

Childhood obesity

Childhood obesity is simply defined as the state of a child being above the stage of overweight due to psychological and/or practical reasons. Psychological reasons are related to the mentality of the child like depression and sadness. Practical reasons are related to the life style like lack of sport activities and bad nutrition system, and this type of reasons is the most common for children to get obese. Children health is highly affected by obesity, and that is the reason behind the large numbers of children suffering from diabetes type2, heart diseases and osteoporosis. Therefore, the economists are considering huge wastes because of obesity, in general, since tremendous amounts of money are spent on curing obesity-related diseases and saving children's lives because they are the future generation and the world needs them. Since obesity is largely a result of extra fats and sugars that can be gained from fast food and sugary drinks, and considering the affects of obesity in economical and health fields, a serious action should be taken to decrease the numbers of obese children. Thus, the best way to decrease the number of obese children is taxing and regulating fast food and sugary drinks by the government.

In advance to the solution, numbers about the problem of childhood obesity can be useful to see the serious danger. Scientifically, in the body mass index scale (BMI), measured by comparing weight and height, a child is considered obese if his BMI exceeds the 95 units, (Barbour, 2010). Nowadays, the American society is in need to deal with childhood obesity since the number of obese children between 6 and 11 years old has tripled during the period of 1976 to 2006 and reached the percentage of 17 out of total obese people, (Barbour, 2010). As previously stated, these huge numbers of obese children are highly qualified to be under the danger of obesity diseases in an early stage of their life. Therefore, they are in need to health care and treatment for these diseases, and that costs lots of money. As these children get older and older to

reach the adulthood, their total medical care increases to be 36 percent more than a regular adult, Finkelstein et al., (2003). Therefore, as obese children get older, their health expenses increase because of their developed stage of obesity and its related diseases.

Taxing fast food and regulating it will largely contribute on decreasing the number of obese children because of many reasons. The first reason is that the price of fast food will increase because of these taxes, and hence results in decreasing the consumption of it. As a demonstration, if someone used to buy a BigMac for \$3, and then he walk down to the burger store a week after and find the BigMac price increased to \$4.50, he is probably won't going to buy it. Therefore, if we count a situation like this for a whole society, the number of cheeseburger consumers will decrease, and so do for the other kinds of fast food and sugary drinks. In addition, according to (Nestle, 2012), regulating fast food and taxing it help changing the default choice of food from fast food, which used to be cheap, to healthy food. Moreover, the gains of taxing can be used by the authorities to construct new facilities like hospitals, schools and streets, help charities or subsidize the producers of healthy food to produce more at less price. For example, in 2002, the state of California has taken a try to impose taxes against soda and use the gains of these taxes to finance anti-obesity programs. The taxing program would have gained \$432 million a year to be distributed to the schools that don't allow selling soda on their campuses, hospitals and clinics, (Caraher & Cowburn, 2004).

Although we have the benefit of taxing and regulating fast food, some people claim that the best solution is to grow children in a way that allow them to control their own choice of food. Murr (2014) explains that children can be taught how to choose food by setting an example for them or showing them the real responsibility when it comes to taking care of themselves. She also adds "... it is about enjoying what we eat, but staying healthy enough to live long, fruitful

lives.” (p. 2). This argument is absolutely true, but regulating junk food and sugary drinks complements the process and make it easier. Specifically, regulating the advertising of fast food decrease the attraction of fast food and take the child away from thinking about these types of advertised items. In addition, taxing can be use as a reason to convince children that a type of food or drink is bad for health and unnecessary to live their life. Moreover, The White House has shown its support for the idea of regulating food in schools when the First Lady Michelle Obama states, "The idea here is simple - our classrooms should be healthy places where kids aren't bombarded with ads for junk food," (Paulson, 2014). This support from the white house by itself is considered a very affecting reason that plays a big rule in convince children about that matter because the First Lady is considered a big example for them.

Added to the previous claim, some people say that advertising of fast food and unhealthy drinks will still attract children. That is true not just for children, but everyone. However, as previously stated, taxing will cause an increase in the price of fast food followed by decrease in the demand of fast food. Economically, this decrease in demand will result in a failure of many fast food industries, and hence the advertising will diminish. Further more, this can be connected to the issue of having a default choice of food and its relation with marketing. Default choice is the type of the food that an individual prefers at most of the time because of specific incentives. Specifically, as Nestle (2014) explains, each individual make a default choice of any commodity based on his own preferences. For a child, when it comes to food advertisements, most children tend to consider any food that has a toy with it as a default choice of food. However, taxing will make it very challenging to accompany fast food meals with a toy, because that makes the cost of production even more expensive, and hence more expensive commodity in the market. As a result, even though advertising still exists with taxing, it is not effective as it used to be.

The number of children who exceed the overweight stage is increasing everyday, and this increase in the number of obese children is accompanied with an increase in the economic losses and health problems. Since childhood obesity is highly related to the excess amounts of fat and sugar in the body, taxing and regulating the unhealthy fast food products will decrease the number of obese children. The effectiveness of that solution is economically guaranteed since taxes will increase the price of fast food, and hence cause a reduction in its demand. Solving the childhood obesity will guarantee a better social and economical situation, because children will be much healthier and productive, also, big amounts of money will be used to develop the world instead of paying them to treat obesity-related diseases.

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