

Candidate 3 evidence

Sociology Assignment

Hypothesis:

Obesity is increasing due to the rise of convenience foods and fast foods that have become available in the UK.

Introduction:

Obesity is used to describe a person who is very over weight with a high percentage of body fat (NHS choice2015). This essay will examine the sociological theories of Obesity and will review how it affects the relationships between social factors and health, it will also look at how cultural and social factors influence the individuals and the health care provisions which can be influenced by the media, market forces and consumerism. Historically ill health was caused by infectious diseases (NHS2015) however, due to advances in medicine, sanitation and living standards the patterns of disease changed (Fitzpatrick, 1999). This topic was chosen Because of its impact in modern day society and is relevant because of the number affected by obesity. A common sense explanation would say that people are obese because they chose to be lazy and don't eat right but this may not be the case and is just making an assumption. A sociological explanation would be unbiased and look at research on why people are obese.

Sociological/common sense explanations:

Sociological explanations requires extensive research which has been proven with repetitive controlled experimentation, using a scientific theory utilising a predefined protocol of observation. an example of this is obesity is increasing due to higher calorie consumption, less physical jobs and lack of exercise, an example of this is the dynamic changes within the home women working full time while raising families means that fast food, ready meals are more convenient than preparing fresh food with lower calorie content .whereas common sense views have no scientific bases usually based on individual perspective and family and cultural values .an example of this is individuals that are obese are lazy and do nothing but eat cakes, sweets and junk food .this is reinforced by terms such as "who ate all the pies "being used to body shame others which leads to lower self-esteem and self-worth of the person it is aimed at. By the 1970's Magazine and Television programmes had defined beauty so narrowly that it was unobtainable by most people (promoting extreme thinness as the only acceptable body type), it also portrayed obese people as lazy and greedy often making fun at their expense. Government has introduced various equality acts but nothing to protect the obese, a consequence of this discrimination is the rise of fad diets, medicines and fitness equipment as the obese strive to fit into the media's promoted body type (CSWD 2015).

The Black Report (1980)

The black report (1980) was published by the department of health and social security's and chaired by Sir Douglas Black the report showed in great detail the extent of which ill health and death were unequally distributed within the UK population,

Key findings were that inequalities had been widening rather than diminishing since the beginning of the National Health Service. Another finding is that psychosocial factors are related to health inequalities.

In 2013, around 16.0% of children were classed as obese, with a further 12.8% at risk of becoming overweight. Obesity levels will increase by up to 58% by 2030 (Public Health England 2015). If these figures are examined against the Black Report (published in the 1980's) in light of the evidence the 1980s Black Report we have a better understanding of these figures. Some of the recommendations from The Black Report were to provide a non-means-tested scheme for free milk for school children and that areas and districts should review the accessibility and facilities of all ante-natal and child health clinics in their areas and take steps to increase utilisation by mothers, particularly in the early months of pregnancy (Sochealth 2015).

In deprived communities physical activity might be limited by street crime, a lack of garden space or other safe place to play and perceived dangers are often reinforced through the media. Consequently, they affect parents' willingness to allow their children to walk to school, play outside or ride a bike. In schools, vending machines bring in much needed revenue, contracted caterers need to make a profit, and timetables are dictated by the need to meet government targets rather than to promote health. The link between childhood obesity and deprivation is easy to see, many obese individuals aren't lazy or ineffective - they merely lack the financial or material resources needed to behave in a different way. A further report by the Fabian Commission on food and poverty said: *"While health and dietary breakthroughs in schools during the late 2000s have improved the health of children as a whole, they have disproportionately benefited higher-income households and have failed to make an impact on households on the lowest incomes (Food and Poverty 2015)."*

The Guardian (2015) reported it seems striking that although the average person in the UK is getting heavier, for most items, the average basket in the UK is getting lighter. The quantity purchased of milk products, meats, fats, sugar and preserves as well as bread have all fallen since 1974,

Analyse and evaluation

Marxism believes that social economics are determined by the wealthy which gives them power over the majority of the population, and encourages them to do whatever it takes to keep that power (Wikipedia 2015). In our society today we find that manufacturers lobby government to ensure preferential treatment, for example fast food companies produce low nutritional convenient food in bulk which keep their costs low, maximise their profit and gives power over the consumer as well as directly contributing to the current obesity crisis.

