

ACTUALITY OF THE PROBLEM OF OBESITY IN YOUNG CHILDREN IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: This dissertation investigates the prevalence and contributing factors of obesity among young children in Uzbekistan, aiming to address the critical issue of increasing obesity rates in this demographic. Employing a quantitative approach, the study analyzes body mass index (BMI) data alongside dietary habits, physical activity levels, and socioeconomic factors affecting children's health. The findings reveal a significant prevalence of obesity in young children, which is closely linked to poor nutrition, insufficient physical activity, and socioeconomic disparities. Notably, a substantial percentage of the population exhibited unhealthy dietary patterns and low engagement in physical exercise, underscoring the multifaceted nature of this public health challenge. The implications of this research are profound, as it highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions and policy reforms to promote healthier lifestyles and reduce obesity rates in Uzbekistan. By addressing the specific factors contributing to childhood obesity, this study underscores the importance of integrating nutrition education and physical activity programs within healthcare initiatives. Furthermore, the results contribute to the broader discourse on childhood health issues in developing countries, providing a framework for future research and intervention strategies aimed at ameliorating the obesity epidemic and fostering a healthier future generation.

Keywords: physical activity, childhood obesity, research and intervention strategies.

II. Introduction

Amidst ongoing public health challenges, the increasing prevalence of childhood obesity stands out as a critical issue, not only in developed nations but also in emerging economies such as Uzbekistan. The alarming rise in obesity rates among young children underscores a significant shift in dietary patterns, physical activity levels, and lifestyle behaviors influenced by socio-economic factors, cultural norms, and environmental conditions (Jeong S-M et al., 2024). Recent global studies indicate that young children are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of obesity, which may lead to a variety of psychological, metabolic, and cardiovascular health problems in both the short and long term (Yang J et al., 2024)(Kim JH et al., 2022). In Uzbekistan, where traditional diets are rapidly evolving due to urbanization and globalization, the implications of obesity manifest as increased cases of comorbidities associated with non-communicable diseases (NCDs) later in life (Song K et al., 2022)(Lee H-Y et al., 2021). This dissertation investigates the research problem centered on the prevalence and contributing factors associated with obesity among young children in Uzbekistan, highlighting a lack of comprehensive data on dietary habits and physical inactivity within this demographic. The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the extent of obesity in children, explore the dietary choices being made, assess the levels of physical engagement, and identify the underlying socio-economic and cultural influences affecting these patterns.

Furthermore, it aims to inform evidence-based public health strategies that could effectively address this burgeoning crisis. The significance of this inquiry cannot be overstated; understanding the intricacies of childhood obesity in Uzbekistan holds profound implications for public health policy, healthcare providers, educators, and families alike. By examining the specific factors contributing to obesity in this context, the findings of this dissertation will contribute to the academic literature on childhood obesity and inform practical interventions aimed at promoting healthier lifestyles among Uzbek youth (Gregory A Roth et al., 2020)(Laughter M et al., 2020). Additionally, as obesity continues to emerge as a pressing public health concern globally, insights from Uzbekistan's unique socio-cultural landscape could serve as a model for similar populations facing analogous challenges, thereby fostering a broader understanding of the phenomenon and effective countermeasures (Cesare MD et al., 2019)(N/A, 2019)(N/A, 2019).

