

Socioeconomic Impacts on Obesity in the U.S

Introduction

Obesity has during recent decades reached an all-time-high and it is affecting public health. The most prominent nation in obesity rates is the United States of America, which will therefore be the subject of this essay. Socioeconomics consists of three main categories; environment, level of education, and ethnicity. How have socioeconomics impacted obesity rates in the U.S?

Source Discussion

[To be added here. The instructions during this year included source discussion as an oral presentation in groups].

Discussion

Ethnicity is a factor when evaluating the cause of obesity rates. An article published by a national institute of health presents statistics from 1995 to 2008 regarding obesity rates among different ethnicity in the United States. According to these statistics, African Americans are showing the highest prevalence of obesity at 31.45%. With the entire nation's average being 21.31%. A probable cause presented by the article is the severe deficiency of available food stores in African American and Hispanic communities. The article claims that these communities only have about 30 to 50 percent of the number of supermarkets, compared to white neighborhoods. The absence of proper availability for vegetables and healthy diets has been associated with higher rates of obesity, according to the article.¹

Another socioeconomic factor is the environment in which people live. The NICHD (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) states that obesity is affected by environmental factors in a multitude of ways. The first one mentioned is inability to burn calories and increase metabolism by physical activity, because of the lack of affordable gyms, nice parks, and sidewalks. The second reason is that portions in the U.S can be oversized, especially in certain states and cities, which cause an increase in calorie intake and thus cause obesity. Another cause raised by the NICHD is that food advertising can cause people to eat more unhealthy foods.²

More recent studies by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) showed that education level played a major role in obesity rates from 2011-2014. For men, being a high school graduate or less is favorable to having some college education, increasing from about 35.5% to 40%. Although, the opposite is true for females, decreasing from 45.3% to 41.2%. Both sexes show significant improvement from being a college graduate, about 12.8 percentile units, according to this study. These statistics are more recent and therefore have a

¹ Luma Akil and H Anwar Ahmad (2011). *“Effects of Socioeconomic Factors on Obesity Rates in Four Southern States and Colorado”*, chapter 21 Ethnicity & disease p.58-62.
<<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3101796/>>
[Retrieved March 24, 2022].

² National Institutes of Health (2016). *“What Causes Obesity & Overweight?”*
<<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/obesity/conditioninfo/cause>> [Retrieved March 24, 2022].

higher national mean percentage, compared to previously mentioned statistics. The study also emphasizes that education cannot be universally associated with obesity, the reasoning being that some races show deviating results. For instance, statistics from black, non-Hispanics show that high school graduates or less had the lowest prevalence of obesity.³

Conclusion

To summarize, certain ethnic groups have a statistically higher probability of being obese in the U.S. Environments also impact obesity rates both by increasing calorie intake, but also by decreasing people's ability to burn calories. CDC presented some interesting statistics on how education affects obesity. Even though there were some differing results for specific groups, the rest of the results indicates that education does impact obesity rates. All the statistics provide solid proof of the socioeconomic impact. Therefore, the conclusion is that socioeconomic factors have an impact on the obesity rates in the United States of America.

Sources

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³ Ogden, Cynthia L and others (2017). “*Prevalence of Obesity among Adults, by Household Income and Education — United States, 2011–2014*”. 66 *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 1369-1373
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