa Sukun Badani (physical activity and rest)
4. Ḥarkat wa Sukun Nafsani(mental activity and emotional states)
5. Naum wa Yaqẓa (sleep and wakefulness)
6. Ehtebaswa Istifragh (retention and evacuation) [10]

Asbab-e-Ghair Zaruriyya

Violation of these principles disturbs the Mizaj and eventually leads to disease. Classical physicians like Baghdadi and Azam Khan also described a set of Asbab-e-Ghair Zaruriyya (non-essential factors) that significantly influence health, including:

- Afal-e-Nafsaniyya (emotions like anger, grief, fear)
- Adat (personal habits like overeating, late sleeping)
- Ashkal wa Iqlim (climate and geography)
- Riyazat (exercise)
- Dalak (massage)
- Hammam (bath and steam)
- Manzil (residence condition)
- Zaman (seasonal variation)
- Sin & Jins (age and gender) [11]

These factors influence the production and flow of Rooh (vital spirit), as well as the efficiency of Quwwat-e-Mudabbira Badan (body's ruling faculty). Any persistent disturbance leads to humoural imbalance, weakens vital faculties, and initiates disease progression [12].

In modern times, the adoption of a sedentary lifestyle, excessive intake of fast and processed foods, stress, poor sleep hygiene, and digital screen overexposure have replaced natural living. These trends are directly responsible for lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, hormonal imbalances, and mental health issues. These are clearly understood in Unani medicine as arising from chronic Su-e-Mizaj due to violation of Asbab-e-Sitta Zaruriyya [13].

Modern Lifestyle and Lifestyle Diseases

According to the World Health Organization, over 70% of global deaths are due to lifestyle-related chronic illnesses, many of which are preventable by correcting behavioural patterns [14].

Modern medical studies confirm that physical inactivity, processed food, and sleep disturbance significantly increase the risk of metabolic syndrome, insulin resistance, and chronic inflammation-factors closely mirroring the Unani concept of humoural imbalance and temperament disturbance [15].

Thus, the Unani approach to lifestyle regulation, personalized according to individual Mizaj and guided by Asbab-e-Sitta, provides a holistic framework for prevention and management of chronic lifestyle diseases.

DISCUSSION

The changing trends in daily living- modern diet, poor sleep hygiene, emotional stress, limited physical activity, and artificial environments- have significantly influenced human health, leading to a surge in lifestyle diseases such as obesity, hypertension,

diabetes, and depression. These conditions are directly connected to Su-e-Mizaj, a fundamental pathological state in Unani medicine, caused by the mismanagement of Asbab-e-Sitta Zaruriyya and Ghair Zaruriyya.

1. Ḥawa (Air):

In urban environments, individuals are increasingly exposed to polluted air, air-conditioned settings, and poorly ventilated indoor spaces. According to Unani philosophy, air (Ḥawa) plays a critical role in preserving the *Rooh (vital spirit)* and *Quwwat-e-Roohaniyah (vital faculties)*. The purity, temperature, and movement of air directly influence the balance of humours (*Akhlaṭ*) and the temperament (*Mizaj*). Ibn Sina elaborates that changes in air-whether in quality, direction, or temperature-can significantly disturb the body's internal equilibrium, thereby affecting both the physical and spiritual dimensions [13]. Prolonged exposure to impure or stagnant air can disturb the *Rooh*, causing fatigue, melancholia, and diseases of the cardiovascular system. These effects can be explained by the fact that contaminated air fails to adequately nourish the *Rooh*, which needs pure air for its sustenance, leading to Su-e-Mizaj and eventual dysfunction in vital organs.[13].

2. Makul wa Mashrub (Food and Drink):

Modern dietary habits, dominated by ultra-processed foods, refined sugars, artificial preservatives, and excessive consumption of cold or dry items, lead to the production of abnormal humours. This directly results in distortion of the Mizaj, manifesting as *Su-e-Mizaj Har Yabis* (hot-dry) or *Barid Ratb* (cold-moist). The Unani concept explains that improper food alters the balance of heat and moisture in the body, impairing digestion and humoural metabolism. This is supported by Monteiro et al. (2013), who showed how the global dietary shift toward ultra-processed foods is closely linked with metabolic disorders [21]. Thus, the deviation from natural, Mizaj-compatible diets results in diseases like diabetes, obesity, and dyslipidemia, through a mechanism of humoural derangement.

3. Ḥarkat wa Sukun Badani (Physical Activity and Rest):

A sedentary lifestyle has become the norm in contemporary society due to digital dependence and automation. From a Unani perspective, lack of regular physical activity allows *Rutoobat-e-Fazila* (excess moisture) to accumulate, especially in the joints and stomach, resulting in cold and moist Mizaj (*Barid Ratb*). This weakens the *Quwwat-e-Hazima* (digestive faculty) and impairs the transformation of food into balanced humours. Lee et al. (2012) confirm this, identifying sedentary behavior as a key contributor to metabolic syndrome [20]. Unani scholar Baghdadi emphasized the necessity of daily Riyazat (exercise) to aid digestion, support humoural balance, and remove waste through perspiration [15]. The physiological explanation aligns with modern science: exercise improves insulin sensitivity, cardiovascular function, and metabolism, all of which Unani considers as signs of humoural harmony.