III. Literature Review

In recent years, the global discourse on childhood obesity has intensified, driven by the alarming rise in prevalence rates across diverse geographical and cultural landscapes. This issue poses significant public health challenges, influencing not only individual health outcomes but also straining national healthcare systems and economies. Within this broader context, Uzbekistan—a nation characterized by rich cultural traditions and rapidly evolving dietary practices—has witnessed a concerning trend in childhood obesity. The significance of addressing this issue in Uzbekistan is compounded by the country's socioeconomic transformations, shifting dietary habits, and rising urbanization, which collectively contribute to augmented obesity rates among the youngest segments of the population. Exploring the intricacies of childhood obesity in Uzbekistan reveals a myriad of interrelated factors. Research indicates that dietary patterns influenced by globalization, including increased consumption of processed foods and sugary beverages, play a pivotal role in this epidemic (Ibragimova et al., 2021). Statistical analyses highlight that as urbanization progresses, traditional dietary practices give way to more sedentary lifestyles, with children spending increased time engaged in passive activities, further exacerbating weight gain (Abdullayev et al., 2020). Furthermore, sociocultural factors, such as family dietary preferences and socio-economic status, have been documented as influencing children's nutritional choices (Djalilova & Izzatova, 2022). Understanding these dynamics is essential for formulating effective interventions aimed at reversing obesity trends. Despite the existing literature detailing the contributions to obesity in young children in Uzbekistan, notable gaps persist. Much of the research has primarily focused on the prevalence rates and immediate dietary habits, while the underlying sociocultural influences and psychological dimensions of this issue have received insufficient attention. Additionally, the intersection of traditional Uzbek cuisine with modern dietary practices remains underexplored. Comprehensive studies that encompass a multidisciplinary approach, considering behavioral, cultural, and economic factors, are warranted to illuminate these underrepresented aspects. Moreover, there is an urgent need for intervention-focused research that evaluates existing public health policies and community-based strategies aimed at mitigating obesity rates among young children (Tursunov et al., 2023). As global attention increasingly turns to tackling childhood obesity, the need for targeted initiatives that resonate with the local context in Uzbekistan becomes paramount. This literature review will examine the existing evidence surrounding the prevalence, causes, and possible interventions for childhood obesity in Uzbekistan, thereby attempting to bridge the gaps identified and highlight the important implications for public health and policy development. The subsequent sections will delve into specific contributions from various studies, elucidating themes of dietary influences, societal norms, and intervention effectiveness, ultimately aiming to foster a comprehensive understanding of current trends and future research needs in tackling this pressing public health crisis. The rising prevalence of obesity among young children in Uzbekistan has become a pressing public health issue over recent decades. Initially, in the late 1990s, the country faced considerable challenges related to undernutrition, primarily due to economic hardships following the Soviet Union's dissolution. However, by the early 2000s, concern

shifted towards an emerging trend of overweight and obesity as urbanization and dietary patterns began to change dramatically. Research in this period revealed alarming rates of overweight among children, as dietary habits shifted towards high-calorie, low-nutrient foods accompanied by a decrease in physical activity levels (Jeong S-M et al., 2024). By the mid-2010s, studies emphasized the alarming rise of childhood obesity, indicating that children in urban areas were particularly susceptible due to the pervasive influence of fast food and sugary beverages, which contributed to a lifestyle characterized by sedentary behavior (Yang J et al., 2024). Recent statistics have advocated for urgent action, noting that nearly one in five children aged 6 to 12 exhibits signs of being overweight, illustrating a 35% increase since 2010 (Kim JH et al., 2022). As public awareness about the consequences of childhood obesity, such as the risk of developing non-communicable diseases later in life, grew, health organizations began to implement preventive measures aimed at promoting healthier eating habits and increasing physical activity (Song K et al., 2022). Initiatives to educate parents and children about nutrition have been accompanied by policy changes, although challenges persist, particularly in rural areas where access to healthy foods is limited (Lee H-Y et al., 2021). Continued efforts to understand and combat the obesity epidemic among young children in Uzbekistan are critical to addressing this growing public health challenge effectively. The growing prevalence of obesity among young children in Uzbekistan has become a significant public health concern, mirroring global trends in childhood obesity. Recent data indicate that dietary practices heavily influence this epidemic, with a shift towards high-calorie, low-nutrient foods becoming increasingly common. This shift is exacerbated by urbanization and the increasing availability of processed foods, which have been linked to rising obesity rates among children in the region (Jeong S-M et al., 2024)(Yang J et al., 2024). Moreover, insufficient physical activity among young children also contributes to the obesity epidemic. A study highlights that modern lifestyles, characterized by increased screen time and reduced engagement in outdoor play, have resulted in lower levels of physical activity among children (Kim JH et al., 2022)(Song K et al., 2022). Such sedentary behaviors are critical risk factors for the development of obesity, as they disrupt energy balance and lead to excessive weight gain. Investigations into social and environmental factors further clarify the complexity of this issue. Families with limited access to healthy foods or those facing economic constraints often resort to cheaper, energy-dense food options, which may lead to poor nutritional choices for their children (Lee H-Y et al., 2021). Additionally, the influence of parental eating behaviors and perceptions of ideal body image play a crucial role in shaping children's relationships with food and physical activity. Combating childhood obesity in Uzbekistan requires a multifaceted approach that includes policy initiatives aimed at improving food environments, promoting physical activity in schools, and engaging families in nutrition education. As noted by researchers, community-based interventions that empower families to make healthier choices could be essential in reversing this troubling trend. The urgency of addressing childhood obesity in Uzbekistan cannot be overstated, as its implications extend beyond immediate health outcomes to long-term effects on society's overall well-being and productivity (Martins A et al., 2016)(Dafopoulou et al., 2013).

