

Research Article
Open Access

Factors of an Obesogenic Environment That Influence in Human Food Behavior

Luciana França Matoso Barbalho

Nutricionista, Brazil

ABSTRACT

This bibliographic research sought to address environmental aspects that can influence human eating behavior. It addressed the influence of the media in the choice of food, the importance of the family as an interferer in the process of forming children's eating habits, as well as the accessibility to foods rich in fat, sodium and sugar, which has become greater due to the growing emergence of fast food chains, making the habit of eating outside the home more constant, driving, in a way, the greater consumption of these caloric foods, which contributes to the emergence of obesity. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that it is essential that interventions are carried out in this environment that can contribute to the installation and maintenance of obesity, as the environmental scenario is considered modifiable and can influence the process of building the child's eating habits and, consequently, of the adult individual.

*Corresponding author

Luciana França Matoso Barbalho, Nutricionista, Brazil. E mail: nutricionistalucianamatoso@gmail.com

Received: July 31, 2021; **Accepted:** August 10, 2021; **Published:** August 15, 2021

Keywords: Obesity. Obesogenic Environment. Eating Behavior.

Introduction

Obesity is defined as the excess of body fat that affects health conditions, being considered a chronic non-communicable disease - CNCD, which is developed from a high energy intake. As a result, it makes the positive energy balance chronic, in addition to representing a major public health problem that has now reached pandemic levels and has become a risk factor for the development of several other CNCDs, such as Diabetes, Hypertension, diseases cardiovascular diseases, cancer, kidney and liver diseases, among other comorbidities [1].

To reach a nutritional state of overweight or obesity, an individual is constantly being influenced by several factors, from social, biological, psychological and environmental. Many studies have shown that human behavior has a close relationship with the environment in which it is inserted, as there is a sum of influences, opportunities or conditions in it - the obesogenic environment, which can contribute to the emergence of overweight and obesity. that eating behavior can be directly influenced by environmental aspects [2].

The obesogenic environment is closely linked to the influence on the conditions it occupies and the determination of individuals' choices that can promote the emergence of obesity. It is attractive and encouraging, in many ways, for the individual to adopt behaviors that are not aligned with practices that will benefit health [3]. The human being is considered a social being and is constantly inserted in relationships, therefore, he is a subject who receives influence from the environment in which he lives, from the imposition of rules and has his beliefs and cultural values that carry throughout life [4].

Human eating behavior can be defined by a set of cognitions and feelings that guide eating attitudes and encompass several aspects, from consumption, how to eat, how and where to eat, and which involves the interconnection of the physiological, psychological and the external environment in which the individual lives. It can also be described as a set of methods, and all reactions and actions that are related to the act of eating and play a determining role for health [5].

It is from the early years of life that this eating behavior takes shape, and as time passes, it takes shape as a result of the interaction of many factors, ranging from genetic, psychological, environmental and social. And behavior change plays an important role in promoting healthy habits and adherence to dietary treatments to which people are often subjected, either by choice, or by necessity [6].

The importance of eating behavior for health can be justified by the fact that, when choosing better choices in which a healthy and balanced diet is present, this becomes essential for the maintenance of quality of life and the physical and mental health of the individuals. Everything that is consumed, specifically when it comes to food intake, does not translate into eating behavior, even knowing that the act of eating represents an action, but this is related to aspects of physiology, which involves mechanisms of metabolism, digestion and absorption. Behavior, on the other hand, precedes the act, permeates culture, beliefs, experiences with food, among other aspects [7].

Since obesity represents a serious and growing public health problem worldwide, bringing many consequences to the health status of the population, since excessive and inadequate nutrition can influence the health and disease processes of an individual and

the whole collectivity, and also considering that the act of eating can be influenced by the environmental scenario, studying the relationship between the environment and eating behavior is of great relevance. Thus, the aim of this article is to review published data that address the obesogenic environment and the determining factors in human eating behavior.