4. Ḥarkat wa Sukun Nafsani (Mental Activity and Emotions):

The modern age is marked by chronic mental stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, which are major contributors to internal imbalances. In Unani theory, excessive emotional strain increases internal heat and dryness, especially affecting the *heart* and *brain*, leading to *Su-e-Mizaj Har Yabis*. Classical texts describe that emotions directly affect the flow and quality of *Rooh*, and disturbances therein result in psychic and somatic disorders [14]. This is mirrored in modern understanding by Leproult & Van Cauter (2010), who found that chronic stress disrupts neuroendocrine function, leading to systemic inflammation and disease [22]. Thus, from both perspectives, maintaining emotional balance is essential for overall health, as excess of any emotional state leads to qualitative changes in the humours and energy systems of the body.

5. Naum wa Yaqẓa (Sleep and Wakefulness):

Sleep is a critical factor in regulating Mizaj. From a Unani standpoint, *Naum* (sleep) facilitates the inward movement of Rooh and supports anabolic processes like tissue repair and humoural refinement. Improper sleep-either deprivation or excessive sleeping-disrupts this cycle. Sleep deprivation induces *Har Yabis* (hot-dry) conditions in the brain, manifesting as irritability, insomnia, and dryness of the temperament. In contrast, oversleeping promotes *Barid Ratb* Mizaj, leading to sluggishness, depression, and digestive weakness. Zakariya Razi highlighted that sleep imbalances could lead to melancholia, excessive sleepiness, and other psychological disorders [10]. Thus, the balance of rest and wakefulness is essential in preserving both mental clarity and physical vitality.

6. Ehtebas wa Istifragh (Retention and Evacuation):

Modern habits like ignoring the urge to defecate, urinate, or sweat interfere with natural evacuative processes. In Unani thought, proper evacuation is vital to prevent the accumulation of Madda Fasida (morbid matter). Ibn Sina emphasized the timely expulsion of waste as necessary for humoural equilibrium [13]. When waste materials are retained, they lead to *Su-e-Mizaj* by contaminating the humours and overloading the organs of elimination. Clinically, this may manifest as constipation, bloating, headaches, or systemic toxicity-conditions recognized today as consequences of poor gut health and toxin buildup Role of Asbab-e-Sitta Ghair Zaruriyya in Modern Disease Patterns

Although not essential for survival, the Asbab-e-Sitta Ghair Zaruriyya (non-essential causes) deeply influence the progression of modern lifestyle diseases:

Riyazat (Exercise):

Lack of daily exercise leads to weakened *Quwwat-e-Hazima* and impaired humoural transformation. As per Unani texts, exercise facilitates the production of healthy Akhlaṭ and aids in the elimination of waste through sweat. Its absence results in *Barid Ratb* conditions, leading to obesity and indigestion [16].

Dalak (Massage):

Traditional practices like *Dalak* are essential for maintaining proper circulation and balancing body heat. Regular massage helps in dispersing accumulated humours, improving the *Quwwat-e-Jaziba* (absorptive power) and *Quwwat-e-Dafi'a* (expulsive power). Neglecting it removes a vital regulatory mechanism of equilibrium [17].

Hammam (Steam Bath):

Hammam serves as a traditional method of *Istifrāgh* (detoxification). Skipping it or doing it improperly results in retention of morbid substances, potentially causing *Su-e-Mizaj Har Ratb* [18]. The moist heat of Hammam helps in liquefying and eliminating waste through skin, supporting humoural purification.

Af'al-e-Nafsaniyya (Emotions), Irtifaqat (Social Factors), and Adat (Habits):

Modern emotional distress, toxic social interactions, and poor habits-such as irregular sleep, night-time screen exposure, or erratic eating-affect both Mizaj and Quwwāt. They alter neurohormonal balance and increase inflammatory markers. This is reinforced by Furman et al. (2019), who concluded that chronic low-grade inflammation, linked to stress and lifestyle, is a root cause of multiple modern illnesses [23].

CONCLUSION

Unani scholars from antiquity to Ibn Sina, Zakariya Razi, and Baghdadi consistently emphasized alignment with natural principles (*Asbab-e-Sitta Zaruriyya* and *Ghair Zaruriyya*) for preserving health. Modern scientific evidence increasingly validates these insights. Whether termed *Su-e-Mizaj*, systemic inflammation, or metabolic dysfunction, the origin lies in the mismanagement of fundamental lifestyle factors. Therefore, correcting lifestyle in accordance with one's *Mizaj*, while observing Unani guidelines for air, food, activity, emotions, rest, and evacuation, remains a time-tested and scientifically relevant approach for disease prevention and health promotion.

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