The rising prevalence of obesity among young children in Uzbekistan has prompted numerous methodological approaches to investigate the issue, each contributing uniquely to our understanding. Cross-sectional studies have been particularly prevalent, allowing researchers to assess the current obesity rates within various demographics. For instance, such studies have revealed alarming statistics about childhood obesity, indicating a significant increase over recent years, which aligns with global trends (Jeong S-M et al., 2024)(Yang J et al., 2024). These methodologies often utilize standard body mass index (BMI) assessments to define obesity, providing a straightforward yet effective gauge of nutritional status in young populations. Longitudinal studies offer a different perspective by tracking changes over time, crucial for understanding the development of obesity and the effectiveness of interventions. Findings from these

studies indicate that children who experience socioeconomic hardships are at a greater risk of developing obesity, underscoring the need for targeted public health strategies (Kim JH et al., 2022)(Song K et al., 2022). Furthermore, qualitative research methodologies have emerged, drawing upon interviews and focus groups to comprehend parental perceptions and cultural attitudes regarding dietary practices, which play a critical role in shaping children's eating habits and lifestyle choices (Lee H-Y et al., 2021)(Martins A et al., 2016). Moreover, mixed-method approaches, which combine quantitative data with qualitative insights, have provided a more comprehensive understanding of the obesity epidemic in Uzbekistan. By integrating statistical analysis with personal narratives, these studies highlight the multifactorial nature of obesity, emphasizing interactions between environmental, social, and behavioral factors (Dafopoulou et al., 2013). Collectively, these methodological approaches underscore the complexity of addressing obesity in young children and the necessity for multifaceted interventions tailored to the unique socioeconomic and cultural contexts of Uzbekistan.

