

GLOBAL OBESITY: WHY THE WORLD IS GETTING HEAVIER AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

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Abstract: Have you ever wondered why, despite all the diet tips and fitness influencers on social media, the world is still struggling with obesity? Since 1975, obesity rates have tripled, and today it's a global crisis affecting over a billion people. In this paper, I want to move away from the usual "it's your fault" narrative. Instead, I'll look at how the modern world—our cities, our economy, and our social habits—makes it incredibly hard to stay healthy. We'll discuss why junk food is cheaper than salad, why our cities are built for cars instead of people, and what governments should actually do to fix this system.

Keywords: Global Health, Economic Inequality, Urban Planning, Food Policy, Obesity Crisis.

1. Introduction

Today, we live in a world of incredible contradictions. On one hand, we have more medical knowledge than ever before, but on the other, we are facing an unprecedented rise in obesity. It's no longer just an issue in wealthy Western nations. Walking through any city, including here in Uzbekistan, you can see how our lifestyles have shifted. We've managed to conquer many old diseases, but we've replaced them with a "silent pandemic" of weight gain. People aren't suddenly becoming "lazier" or losing their willpower all at once. Something much bigger is happening. The environment around us has changed so fast that our bodies can't keep up. We are living in an "obesogenic" world, where everything from the price of bread to the lack of sidewalks pushes us toward weight gain. In this research, I want to explore the real-world reasons why staying fit has become a luxury rather than a normal part of life.

The core of the problem lies in the fact that our biological evolution hasn't caught up with our technological progress. For thousands of years, humans had to work hard for every calorie. Now, calories find us. They are in our pockets, on our screens, and at every corner of our streets. My research question is simple: What are the actual social, economic, and environmental factors driving this rise, and are governments doing enough? We need to understand that obesity is often a biological response to an environment that is practically designed to make us gain weight. By shifting the focus from individual blame to systemic analysis, we can begin to see the true complexity of the global obesity crisis and find more effective solutions that benefit everyone, not just those who can afford expensive organic food or personal trainers.

2. Methods

To understand this crisis, I didn't just look at one or two articles. I wanted to see the "big picture," so I gathered data from global sources like the World Health Organization (WHO) and analyzed health trends from 1975 all the way to 2024. This helped me see how the world

has changed over the last fifty years. I used a "Systemic Review" approach, looking at the whole system rather than just one piece. I focused on three specific areas that affect our daily lives: Food Pricing, Urban Planning, and Policy Analysis.

In terms of food pricing, I compared the cost of calories in processed foods versus fresh produce to see if money is the main barrier for most people. For urban planning, I examined city designs in various regions, specifically looking at how walkable cities compare to car-dependent ones. Finally, I reviewed laws like the "Sugar Tax" in more than 50 countries. I wanted to keep the research grounded in real-world facts that everyday people like us deal with every single day. By using these multiple angles, I could ensure that the conclusions drawn were not based on a single factor but on the intersection of economics, geography, and political science. This holistic methodology is crucial for a problem as widespread as obesity.

3. Results

The results of my research were quite eye-opening. What I found is that our "choices" are heavily influenced by our surroundings. In almost every region, I found that junk food is much cheaper than fresh fruit and vegetables. For a student or a family on a budget, buying processed food isn't a "bad choice"—it's an economic necessity. This is what we call the "Poverty-Obesity Paradox." When a burger costs less than a salad, the market is choosing your health for you. This trend was consistent across both developed and developing nations, suggesting a global shift in the food supply chain that prioritizes cheap, energy-dense calories over nutrient-rich meals.

Furthermore, we have effectively "engineered" movement out of our lives. Cities that are built for cars instead of people have much higher obesity rates. If you don't have a safe place to walk or bike to work, staying active becomes an expensive "extra" rather than a natural habit. My analysis showed a strong correlation between the lack of public green spaces and higher Body Mass Index (BMI) scores in urban populations. Additionally, social media marketing is a massive driver of unhealthy habits, especially for our generation. We are constantly targeted with ads for high-calorie snacks, and our entertainment has moved from being active outdoors to sitting and scrolling. The digital environment has created a new layer of the "obesogenic" world, where mental fatigue and physical inactivity go hand in hand with aggressive food advertising.

4. Discussion

So, what does all this mean? It means obesity is a systemic failure, not a moral one. We shouldn't be asking people to fight an uphill battle against a world that wants them to be unhealthy. This discussion proves that we need a "Structural Public Health" approach. First, we need to treat urban planning as a part of health policy. If we build more bike lanes and parks, people will move more without even thinking about it. Second, governments need to stop subsidizing things like sugar and start helping farmers who grow real, fresh food. The current economic structure rewards companies that produce processed food, while making it harder for local vegetable growers to compete.

Third, we need to talk about marketing. Just like we regulated tobacco, we need laws that protect people—especially kids—from constant junk food advertising. My research suggests that "hard" policies, like taxing sugary drinks, are much more effective than just giving people advice. Education is important, but it cannot overcome the reality of expensive healthy food and dangerous streets. If we want a healthier world, we have to make the healthy choice the easiest and cheapest one for everyone, not just for the wealthy. We must move beyond the "personal responsibility" argument and demand that our environments support our

health rather than sabotage it. This means looking at how every government department, from transport to finance, can contribute to reducing obesity.

5. Conclusion

To wrap things up, the global rise in obesity is a huge problem, but it's not an impossible one. We need to move away from blaming individuals and start reforming the system. By addressing the social, economic, and environmental foundations of our world, we can build a healthier future. It's time for real action, not just more diet tips. Health should be a right, not a luxury. The evidence is clear: our current path is leading to a massive health crisis that will overwhelm our medical systems if we don't act now.

As a student at the Uzbekistan State World Languages University, I hope this research highlights that even simple changes in how we view our environment can lead to massive improvements in our collective health. The time for giving advice is over; it's time for governments to change the rules of the game. We need to demand cities that allow us to move freely and a food market that provides us with nutrition we can afford. Only by changing the structure of our daily lives can we hope to reverse the trends of the last fifty years and ensure a healthier life for the generations to come.

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