

# Sample research paper on obesity and overweight as global diseases

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



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## **Introduction**

Overweight and obesity are terms that are used to describe abnormal or excessive fat accumulation to such a level that may negatively affect the health and well-being of an individual (Rossouw, Grant and Vilihjoen, 2012).

Over the recent decades obesity and overweight has developed to be a global issue with more and more individuals developing this condition.

According to Bahia, Silvia, Barufaldi, de Azevedo, Alves, Pepe and Vianna

(2012), in 2005, the World Health Organization indicated that an

approximately 1. 6 billion adults were overweight and 400 million adults were obese. Additionally, they provided an estimate that by 2015 this figures would increase to 2. 3 billion adults being overweight and 700 million adults being obese.

The main concern with overweight and obese is their association with chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease. Some of the cancers associated with obesity include pancreatic cancer, breast cancer and

cancer of the endometrium (Bahia, Silvia, Barufaldi, de Azevedo, Alves, Pepe and Vianna, 2012). Since it causes most of these diseases, being overweight and obese contributes to the increase in healthcare cost and increase, in mortality rates. Overweight and obesity are ranked in fifth place as leading risk for global deaths (Kearns, Dee, Fitzgerald, Doherty and Perry, 2014). Additionally, overweight and obesity contribute to disability. Kearns, Dee, Fitzgerald, Doherty and Perry (2014), indicate that obesity and overweight have contributed to an increase in the adjusted life years of approximately 2.3% of total global disability.

The prevalence rates of overweight and obesity continue to increase. According to Kearns, Dee, Fitzgerald, Doherty and Perry (2014), global estimates as of 2008 indicate that 1.5 billion adults from ages 20 and above were overweight. This number includes 200 million obese men and 300 million obese women. These figures are almost similar to the earlier figures reported and indicate an increasing trend. Studies in the United States indicate that most children are normally affected by obesity and overweight issues tend to develop or maintain this condition in adulthood. According to McCracken and Phillips (2012) for children aged over 2 years, a third of them are either overweight or obese. In a country such as Brazil, the prevalence of overweight and obesity have increased from 43% to 48.1% and 11% to 15% respectively between 2008 and 2012 (Bahia, Silvia, Barufaldi, de Azevedo, Alves, Pepe and Vianna, 2012).

Earlier research indicates that obesity and overweight were associated with the affluent families in the society. However, this trend has changed significantly with the cases in the developing countries increasing at a high

rate. According to Rossouw, Grant and Vilihjoen (2012), overweight and obesity also affects middle income and low-income populations. Data indicates that, in 2010, 43 million children under the age of 5 years were overweight and 35 million of these children were in the developing countries (Rossouw, Grant and Vilihjoen, 2012). This clearly shows that the issues of obesity and overweight has indeed gone global. Africa seems to be most affected. The main cause of the increase in prevalence, in Africa, has been linked to a decrease to access to diet rich foods and a decrease in participation or involvement, in physical activities. With this trend, it is estimated that, by 2020, obesity related disorders would be the cause of about 7 out 10 deaths (Rossouw, Grant and Vilihjoen, 2012).

In the developed countries, children are most affected by overweight and obesity. For instance, in the European countries approximately one-fifth of the school-going children are overweight, and 5% of these children are obese (Wang and Lim, 2012). In the United States, this percentages are slightly higher. Approximately 30 percent of the school-going children are overweight, and 15 percent are obese.

## **Causes of Overweight and Obesity**

The increase in growth of the fast food industry, in the developed countries has contributed significantly to the increase in cases of overweight and obesity. In a country such as the United States, it is common to find fast food restaurants at the end of almost every street. According to Das (2011), fast food consumption in the United Sates has increased tremendously within the last three decades. The increase in fast food visits directly results to increase

or change in body weight. The changes in the world food economy have resulted to an increase in the provision of processed high fat foods (Al-Shamsi, 2008). Additionally, sedentary lifestyle changes have also contributed to the development of overweight and obesity scenarios. The increase in different levels of entertainment has made individuals decrease their participation in physical activities. In the case of children, video games and increased access to the internet has made them become glued to their computer screens. Cases have been reported of children being addicted to the internet to such an extent that they neglect their health. Most of the people who use their computers or are glued to their television sets will tend to prefer fast food as it reduces their interruptions to what they are focusing on. They view cooking as a time waster.

According to Basu, McKee, Galea and Stuckler (2013), soft drinks also contribute to the increase in overweight and obesity. Most of the soft drinks contain large amounts of refined sugar, which increases the glycemic load while lacking sufficient quenching properties. This then contributes to weight gain. Penn and Kerr (2014) note that the media plays a significant role in contributing to an increase in overweight and obesity. Most of the advertisement in media provide a picture of fast foods and drinks being very delicious and ignore the issue of providing quality nutritional information or side effects that may be associated with excessive consumption of fast foods. Conventional nutritious foods are not given sufficient airplay on media.