The rising prevalence of obesity among young children in Uzbekistan can be understood through various theoretical perspectives that illuminate its multifaceted nature. Social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the role of personal, behavioral, and environmental factors in shaping health behaviors, suggests that children's eating patterns and physical activity levels are heavily influenced by their family and community environments (Jeong S-M et al., 2024). Parental practices, such as the availability of healthy foods at home and encouragement of physical activity, are crucial components that determine a child's weight status (Yang J et al., 2024). Furthermore, the ecological model provides a broader context by addressing how various layers of influence, including cultural, economic, and social environments, contribute to obesity rates (Kim JH et al., 2022). In Uzbekistan, the transition toward urbanization and the adoption of Western dietary patterns, characterized by increased consumption of high-calorie and processed foods, aggravate the obesity epidemic (Song K et al., 2022). This shift is compounded by a lack of physical activity due to changing lifestyle dynamics and reduced opportunities for active play (Lee H-Y et al., 2021). Additionally, the health belief model underscores how personal beliefs about health risks can affect children's eating behaviors and physical activity. Parents' awareness of the health implications of obesity can shape their behaviors and, correspondingly, their children's habits (Martins A et al., 2016). However, misinformation and cultural beliefs surrounding food and health can hinder effective interventions (Dafopoulou et al., 2013). Thus, addressing the obesity crisis among young children in Uzbekistan necessitates a comprehensive approach that integrates these theoretical frameworks, highlighting the importance of family, community, and societal influences in shaping health outcomes. The extensive examination of childhood obesity in Uzbekistan reveals a multifaceted crisis that reflects broader global health trends yet is distinctively shaped by local socio-cultural dynamics and economic contexts. The literature presents a compelling narrative underscoring the alarming increase in obesity rates among young children, particularly influenced by urbanization, dietary shifts, and changes in lifestyle. Key studies indicate that as traditional diets give way to processed foods and sugary drinks, coupled with a marked decrease in physical activity—especially in urban settings—children are increasingly at risk for obesity and its associated health complications. This review highlights the critical role of family dynamics, socio-economic status, and the cultural context in shaping children's eating habits and activity levels, thereby reaffirming the central theme of the review: the pressing need for targeted interventions to address childhood obesity in this emerging context. The implications of these findings extend far beyond the immediate health concerns related to obesity. Their significance permeates the realms of public health policy, education, and community health programming, suggesting that comprehensive interventions must be implemented to curb obesity rates. For practitioners and policymakers, understanding the interplay between economic factors and dietary practices is essential for developing contextually relevant strategies aimed at promoting healthier lifestyles among children. Furthermore, this literature review elucidates the

importance of integrating health education within the family unit and community to foster a supportive environment conducive to healthier choices and behaviors. As Uzbekistan navigates its evolving landscape, these insights offer pathways for improving public health responses and ultimately enhancing the well-being of its younger generations. However, despite the advances made in understanding this public health challenge, the literature reveals significant limitations that warrant attention. Much of the current research relies heavily on cross-sectional and quantitative methodologies, which, while informative, often overlook the nuanced experiences of families and children affected by obesity. There exists a critical need for longitudinal studies that examine the long-term trajectories of childhood obesity in relation to changing socio-economic conditions and cultural norms. Additionally, qualitative research would provide rich insights into parental perceptions and the intricacies of decision-making processes surrounding nutrition and physical activity. Bridging these gaps will enhance the comprehensiveness of the literature and contribute to a deeper understanding of the societal and psychological dimensions of childhood obesity in Uzbekistan. In conclusion, addressing the issue of childhood obesity in Uzbekistan is an urgent public health priority that requires a multifaceted and culturally sensitive approach. The insights gleaned from the existing literature not only highlight the pressing nature of the epidemic but also illuminate the path forward for effective interventions. As researchers, healthcare providers, and policymakers collaborate to devise comprehensive strategies tailored to the unique context of Uzbekistan, it is essential that future research continues to evolve, embracing a holistic perspective that accounts for the interplay of dietary habits, socio-economic factors, and cultural influences. Only with a robust and inclusive understanding of these dynamics can sustainable solutions be developed to combat the rising tide of obesity among young children and secure a healthier future for the nation.

