180 - OVERWEIGHT OCCURENCE AND CHILD OBESITY AND ITS RELATION TO SOCIAL-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The terms: overweight and obesity have numerous definitions. Guedes and Guedes (2003) understand overweight as "an excessive increase in total body weight, which can occur as a consequence of a change in just one of its elements (fat, muscle, bone and water) or in its entirety". Obesity is the excessive and exclusive storage of body fat (SAITO, 1987) as a whole and carries risks to the health of individuals, being considered an illness of the group of Chronic Non-Transmittable Diseases (PINHEIRO et al. 2004).

Obesity and malnourishment are present in both developed and developing countries (ARAÚJO and PETROSKI, 2002), affecting indistinguishably children, adolescents, adults and elderly of either sex and social classes. According to Oliveira and Fisberg (2003), child obesity has increased in the past decades at an alarming rate worldwide, being characterized as a world epidemic. European researchers are concerned with the rapid increase of obesity in young age groups (YORK, 2004). Japan, country with adept culture to healthy feeding, begins to worry about obesity. It is turning in to a public health problem, with prevailing values of 24.5% and 17.8% overweight and 2.3% and 3.4% obesity in the country (male and female sex, respectively) (YOSHIIKE et al.2002).

Brazil, similar to other developing countries, displays extremely heterogenic epidemiologic characteristics; it can be said that it has most of the nutritional public health problems, amid: moderate proteic-caloric malnourishment, iron deficiency, iodine & vitamin A and obesity (CASTRO and TIRAPEGUI, 2002). For this reason, numerous researches have been developed with the intent of verifying the nutritional conditions of children and adolescents in school and identifying abnormal alterations (ARAÚJO and PETROSKI, 2002).

In Brazil, specifically in the Southern region, a higher index of obesity and overweight was registered among students from the Southeastern, Northeastern, North and Mid-West regions, where there are more cases of malnourishment in comparison to the South (ARAÚJO and PETROSKI, 2002).

In the search of answers for the overweight and obesity scenery, it should be taken into account that historically, a fat child meant a healthy child, probably able to survive to the harshness of malnourishment and infections (FISBERG, 2003). On the other hand, the increase in body fat revealed the inverse process, from supposed good health to illness, such as the chronic-degenerative, (non-insulin dependent diabetes), some types of cancer, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, behavioral problems among others (CASTRO and TIRAPEGUI, 2002). It should be highlighted that the damages can be catastrophic and difficult to be reverted, as seen from the high failure rates in treatments for obesity (with exception to bariatric surgery), and for the almost constant tendency to gain weight after weight loss (BOUCHARD, 2003).

Relevant information: obesity seats at number ten (10) among death risks; hypertension, high cholesterol and lack of exercise (3rd, 7th and 14th respectively) are frequently associated to obesity. The first ten represent 40% of death risks (DEITEL, 2003). Underlining the issue that one of the causes of obesity (excessive eating), differently from the other risk factors (tobacco and alcohol, 4th and 5th) enter homes deliberately in its majority induced by parents.

With the aim of avoiding that overweight lingers and/ or turns into obesity, early intervention is necessary. The school period is stressed in this process, in which early prevention is advised and where healthy life habits have greater chances of being incorporated in future adult life.

From the presented facts, in which obesity is an evil that haunts indistinguishably all age-ranges independently from social class, and where the school could be a center for excellence in the promotion and protection of health, this study, of bibliographic characteristic, has worked over the following question: What is the relation between overweight & child obesity rates and social-economic levels?

2. OBJECTIVE

To illustrate developed studies on the existing relation between overweight indicators & child obesity and social-economic levels, with the intent of verifying whether there is a relation prevalence among these variables.

3. CAUSES OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

Extending to other sub-categories, environmental and genetic factors are the main last factors which can cause overweight and obesity. There is no way to affirm that a determinate factor prevails. What is seen in literature is a correlation between genetic and external origins.