Material and Methods

A bibliographical research was carried out, in which the Scielo, PubMed and BVS databases were used, having as key words: eating behavior, obesity, obesogenic environment. Review articles, original articles, as well as books that were related to the theme that addressed the influence of the obesogenic environment on the eating behavior of individuals were searched. There was a meeting of different information found in the sources of consultation and after reading the abstract and relevant parts of the content, the materials were read, in full, those whose object of study were the theme proposed in this research. Materials that did not meet the criteria were excluded from the study.

Results and Discussion

Analyzing an exploratory study, states that, over the years and the beginning of the adolescence phase, eating habits are influenced by the power of autonomy acquired in this phase, as well as the feeling of independence gained, and these conditions seem to favor the practice of inappropriate eating behaviors, which can lead to overweight and obesity [10]. Some reasons may be associated, for example, with the desire for acceptance by society, and the fragility in wanting to meet the social pressures imposed, in addition to the power that the media exerts with manipulative commercials that only aim to inform and not educate as well. such as the search for a pre-established body pattern, and the lack of care for one's own health. All this happens even in the existence of satisfactory knowledge about healthy eating and being aware of the possible consequences on the part of adolescents.

Another point mentioned in this study is that there are some factors that influence food choices, regarding availability, easy access to food, and social influence, such as: markets located in the vicinity of home or work, prices are affordable and that the food to be purchased is in line with those consumed by the family in their own home, that they are respecting the parents' purchasing preference, or because they think it is best for their children, or because they are consumed with respect the family beliefs and customs, or even that they are in accordance with the food preferences of friends when they are in social interaction.

This shows that an environment that favors these choices, such as the ones mentioned, can impact eating behavior, which suggests that if family members habitually consume fatty foods, rich in sodium, very palatable, such as ultra-processed, motivated by the circumstances mentioned, the propensity to develop a nutritional status of obesity is greater.

In a study carried out with more than 200 children and almost 90 parents, it was evidenced that the intake of fruits, juices in a natural way and vegetables is positively influenced because these foods are available and accessible at home [8]. The family has a great relevance in the child's learning process, with regard to issues involving nutrition education.

Corroborating these findings, cites that parents can become tools that promote a nutritious and balanced diet for their children, through more interesting food choices for health and also that mothers who choose to offer their children a nutrition primarily

thought of quality and not only on the taste aspects focusing on taste, end up offering healthier meals [11].

In that same study, it is said that the reduction in the intake of fats and sugars by children can be achieved by changes in the parents' eating habits, and this behavior benefits not only those who practice it, but also extends to all those who make up the family. It also mentions that, in this family life, the environment that is established can lead to either excessive eating or even a more sedentary standard of living and that, the example of parents who eat to excess, without due attention, that does not identify the signs of satiety itself, which chew at an accelerated pace, is seen very negatively for their children.

It is worth mentioning that children, with regard to socioeconomic, psychological and cultural aspects, are influenced by the environment where they live, which, in most cases, is integrated by the family environment. Thus, all actions are very commonly the result of this environment, which when unfavorable can contribute to the development of eating problems, which can extend throughout the course of life.

According to Taras (1995), it was identified that children who lived in the United States, who watched television, on average, 21 hours a week, and within that time, 3 hours referred to advertisements for foodstuffs, mostly foods rich in sugar, fat and salt, regardless of gender, degree of reading ability, ethnic aspects, routine and parental education level, there was a positive correlation between the use of television and misconceptions about food and inadequate eating habits.

The emergence of fast food chains can be discussed by, when he states that, with each passing day, these chains only expand, following the needs of people, who increasingly have less time to take their meals calmly at home, and they opt for convenience and ease, with a tendency to choose to eat out and this can contribute to the increase in the prevalence of obesity [12].

In another study corroborates by suggesting that obesity can be justified because when people choose to eat away from home, they have a habit of exceeding the amounts ingested, in their portions, having a tendency to choose denser foods energetically [13]. On the other hand, states that, even if fast food chains contribute to the growth of obesity, it cannot be seen as a single reason that will promote this chronic disease, because there is a style life that needs to be adopted by individuals and that can make all the difference in the installation or not of this nutritional status [12].

