

# Demystifying the causes of obesity and overweight research paper sample

[Business](#), [Industries](#)



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## **The Problem of Obesity and its Etiology**

Undoubtedly, much of the population in the United States is either obese or overweight. This has subsequently become a burning issue among many Americans, policymakers and ordinary citizens alike. According to Barnet and Bedau (2010), it is important to understand the etiology of obesity so as to determine the most appropriate remedial interventions. As such, several possible explanations arise, key among them being the fact that people are responsible for their own weight-related problems. Barnet and Bedau essentially highlight the idea that morbid obesity and the problems of an overweight population can be stemmed by simply urging people to play a more direct role in their weight regulation.

For purposes of this paper, other alternative explanations will also be explored together with the ones presented by Barnet and Bedau (2010).

There are several other alternative explanations that must be explored for this issue to be fully understood. For instance, researchers (Finkelstein, Ruhm, & Kosa, 2005) have pointed to a link between the advent and prolific growth of the fast food industry and the growing cases of obesity in the United States. Similarly, there are possible links between obesity and genetic predisposition among other causative factors. The following is a concise presentation of the possible causes of obesity and their implication for the most natural and appropriate remedies.

## **Fast Food**

Fast food, which basically refers to a wide array of inexpensive types of food prepared and served without delay, have become the prime food choice for many people the world. This includes foods such as burgers (ham, cheese, and many other types), French fries, and sausages. Many people probably prefer these foods because they are easily accessible and do not require much time and effort in terms of preparation and service. In fact, some people choose to just drive by fast food eateries and outlets to get their preferred food without even leaving their vehicles. These fast foods are very high in calories (Finkelstein, Ruhm, & Kosa, 2005), some of them even being completely covered with greasy cooking oil and dressings. In light of this fact, excessive indulgence in such kinds of foods would then require that these people be very physically active so as to burn off those extra calories, which is seldom the case.

## **Genetics**

Some researchers (Wyatt, Winters, & Dubbert, 2006) have also pointed to a possible link between obesity and genetics. This has then come to be termed as a “genetic predisposition to obesity,” which basically means that the problems of obesity and overweight can be traced to some key elements with the gene pool. As such, people might be able to attribute obesity to heredity, which indicates a need for further research. If genetic predisposition plays a significant role in cases of obesity and adiposis, then just focusing on the fast food industry or personal choices would not be enough to address it fully.

## **Food Manufacturers**

Much of the brunt for the rising cases of obesity has been borne by the fast food industry as highlighted above. Nevertheless, this is just a single element within the vast expanse of the general food industry. A great part of this industry is comprised of food manufacturers that claim to produce foods rich in nutrients with little or no additional information; this is usually done to the dire misinformation of the general populace. In essence, food manufacturers undertake pompous product launches and promotional events whenever they create a new product, either within or outside their extant product lines. This means that most of their efforts go to product promotion (Powell, Glen, & Chaloupka, 2007) and not to informing the public on just how these foods are manufactured or even giving out the details of their contents. They focus primarily on how well they can sell their products to the consumers. A case in point is that of breakfast cereals, cakes and other

branded snacks. Cakes and most snacks are generally very high in starch, which is in itself a complex carbohydrate; the former also have considerable amounts of butter and sugar. This means that they are very rich in calories and thus require consumers to be physically active so as to maintain a healthy body-mass index (BMI).

## **Changes in Lifestyle**

Over the past years, people's lifestyles have change drastically with changes in socio-economic drivers and parameters. For example, people have now shifted from the manual blue-color labor activities of the past to the less physically-intensive white-color office jobs (Malterud & Tonstad, 2009). This is indeed a reflection of the changes in the socio-economic framework around the globe, coupled with advances in the fields of science and technology. The latter have in fact contributed much more directly to this change in lifestyles given that technological advances have made people more sedentary and inactive than in the past. For instance, there is no longer any exclusive need for hand-deliveries and direct mail as people can now communicate in real time with each other from the conform of their chairs. This is a stark contrast to earlier times when people had to exert themselves physically in order to stay in touch.

## **Economics**

Another contributing factor to the rising cases of obesity is tied to pure economics, albeit in a subtle manner. The laws of economics dictate that consumption of goods and services will increase when prices fall and/or purchasing power increases. This means that the more affluent a society

becomes, the more likely it is going to consume more goods and services. Recent economic trends indicate that the prices of high-calorie prepackaged foods have gone down significantly owing to the economies of scale resulting from large-scale mass production. According to Finkelstein, Ruhm and Kosa (2005), " Obesity is not only a health but also an economic phenomenon." For instance, developed economies have become more service-oriented at little initial cost and input, which translates into massive returns on investment (ROI). This then results in increased gross income among the population which in turn translates to heightened purchasing power. This then means that more people can now buy more high-calorie food stuffs at a cheaper price.

## **Personal Choices**

The final aspect of rising cases of obesity is personal choices and preferences. These extend over a wide range of subjects, from food to lifestyle choices. According to Barnet and Bedau (2010), this is by far the most significant contributing factor to the problem of obesity and rising cases of overweight among people. The element of choice is much more evident across the populace as far as physical activities and exercises are concerned. Nowadays people, especially the youth, are choosing to play video and computer games with their friends as opposed to engaging in interactive physical activities such as football, basketball, baseball or even foot races. Similarly, people are voluntarily choosing more sedentary lifestyles over the more physically exertive alternatives. More people now prefer to just stay at home watching movies, surfing the internet through

their computers and laptops, or engaging their friends in online social media through their phones and palmtops for the better parts of their free time.

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