The causes of increased obesity in the world are not yet sufficiently clarified. For Pinheiro et al (2004), there are three study hypotheses: 1. more genetically susceptible populations, which can be emancipated when in conjunction with certain environmental factors (the increase in obesity among lower income populations could be related to a supposed "economic genotype", in which the obesity related genes would be a pledge for survival in case of lack of food); 2. rapid and intense decrease in ones energy expenditure (most studied hypotheses); 3; early energy-proteic malnourishment (occasional protein and energy restriction) "a change in regulation of the central nervous system with the intent of facilitating body-fat storage" (PINHEIRO et al. 2004).

Natural selection is a hypothetic genetic example of a determining factor for obesity, as individuals who could store more calories at times of abundance would be favored at times of shortness. In this evolutionary context, the normal distribution in humans metabolism variation would have given rise to individuals pre-disposed to becoming obese, although this situation could have never happened for the simple fact that there has never been a period of abundance.

Oliveira et al. (2003), concluded that environmental and biologic factors affect obesity and overweight. Moreno-Aliaga et al. (2005), described obesity as a complex disease of multiple-factor origins, which in many cases appear as a polygenic condition that can be affected by a number of environmental factors, from nutrient intake to the practice of exercise, also influenced by compensatory genetic mechanisms. Serassuelo Junior at al. (2005), affirm that the obesity determining factors are genetic and environmental, with a very narrow breaking line that cannot be easily seen in practice. Saito (1987) described that in every animal species there are individuals who can build up fat easier, and the human species is no exception, existing individuals who are better at storing and worse at dissipating energy than others, due to differences in metabolism. On the other hand, environmental factors act in a decisive manner in relation to an individuals' nutrition, independently from genetic pre-disposition.

There is a greater number of factors described about external origins: family sizes, order of birth, social class, marital status, social aid level, parent assistance, among others which can extremely affect a child's eating and exercise habits

(BOUCHARD, 2003), little exercise and too much time spent in front of the television, computers and video-games (ALMEIDA, et al. 2002), diets, which have consequently raised the consumption of carbohydrates due to the increased campaigns alerting of the hazards of fat ingestion (EBBELING et al, 2002), technological efficiency which by the reduction in the price of vegetable fats, have made them more accessible to lower income populations; such as higher income has increased the variety of foods consumed, therefore, increasing the daily proportion of energy supplied by fats (CASTRO and TIRAPEGUI, 2002). Apart from environmental factors, there is political influence, local climate, beliefs and taboos that generate eating habits, family dynamics, advertisement, school and/ or working hours, influence of friends, fashion, seasons of the year (higher incidence in Spring and Winter), geography (more frequent in urban areas), and from the social-economic level of the population (SAITO, 1987).

By relating overweight and obesity to social-economic factors, some authors describe their interpretations. Fisberg (2003) states that inn the sixties, obesity is characterized as a dysfunction associated to the wealthiest social-economic classes. Although it has significantly been gaining grounds among the less favored class; a phenomenon denominated nutritional transition. Phenomenon which has been raising questions among researchers. Ana Lidia Sawana from the São Paulo Federal University (Universidade Federal de São Paulo), stresses that malnourished individuals, who have survived and recovered, with access to food, may incorporate energy more readily in the form of fat deposit, as a response to a natural protection of the organism (FISBERG, 2003).

Without the relation between the socioeconomic level and obesity, the results pointed by REILLY et al (2005) cam from the identification, in United Kingdom, from the precocious risk factors (until three years old) for infantile obesity. For that, 8.234 children were evaluated, between them the socioeconomic factor from the mother, which was not related to obesity.

Other authors gather obesity in both social levels. Castro and Tirapegui (2002) describe that the urbanization process has a much bigger influence that the own rise if the *per capita Internal Brute Product*. In Brazil, the increase on the income has been associated with the higher level of obesity, however, in contrast, for example, with China. In many Brazilian regions there are situations in which the poorer population segments suffer more with problems related with the excessive consumption of food then the richer segments.

Variations on the socioeconomic level over the prevalence of overweight in children are observed primarily in adolescents, but with ethical differences. The prevalence of obesity lowers with the improvement of the economic level in white adolescents, but raises on black and Mexican-American adolescents (YORK, 2004).