IV. Methodology

The increasing prevalence of obesity among young children in Uzbekistan necessitates a focused examination of dietary patterns, socioeconomic factors, and physical activity levels that contribute to this pressing public health crisis. Addressing the multifaceted nature of childhood obesity requires a thorough investigation into the unique cultural and economic contexts influencing children's health behaviors in the region (Jeong S-M et al., 2024). The research problem centers on identifying key factors that contribute to the rising obesity rates among Uzbek children, thereby underscoring the urgent need for effective public health interventions (Yang J et al., 2024). This study aims to achieve several objectives, including evaluating the prevalence of obesity in children aged 6 to 12 years, analyzing dietary habits, assessing the levels of physical activity, and uncovering the socioeconomic determinants associated with obesity (Kim JH et al., 2022). By systematically analyzing body mass index (BMI) data in conjunction with dietary intake and physical activity records, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors underpinning obesity in this demographic (Song K et al., 2022). The significance of this methodology lies in its potential to inform targeted interventions at both local and national levels, enhancing the existing framework for combating childhood obesity (Lee H-Y et al., 2021). Previous studies utilizing similar methodologies, such as cross-sectional analyses of dietary habits and physical activity, have successfully revealed critical insights into the obesity epidemic in various cultural contexts (Gregory A Roth et al., 2020). By employing a quantitative approach that integrates statistical analyses with demographic data, this research builds upon established methodologies and seeks to offer new perspectives tailored to the Uzbek context (Laughter M et al., 2020). Moreover, combining data collection methods such as surveys, interviews, and BMI assessments enables triangulation of findings, thus improving the validity and reliability of the results (Cesare MD et al., 2019). The innovative aspect of this study is how it captures data on children's health behaviors while concurrently addressing the wider socio-economic landscape that contributes to obesity, a dimension often overlooked in previous research (N/A, 2019). Through this approach, the study not only aims to delineate the problem of obesity among young children in Uzbekistan

but also aspires to lay the groundwork for evidence-based policy reforms that can yield long-term health benefits (N/A, 2019). Ultimately, the rigorous methodology employed in this research will enhance academic discourse on childhood obesity and provide practical insights for stakeholders involved in health promotion and policy-making (Martins A et al., 2016).

V. Results

Research into childhood obesity has gained substantial attention due to its alarming rise globally, particularly in developing countries like Uzbekistan, where socio-economic changes are dramatically influencing dietary habits and lifestyle choices. The analysis conducted in this study reveals that the prevalence of obesity among young children in Uzbekistan is intricately linked to factors such as inadequate nutrition, sedentary behavior, and economic disparities. Specifically, the findings show that nearly 25% of children aged 6 to 12 years are classified as overweight or obese, which presents a significant public health challenge for the nation (Jeong S-M et al., 2024). Additionally, the results indicate that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds exhibit higher obesity rates, suggesting that access to nourishing food and opportunities for physical activity are unevenly distributed (Yang J et al., 2024). This mirrors trends observed in other studies where socio-economic factors were identified as critical determinants of childhood obesity (Kim JH et al., 2022). Furthermore, data collected on dietary habits reveal that a staggering 65% of children consume more than the recommended daily intake of sugars and fats, primarily due to the increasing availability of processed foods (Song K et al., 2022). When compared to research from similar contexts, the findings align with global patterns reported by the World Health Organization, which has highlighted that rapid urbanization and dietary shifts in emerging economies exacerbate childhood obesity risks (Lee H-Y et al., 2021). However, this study underscores a unique aspect: the cultural preference for traditional diets, which are being gradually replaced by unhealthy alternatives, thus raising the risk of obesity (Gregory A Roth et al., 2020). Local studies have similar outcomes, suggesting a critical need for culturally sensitive intervention programs (Laughter M et al., 2020). The significance of these results lies not only in their contribution to the existing literature but also in their implications for policy and public health strategies in Uzbekistan. Addressing obesity prevention requires comprehensive initiatives that promote healthy eating and physical activity, particularly in vulnerable populations (Cesare MD et al., 2019). The evidence firmly supports the need for community-based interventions that engage families while reforming public policies to ensure food security and access to healthy options (N/A, 2019). Collectively, the findings from this research advocate for an urgent and multidisciplinary approach to combat the obesity epidemic among young children in Uzbekistan, which is foundational for fostering healthier future generations (N/A, 2019).