This leads to the reflection that the distribution sector of foods high in fat, sugar and salt and low in fiber, such as fast food restaurants, can influence this epidemiological scenario of obesity, which is increasingly expanding worldwide, and according to Janssen et al., (2006) agrees that this is a scenario that is related to environmental factors and thus it is easier to understand that this vulnerability can lead to a high consumption of food, promoting excess energy ingested, and encouraging sedentary lifestyle [9].

Conclusion

It is possible to conclude that, somehow, the environment in which we are a part can interfere with eating behavior, which can be influenced by several aspects, ranging from media manipulation through the airing of non-nutritive food advertisements, especially in a family environment in which there is a constant and high use of television by children, as well as the availability and ease of access to food in this family environment, with the examples

given by the parents themselves in food selection.

Another important aspect is the easy and abundant supply of fastfoods, which expand every day, linked to the greater need of individuals due to their routines, to opt for practical and quick meals, mostly rich in sodium, sugar and fat, which contributes to the increase in obesity, which makes it essential to modify these choices and habits.

It is suggested that the family role is essential for providing a healthier lifestyle for children, since children's food preferences are also influenced by the parents' dietary choices and habits. In addition, there must be constant monitoring of the time children spend using television, due to the vulnerability to which they are exposed to nutritional education. It is essential to carry out interventions in this environment, as it is potentially modifiable and can influence the process of construction of the child's eating habits and, consequently, of the adult individual.

Referências

1. Swinburn Ba, Sacks G, Hall Kd, Mcpherson K, Finegood Dt, et al. (2011) The global obesity pandemic: shaped by global drivers and local environments *Lancet*.
2. Alvarenga M, Antonaccio C, Figueiredo M, Timerman F (2015) *Nutrição Comportamental*. 1ed. Manole.
3. Swinburg, B Egger, Graza F (1999) Dissecting obesogenic environments: the development and application of a framework for identifying and prioritizing environmental interventions for obesity. *Prevent. Med* 29: 563-570.
4. Tribole E, Resch E (2012) *Press Intuitive Eating: A Revolutionary Program That Works* 3ed. St. Martins.
5. Parente Albuquerque L, Montenegro Cavalcante Ac, Almeida, Cezar P, De Magalhães Carrapeiro M (2016) Overweight relationship with dietary behavior and lifestyle in brazilian students. *Nutr Clin Diet Hosp* 36: 17-23.
6. Brazilian Association for the Study of Obesity and Metabolic Syndrome Brazilian Obesity Guidelines (2016) ABESO - Brazilian Association for the Study of Obesity and Metabolic Syndrome. 4th ed. - Sao Paulo-SP.
7. Garcia Rwd A (1999) food, diet, taste. Changes in food culture. Institute of Psychology at the University of São Paulo. Department of Social and Work Psychology. São Paulo.
8. Cullen KW, Baranowski T, Owens E, Marsh T, Rittenberry L, et al., (2003) Availability, accessibility, and preferences for fruit, 100% fruit juice, and vegetables influence children's dietary behaviour. *Health Educ Behav*. 30: 615-626.
9. Ian Janssen, William F Boyce, Kelly Simpson, William Pickett (2006) Influence of individual and area level measures of socioeconomic status on obesity, unhealthy eating, and physical inactivity in Canadian adolescents. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 83: 139-145.
10. Neumark-Sztainer D, Story M, Perry C, Casey M (1999) Factors influencing food choices of adolescents: Findings from focus-group discussions with adolescents. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 23: 576-585.
11. Lake AA (2004) Longitudinal dietary changes from adolescence from adulthood: perceptions, attributions and evidence. *Appetite* 42: 255-263.
12. Jeffery RW, Baxter J, Mcguire M, Linde J (2006) Are fast food restaurants an environmental risk factor for obesity? *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* 3: 2.
13. Nicklas Ta, Baranowski B, Cullen Kw, Berenson G (2001) Eating patterns, dietary quality and obesity. *J Am Coll Nutr* 20: 599-608.

Copyright: ©2021 Luciana França Matoso Barbalho. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.