A diversification in the relation between prevalence and the socioeconomic level was found by SILVA et al (2005) whose objective was to compare the prevalence of overweight and obesity in a group of 1616 pre-school students, school students and adolescents of different socioeconomic conditions in the city of Recife. It was found 14,5% of overweight and 8,3% of obesity in general analysis. The prevalence of overweight and obesity was higher in pre-school students (22,2% and 13,8%), observing a progressive reduction of the frequency in school age line (12,9% and 8,2%) and adolescents (10,8% and 4,9%). A similar prevalence of overweight was observed between the pre-school students independent on the socioeconomic conditions, however between school students and adolescents, there was a higher percent in the better acquisitive power classes. As to obesity, the prevalence was higher in pre-school students and school students of better acquisitive power, than those of low income.

In favor of the relation between obesity and the low CSE, 5 references were found.

The population with higher cultural level and acquisitive power will be able to demonstrate higher consciousness over the necessity of body weight control and consume ailments of better quality. Individuals with less acquisitive power and with a inferior cultural level may demonstrate relative risk two times higher of showing body fat and weight excess than those with higher acquisitive power and better cultural level, according to Romieu et al. (1988, apud GUEDES and GUEDES, 2003).

Ferreira & Magalhães (2005) in his article "Obesity and Poverty: the apparent paradox A study with women from Favela da Rocinha" describe that obesity appears more like a face of the country's social inequality. The approaches that link obesity to situations of abundance and richness lose their explaining reach in the case of Brazilian poor female population. Or be it, the obesity is linked to poverty and its multiple consequences in social life.

Studying adult population (1.105 people above 18 years), Velásquez-Meléndez, et al (2004), aimed to determine the prevalence of overweight and obesity and investigate the risk factor for Belo Horizonte population. The interaction between female gender and high schooling constituted a protector factor to overweight but not the obesity. Women with low schooling showed a high risk of developing obesity in comparison to men. Also realized with adult population, the work of Gigante, et al (2006), objected to describe the prevalence of obesity in 1968 adults form 20 to 69 years and verify its association with socioeconomic and demographic variables in the city of Pelotas. In relation to the socioeconomic variables, it was observed the association between obesity and low schooling, and obesity and low income.

In all the regions of the country, significant shares of the adult population showed overweight and obesity. In relative terms, the most critical situation is verified in the South Region, however in absolute data, the Southeast Region is the worrier. The increase of the prevalence of obesity in Brazil becomes even more relevant, when it is verified that the increase, in spite of been distributed in all country's regions and in the different population's socioeconomic extracts, it is proportionally higher between families of low income (PINHEIRO et al, 2004).

The research of Anjos and Croscob (2006) didn't found relation between the low socioeconomic level and obesity. It's worth to emphasize that the population studied belonged to the public school and as the authors described "belonged to a neighborhood with deficiency on urban structures. Their residences are found in accidental places (hills) what took to prolonged walks and difficulty to access the residence and to reach squares or spare time places."

Serassuelo Junior et al. (2005), objected to evaluate physical aptitude (body mass, stature, skin folds, circumference, and test to evaluate strength and flexibility) of 135 children of low socioeconomic level from the city of Cambé/PR. In spite of the higher body mass results, stature, ÓSF (Skin Folds) between girls, most part of the children investigated attended the established criterion for health, according to the BMI values and total amount of skin folds, or be it, there was no relation between the socioeconomic level and obesity.

Six studies were found bout the relation between obesity and a high CSE,

When searching for answers if the prevalence of overweight in pre-school students raised in low income population in United States, MEI, et al (1998) arrived to the conclusion that there was an increase of 18,6% in 1983 to 21,6% in 1995 between the children below 5 years (18 states from the District of Columbia), included in the *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System.*

The prevalence of overweight (34,3% and 8,7%) and obesity (15,1% and 4,4%) were high among children of high socioeconomic class, when compared with those proceeding from a low income community, suggesting a possible association with food access and habits. Were studied 515 children (6-10 years), 332 proceeding from private schools from Recife, PE and 183 from a low income community (BALABAN et al., 2001).