There are some weaknesses in regards to the Black Report, the report commissioned in 1977 by Labour but then the Conservatives were elected and held the report until 1980 because they didn't agree with it.

A strength is that since the report there have been more health initiatives and that the report also had a huge impact in the UK and overseas.

Scottish health survey (2017)

The Scottish Government commissioned a health survey to analyse obesity levels within Scotland in 2017 which is vital information to combat the impact of obesity on the health services and to raise quality of life. Scotland's obesity levels is one of the highest within the western world.(Scotgov2018).the report found that 29%of over 16 years were in the obese category but 65% were overweight with the potential to become obese. An adult was classed as overweight if their body mass index (BMI) was 25 to less than 30, obese if their (BMI) was 30 to less than 40 but morbidly obese if over 40(NHS Scotland 2018).Several studies have tried to estimate the costs to the NHS with figures suggested to be between£363 and £600 million the impact of conditions associated to obesity such as heart conditions, diabetes are used to reach this conclusion while this reflects the impact on the NHS it does not take into account the socioeconomic implications such as lost labour and market costs it's been estimated to be more closer to £4.6 billion , with this information the Scottish government published Healthier future-Scotland's Diet and healthy weight delivery plan (scotsGov2018).this states that to make an impact on future generation's health should begin within the womb and continue throughout a child's life.

Analyse and evaluation

Analysing this by using functionalism theory which is defined by Durkheim (as follows "Society is a system of interrelated parts where no one part can function without the other. These parts make up the whole of society. If one part changes, it has an impact on society as a whole" (Thought Co 2018). The healthier future Scotland's Diet and healthy weight delivery plan would treat everyone as a whole and not take into account other factors which the social theory would state are also required these are to identify barriers, negative attitudes and exclusion by society (Wikipedia 2015). Functionalism believes that good health and medical care is really important for society to function effectively. Bad health makes it harder to perform our roles in society and if the majority of society are overweight or obese it becomes a problem as society will suffer due to health conditions related to obesity.

Weakness to this report is that it may lead higher levels of bias against individuals who are obese, Puhl and Brownell (2001) observed a cultural bias against obesity which penetrates our entire culture, This can lead to an individual being judged by their size and not on their ability and can foster low self-esteem and depression among the affected. A strength of this report is that it has lots of research to back it up. Another weakness of this report is that it used a survey which means that people could be bias and change their answers to put themselves in a better light.

Conclusion

Throughout all the research I have read my hypothesis on obesity being on the increase has been confirmed, By using epidemiology (which is the study of the patterns, causes and effects) and BMI data the Scottish Health Survey 2013 measured the increase in obesity within Scotland, the results showed that since 1995 there has been a 8.4% increase in the proportion of adults aged 16 to 64 categorised as obese (from 17.2% in 1995 to 25.6% in 2013), although the level has remained fairly constant since 2008 perhaps due to increased media coverage promoting healthier eating and

exercise. Over the same period, the proportion who were overweight or obese increased from 52.4% to 62.6%, again showing some stability in recent years.

This supports my hypothesis and is conclusive with my findings. In conclusion there are many influences to take into consideration, sociology can help support and explain these influences through models of health. Without changes in education, reducing the divide in poverty, making support more accessible and removing the stigma attached to obesity the problem will continue to grow, I believe the individual needs to take responsibility to help themselves and improve their own health and wellbeing.

The government is trying to find ways to educate and improve our eating habits, in recent years it has provided free school meals for primary children and fresh fruit and vitamins for young families on benefits. Along with raising the cost of high sugar items its policies have created an improvement in the statistics but for the working poor this support is not available, an easy step such as reducing the cost of fresh products, perhaps by offsetting this price drop by increasing the price of unhealthy foods would be a massive step forward in promoting healthy eating and reducing obesity.

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