Additionally children and adults in the lower socio-economic classes tend to have a higher chance of being overweight. In a country like Germany,

women with low levels of education, low income and low occupational status are affected more by obesity than women in higher social classes and higher levels of income (Kuntz, 2010). This may be attributed to the lack of information or knowledge on the type of diet or nutrition that may be healthy for them and their children. Racial factors in the developed countries may also be linked as a cause for obesity. African American women tend to have a higher risk of being obese than Caucasian women (Buchman, 2006). Changes in transportation modes such as access to high speed trains to and from work, availability of cabs have also reduced the need for people to walk to work.

## **Consequences of Overweight and Obesity**

According to Bagchi and Preuss (2012), obesity or being overweight can cause negative health, economic, social and psychological consequences. As indicated earlier, being overweight or obese can contribute to the development of other health illnesses, which in certain cases may be chronic. Health conditions associated with overweight and obesity include respiratory conditions such as asthma, musculoskeletal disorders such as osteoarthritis, infertility, cardiovascular diseases, cancers and gall bladder disease (Bagchi and Preuss, 2012). Most of the overweight and obese individuals usually have a higher risk of developing cardiovascular diseases. Most of these conditions cause premature death and disability. According to Bagchi and Preuss (2012), individual between the ages of 25 and 35 are more likely to experience premature death because of overweight and obesity conditions. Prevalence of hypertension, diabetes and increased

levels of cholesterol is six times higher in obese women than in a lean woman (Bagchi and Preuss, 2012).

Psychologically, being overweight can affect an individual's level of self-esteem, and this may result to depression and anxiety problems. According to Harriger and Thompson (2012), factors such as teasing from peers tend to affect the self-esteem levels of children with overweight or obesity issues. Additionally, criticism that makes people believe that their weight is beyond their control also tends to decrease the levels of personal self-esteem in overweight individuals.

Body image dissatisfaction is common among overweight and obese individuals. This then may lead to people developing other problems such as eating disorders. These eating disorders may include dieting, fasting, laxatives, binge eating and diuretics (Harriger and Thompson, 2012). Most overweight individuals receive incorrect information about the proper dieting procedures. It is common for individuals that are dissatisfied with their bodies to resort to stress eating or binge eating. This tends to increase their chances of developing chronic illnesses associated with being overweight.

## **Prevention of Overweight and Diabetes**

Physical exercises are an important activity that may greatly help reduce cases of overweight and obesity. Overweight adults need to include a number of physical activities such as jogging or walking in the daily schedule. This also applies to overweight school-going children. Frequent physical exercises will help ensure that the excessive consumption of high-energy foods is converted or used in the bodies of the overweight

individuals. Schools can also insist on the participation of outdoor games by children.

Since most of the children with obesity tend to engage in playing videos games and watching a lot of television, parents need to limit the time spent watching television and accessing computers and video games by their children. For young adults who engage in excessive online gaming and watch a lot of entertainment, an appropriate measure would encourage them to be more involved in outdoor activities and interact socially with other people. Parents need to set out specific times that children can only have access to the television set.

When it comes to issue of dieting, correct information needs to be provided to overweight and obese people. Poor or wrong information concerning dieting may contribute to the development of eating disorders that were outlined earlier. Excessive consumption of fast foods needs to be avoided and more emphasis put in place to consume healthier foods. Family meals need to be balanced and overweight individuals need to consume less proportions of energy giving foods with high proportions of fat.

Additionally, intervention programs can be developed that enable overweight individuals to become comfortable with their weight (Phillips, 2012).

Interventions programs need to be applied or follow a holistic approach, which addresses dieting, physical activities, family and peer support and also take into account the gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status of the affected individuals (Phillips, 2012).

Positive lifestyle changes need to be advocated to individual with overweight problems. Parents can engage in lifestyle activities that promote healthier



living from which the children can emulate. In families where both the parents and children are overweight, the parents need to take an initiative in engaging in physical activities and encourage children to take part in their activities as a show of family unity and support.

## **Conclusion**

Overweight and obesity continue to be a global burden for the society because of the changes in physical nature of many jobs. Most job going individuals engage in the normal eight to five jobs that do not allow or involve many physical movements. This has increased the morbidity and mortality rates associated with overweight and obesity. The issues of obesity and overweight needs not to be the focus of effort by an individual but also involve government agencies to incorporate intervention programs in the public health services system. Risk factors need to be taken into account in the development of intervention or prevention programs. Such efforts need to be employed drastically to reduce complications and development of chronic illness among adults and children with overweight and obesity issues. Aiming to address the overweight and obesity issues will indeed help countries improve their economic output since individual will have better and healthier lives to focus on their work.

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