In the article named "Prevalence of Obesity in School Students from Salvador, Bahia", LEÃO et al (2003) divided the sample between public and private schools, with socioeconomic distinction between the studied groups. In the private schools, it was observed a higher prevalence of obesity (30%) in relation to public schools (8%). Obesity was significantly associated with: 1) parents' high schooling levels; 2) high familiar income; 3) presence of TV, computer, telephone and video game on the residences. The

association was not significant for: 1) sex; 2) ethnic group; 3) age line; 4) historic of change of city and/or school; 5) mother nursery past; 6) fruit and candy consume in high frequency (3x/week at least); 7) preference for ailments with high caloric values; 8) preference for plays that require high energetic spend and; 9) habit of watching TV, use computer and video-game. There was an inverse association for the children with school repentance past, high frequency of vegetables consumption (at least 3 times a week) and systematic realization of physical activity.

OLIVEIRA, et al (2003) when studying 699 children of 10 school from the public net and 18 from private net from Feira de Santana - BA, concluded that from the biological, physiological, socioeconomic and sociobehavior factors analyzed, that study in private school and be only child were the predictive factors in the determination of excessive of weight gain, data that confirm the influence of familiar microenvironment and macro-environment in overweight/obesity genesis.

The study of Ronque (2005) objected to verify the prevalence of overweight and obesity in school students from 7 to 10 years, from both sexes and of high socioeconomic level, in 511 school students from the city of Londrina. The results indicated prevalence taxes of overweight (~19%) and obesity (~14%) superior to Brazilian population mean for the line age studied. The authors concluded that the high socioeconomic level seems to negatively affect the prevalence of overweight and obesity, increasing the risks to a development of metabolic dysfunctions in precocious ages.

In the search to identify the variables associated to overweight in school students from 6 to 11 years from Cuiabá, Guimarães et al (2006) found overweight in school students with familiar income *per capita* <3 minimum salaries that had mothers from ages between 25 an 29 years and with high levels of schooling and with historic of only one marriage; also was it was high in the female students who possessed only one brother, played =10h per week, has parents with body mass index =30 and were born with weight >3500g.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the analysis of the essays presented it can be verified that there is a lot more to be studied in relation to the theme, in special with studies of the epidemiological characteristics, because there is no consensus shown about the general picture of the relation between socioeconomic levels and obesity.

The data gathered allows inferring that in the infantile phase there is a prevalence of overweight and obesity in high socioeconomic level. Although, with strong tendency to an inversion of the picture in more advanced ages. Here can be considered some hypothesis:

a) with the passing of time the high socioeconomic class acquires higher knowledge and consequently better possibility to understanding and attending of health necessities. This hypothesis is well-grounded with the studies that show high relation between schooling level and low level of overweight and obesity;

b) those less fortunate children have more difficulty in abundant feeding, what situates them in normality levels and, sometimes, in levels of sub nutrition, in relation to the children of higher socioeconomic level. This hypothesis is referenced by studies presented which verified that the infantile obesity reaches more the children from high socioeconomic class then the low ones.

Following this meaning, we understand that the advances conquered in relation to the quality of the ailments, incentive to motor inactivity because of technologic attractive and advance and lack of motor stimulus in the level of schooling, might, in a short amount of time, aggravate the picture shown.

Therefore, with basis on the different positions about the socioeconomic factor and its influence in front of the overweight and obesity, more studies that search to reveal this situation becomes necessary, so that it may occur an effective action of combat to the factors that predispose the individual to the evils that obesity may cause.

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OVERWEIGHT OCCURENCE AND CHILD OBESITY AND ITS RELATION TO SOCIAL-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Abstract

Obesity represents a public health problem at world level, with indiscriminate occurrence in the different age ranges and social-economic levels. For that reason, there is an urgent need that programs be developed with the intent of amending this preoccupying situation, hazardous to the individual and costly to the health systems; given that, the earliest they commence, the greater are the chances of success. Amid the factors which contribute to this situation in contemporaneous society, the co-relation between social-economic level and obesity has been under investigation. Hence, this study of bibliographic characteristic has seeked for data which could substantiate such affirmation related to the young population. For that matter, herewith are authors working on the subject amongst the lower and higher social-economic classes; and the results of the researches have linked overweight and child obesity to better social-economic conditions.