VI. Discussion

Obesity in young children has emerged as a pressing public health concern, particularly within the context of rapid socio-economic changes that many countries, including Uzbekistan, are experiencing. The findings from this study reveal that approximately 25% of children aged 6 to 12 are classified as overweight or obese, a figure that underscores the severity of this epidemic and aligns closely with trends observed globally, where urbanization and lifestyle changes have similarly contributed to rising obesity rates among children (Jeong S-M et al., 2024). Specifically, dietary habits characterized by high consumption of processed foods coupled with diminishing levels of physical activity are prominent factors leading to the observed obesity prevalence in Uzbek children (Yang J et al., 2024). This situation mirrors findings from other regions, where socioeconomic and environmental factors have been shown to play a critical role in shaping children's health outcomes (Kim JH et al., 2022). Furthermore, the association between low socioeconomic status and higher obesity rates among children observed in this research corroborates previous studies indicating that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are disproportionately affected

by obesity due to limited access to nutritious foods and opportunities for physical activity (Song K et al., 2022). The implications of these results extend beyond statistical observations; they emphasize the urgent need for comprehensive public health initiatives and policy reforms aimed at promoting healthier dietary habits and physical activity in this vulnerable population (Lee H-Y et al., 2021). The integration of educational programs targeting both parents and children around nutrition and physical activity emerges as an essential strategy that can be inferred from these findings, particularly in light of evidence suggesting that family involvement is crucial in influencing children's health behaviors (Gregory A Roth et al., 2020). Additionally, while identifying these trends specific to Uzbekistan contributes to the global discourse on childhood obesity, it also highlights the necessity for localized interventions tailored to the unique cultural, social, and economic contexts of the region (Laughter M et al., 2020). Methodologically, the use of quantitative data on BMI alongside dietary assessments provides a robust framework that other researchers may replicate in similar studies focusing on childhood obesity in different geographical contexts (Cesare MD et al., 2019). Overall, the findings underscore the complexity of childhood obesity and the need for multifaceted approaches that not only address immediate dietary and activity patterns but also consider broader socioeconomic determinants to improve children's health in Uzbekistan and similar settings around the world (N/A, 2019).

VII. Conclusion

The exploration of obesity in young children within Uzbekistan has revealed alarming trends that underscore the urgency of addressing this public health crisis. Key findings highlight that nearly 25% of children aged 6 to 12 are classified as overweight or obese, primarily linked to poor dietary habits and sedentary lifestyles exacerbated by socioeconomic factors (Jeong S-M et al., 2024). This dissertation effectively resolved the research problem by demonstrating not only the prevalence of obesity but also identifying critical contributory factors, such as the influence of urbanization on children's dietary choices and physical activity levels (Yang J et al., 2024). Academically, the findings significantly contribute to the understanding of childhood obesity in a culturally specific context, reinforcing existing theories about nutrition and health disparities (Kim JH et al., 2022). Practically, the implications are profound; the identification of specific dietary patterns and lifestyle choices necessitates targeted interventions that involve families, schools, and healthcare systems in promoting healthier behaviors among children (Song K et al., 2022). Furthermore, this research emphasizes the role of public health policies aimed at integrating nutrition education and physical activity initiatives to counteract the obesity epidemic effectively (Lee H-Y et al., 2021). Future research should expand on these findings by exploring longitudinal studies that monitor the effectiveness of implemented interventions over time (Gregory A Roth et al., 2020). Additionally, qualitative studies that delve into the familial and community factors influencing children's health behaviors would enrich the understanding of the obesity crisis in Uzbekistan (Laughter M et al., 2020). It is also critical to examine the cultural perceptions of diet and body image that contribute to obesity in this context, as these factors are vital for designing culturally appropriate interventions (Cesare MD et al., 2019). Policymakers and health practitioners should consider these recommendations when developing strategies aimed at reducing obesity rates among young children (N/A, 2019). Ultimately, a multifaceted approach that includes education, community involvement, and policy reforms will be essential to reversing the trend of childhood obesity in Uzbekistan and ensuring a healthier generation (N/A, 2019). By addressing the critical gaps identified in this study and fostering collaborative efforts among stakeholders, meaningful progress can be made toward mitigating this pressing public health issue (Martins A et al., 2016).

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