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Childhood Obesity as a Socio-economic problem

**Introduction:**

The issue that is predominantly being talked off by all talk show hosts and at the same time, the only issue which is still growing at an alarming rate is the obesity problem in the United States. There have been many researches that have been conducted on the obesity issue of children and how it harms their health and the socio-economic problem of the obesity issue has also been brought to light. I would like to research on the socio-economic aspects of the problem of childhood obesity with a more futuristic perspective.

**Aim:**

The aim of this research will be on understanding the futuristic socio-economic impact that childhood obesity can have on families in specific and countries at large. Now this is a very broad topic as such, and hence to narrow it down further I would like to work on a proper literature review, conducted as a summary in this work. Based on the critical insights form existing research work and also articles, it would be much easier to frame more specific research questions.

**Summary and Arguments:**

*Medical Arguments:*

Kopelman (2000) argue on the medical aspects of how this could affect the person in context. Obesity is observed by researchers to replace most of the infectious diseases in current world population. Undernutrition and infectious diseases were some of the most significant contributors in the past, but in current times obesity related issues such as diabetes mellitus, coronary heart disease, certain forms of cancer, and sleep-breathing disorders are seen to be increasing. In context of the research aim considered here, the increase of obesity related disorders will hence contribute to social economic impact on the individual.

Obesity is considered as an increase of body-mass index. However, obesity alone might not be a problem, in the case of children even the more modest amount of extra weight results in issues (Goodman, et al, 2000). There are detrimental effects associated with being overweight which might be missed as it is not considered as carefully as being in an obese state. Intraabdominal fat issues exist here too (Goodman, et al, 2000).

Reilly et al (2005)’s research highlights how issues of genetics could cause increased obesity susceptibility. The research is interesting as it indicates that it is not just the presence of high energy foods but also some of the genetically inherited context that puts children at risk. Now obesity and its socio-economic impact has to be considered from a more genetics applied angle too.

*Junk Foods and Inactivity:*

Research such as (Sturm, & Datar, 2005) works on childhood obesity also focus on how it occurs as a combination of genetic susceptibility and the presence of junk food or high energy foods. These high energy foods are more available in current times and until a more holistic implementation to stop these junk food accessibility is created it would be difficult to combat obesity (Sturm, & Datar, 2005).

Other researchers such as Wake et al (2003) present how childhood obesity is caused by lesser amount of exercise exposure. Children in current times are exposed to a higher stress life compared to the past and combined with the form of foods available to them there is a propensity to gain weight. Now the factor of exercise would have helped balance this issues to a certain extent but lesser exercise persists in current times leading to obesity becoming an even stronger problem.

*Socio-economic Issues:*

Wang & Lim (2012) present how it could be possible for obesity to have a strong socio-economic impact on those developing regions of the world. Now to understand this better consider how in the case of developing countries there are around 35 million children who could be obese and around 92 million are considered to be at risk of being overweight.

Now Wang & Lim (2012)’s argument is that it is the presence of energy dense diets that have led to the increase in obesity. In developing nations this leads to issues of economy later as the country is left battling the diseases and more introduced because of obesity. Obesity–SES association varies by gender, age, and country and in time could have a much stronger impact on the country even destabilizing economic infrastructures.

Researchers such as Gibson et al (2007) present different ways that the family could help in order to address this issue. For instance, the family could help the child in following a much healthier diet or could help the child to get the needed physical activity that seems to be missing as other research work suggests. In fact, the family could be a pivotal unit to help the child in battle the issues of childhood obesity. Personal economic and socio-economic impact to society would both be handled properly.

Wang (2001)’s research argues that socio-economic status of the child will also have an impact on obesity. Children, the form of socio-economic background they are born in and more will have an impact on the quality of food they are exposed to and hence this factor becomes important in understanding the futuristic socio-economic impact that childhood obesity can have on families in specific and countries at large.

Finally, Sobal, & Stunkard, (1989) article, ‘Socioeconomic status and obesity: a review of the literature’ and Wang, & Beydoun, (2007)’s article is helpful in identifying more characteristics of social and economic origins. For instance, Wang & Beydoun (2007)’s research presents how race, ethnic characteristics will have an influence on obesity. Once again, an interesting point noted here is that when discussing race, ethnicity and geographic, the economic elements are drawn into perspective. So socio-economic impact on obesity and obesity’s impact on socio-economics of individual and the country are undeniable.

**Conclusion**

Summary of ten different sources of literature and their annotations are included as part of the proposal. This is just a preliminary work towards research completion and the next step would be to complete a detailed literature review on the subject.

Annotated Bibliography

1. Wang, Y., & Lim, H. (2012). The global childhood obesity epidemic and the association between socio-economic status and childhood obesity.*International Review of Psychiatry*, *24*(3), 176-188.

The work is useful to understand how obesity is challenging growth in countries with lower economic growth at the moment. It will be used to highlight how similar economic deprivation can occur for people who are under or near poverty line in the United States.

2. Gibson, L. Y., Byrne, S. M., Davis, E. A., Blair, E., Jacoby, P., & Zubrick, S. R. (2007). The role of family and maternal factors in childhood obesity.*Medical Journal of Australia*, *186*(11), 591.

The work will be useful to highlight how critical factors such as the family would have an impact on health habits of the child and can hence be used to handle obesity issues.

3. Kopelman, P. G. (2000). Obesity as a medical problem. *Nature*, *404*(6778), 635-643.

The work is useful for explaining how an array of cardiovascular issues are introduced because of obesity in children.

4. Goodman, E., Hinden, B. R., & Khandelwal, S. (2000). Accuracy of teen and parental reports of obesity and body mass index. *Pediatrics*, *106*(1), 52-58.

Parental perceptions of obesity and child BMI will be used in the research to show how change is required in parental perceptions so as to control obesity related issues later.

5. Sturm, R., & Datar, A. (2005). Body mass index in elementary school children, metropolitan area food prices and food outlet density. *Public health*,*119*(12), 1059-1068.

This study will be helpful for presenting how the environment surrounding the child would influence the child to make wrong food decisions.

6. Reilly, J. J., Armstrong, J., Dorosty, A. R., Emmett, P. M., Ness, A., Rogers, I., ... & Sherriff, A. (2005). Early life risk factors for obesity in childhood: cohort study. *Bmj*, *330*(7504), 1357.

The genetic risk factors that make children susceptible to obesity must be viewed as a threat to the future socio-economic state of nations and the research presents evidence on what role genes play.

7. Wake, M., Hesketh, K., & Waters, E. (2003). Television, computer use and body mass index in Australian primary school children. *Journal of paediatrics and child health*, *39*(2), 130-134.

This work presents how inactivity is contributing to obesity and how taking up initiatives when the children are young will reduce socio-economic impact later on.

8. Wang, Y. (2001). Cross-national comparison of childhood obesity: the epidemic and the relationship between obesity and socioeconomic status.*International journal of epidemiology*, *30*(5), 1129-1136.

Socioeconomic status of the child could also contribute to the obesity epidemic and this research article would be helpful for the research.

9. Sobal, J., & Stunkard, A. J. (1989). Socioeconomic status and obesity: a review of the literature. *Psychological bulletin*, *105*(2), 260.

This literature review could be used to look up additional studies on socioeconomic impacts.

10. Wang, Y., & Beydoun, M. A. (2007). The obesity epidemic in the United States—gender, age, socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, and geographic characteristics: a systematic review and meta-regression analysis.*Epidemiologic reviews*, *29*(1), 6-28.

This research highlights how ethnicity, demographics, and also geographic characteristics have an impact on obesity and hence could be useful for research.