Key-words: overweight, child obesity, social-economic condition.

LA PRESENCE INDISTINCTE DE LE POIDS EXCESSIF ET L´OBESITE INFANTILE AVEC LA CONDITION SOCIO-ECONOMIQUE

RÉSUMÉ

L'obésité se constitue comme un problème de santé publique en niveau mondial, avec une présence indistincte à les diverses bandes étaires et les niveaux socio-économique. Dans ce sens, il y a la necessité pressant de que des programmes soient développés avec l'intention de deretourner ce tableau préoccupant, néfaste à la personne et onéreux pour les systèmes de santé, en étant que combien avant seront des initiés, plus grand les possibilités de succès. Parmi les facteurs qui contribuent à la constitution de cette situation dans la société contemporain s'est enquêté la relation entre le niveau socio-économique et l'obésité. Ainsi, cette étude de caractéristique bibliographique, il a cherché à soulever des données qui pouvaient baser telle affirmation, rapportée aux populations jeunes. Dans ce sens, se sont trouvés des auteurs en travaillants la thématique de telle façon concernant la classe économique abaisse combien l'augmentation, et les résultats des recherches se sont rapportés le poids excessif et l'obésité infantile à une meilleure condition socio-économique.

Mots-clés: poids excessif; obésité infantile; condition socio-économique (CSE).

LA OCURRENCIA DEL SOBREPESO Y LA OBESIDAD INFANTIL Y LA RELACIÓN CON LA CONDICIÓN SOCIOECONÓMICA

RESUMEN

La obesidad se constituye como un problema de salud pública en nivel mundial, con una ocurrencia indiscriminada en las diversas fajas de edades y niveles socioeconómicos. En ese sentido, hay la necesidad urgente de que programas sean desenvueltos con la intención de revertir ese cuadro preocupante, perjudicial al individuo y oneroso para los sistemas de salud, siendo que cuanto antes fueren iniciados, mayores las chances de suceso. De entre los factores que contribuyen para la constitución de esa situación en la sociedad contemporánea está siendo investigado la relación entre el nivel socioeconómico y la obesidad. Así, este estudio de característica bibliográfica, buscó levantar datos que pudieran basarse tal afirmativa, relacionadas a las poblaciones jóvenes. En ese sentido, se encontraron autores trabajando la temática tanto en relación con la clase económica baja como la alta, y los resultados de las encuestas relacionaron el sobrepeso y la obesidad infantil a una mejor condición socioeconómica. Palabras Clave: sobrepeso, obesidad infantil, condición socioeconómica (CSE).

OCORRÊNCIA DE SOBREPESO E OBESIDADE INFANTIL E SUA RELAÇÃO COM A CONDIÇÃO SOCIOECONÔMICA

RESUMO

A obesidade se constitui como um problema de saúde pública em nível mundial, com uma ocorrência indiscriminada nas diversas faixas etárias e níveis socioeconômicos. Nesse sentido, há a necessidade premente de que programas sejam desenvolvidos com o intuito de reverter esse quadro preocupante, prejudicial ao indivíduo e oneroso para os sistemas de saúde, sendo que quanto antes forem iniciados, maiores as chances de sucesso. Dentre os fatores que contribuem para a constituição dessa situação na sociedade contemporânea tem-se investigado a relação entre o nível socioeconômico e a obesidade. Assim, este estudo de característica bibliográfica, procurou levantar dados que pudessem embasar tal afirmativa, relacionadas às populações jovens. Nesse sentido, encontraram-se autores trabalhando a temática tanto em relação à classe econômica baixa quanto a alta, e os resultados das pesquisas relacionaram o sobrepeso e a obesidade infantil a uma melhor condição socioeconômica.