

SOCIOECONOMIC VARIABLES AND THE PREVALENCE OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF FUNDÃO, MONTIJO, OEIRAS, SEIXAL AND VIANA DO CASTELO

Andrade T.¹, Silva A.L.¹, Ramos C.¹, Carvalho M.A.¹, Rito A.^{1,2}

¹University Atlântica, Oeiras, Portugal

²National Institute of Health Dr. Ricardo Jorge, Lisbon, Portugal

BACKGROUND: Recent studies have demonstrated that childhood obesity has a multifactorial etiology. Unhealthy eating patterns and a lack of physical activity appear to be major risk factors associated with the development of this disease. Recently, it has been argued that the socioeconomic status (SES) of family household might be linked to the onset and evolution of obesity. The aim of this study, undertaken under the auspices of the Municipalities Child Health (MUN-SI) Project, is to investigate the association or relation between the SES of families and the prevalence of obesity in children enrolled in the 2nd year of the 1st cycle of elementary Public Schools in the Municipalities of Fundão, Montijo, Oeiras, Seixal and Viana do Castelo. **METHODS:** This longitudinal study was undertaken in three different stages. The data presented here resulted from the first phase of the project, which took place in the academic year of 2008/2009. The nutritional status of 3173 children aged 6 – 11 years, enrolled in 167 Public Schools from 5 Municipalities was evaluated through the application of a MUN-SI Questionnaire and in accordance with the classification criteria of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2000). Family SES was determined using the MUN-SI Family Questionnaire and was defined in relation to parents' educational achievement, professional occupation, socio-professional status and household income. Descriptive analysis consisted in identifying the frequencies of the explanatory variables. For the inferential analysis, the Binomial Logistic Regression Model was used and the odds ratios for confidence intervals were set at 95 %. **RESULTS:** Of the children that were evaluated, 50.4 % were female, 32.1 % were overweight and 14.3 % were obese. It was observed that parents' lower academic level both socio-professional status equivalent to no qualified occupations and a family household income <1500€ monthly appear to be a significant risk factors for the development of childhood obesity ($p < 0.01$). **CONCLUSIONS:** These results showed that the SES of families is inversely associated with the prevalence of childhood obesity. New approaches on these dimensions could improve the obesity trends, enhancing families' healthy lifestyle nearby children nutrition status. Community-based programmes working at a local level demonstrates the importance of formulating future preventive actions to combat childhood obesity in families with lower SES.