
IMPACT OF LIFESTYLE CHANGES AND LACK OF EXERCISE ON HEALTH: AN ANALYSIS OF DIETARY PATTERNS, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, AND DISEASE PREVALENCE

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ABSTRACT

Key Words:

Lifestyle Changes,
Physical Activity,
Disease Prevalence

Lifestyle changes have had a significant impact on the global illness burden in recent decades. This study aims to understand how changes in dietary patterns and decreased physical activity have contributed to the rise in lifestyle diseases, especially diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases. Using secondary data from organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it reveals there is an alarming increase in the usage of processed foods and a sedentary lifestyle. The results confirm a global health crisis by establishing a decline in physical activity, a decline in whole food consumption, and an increase in the usage of processed foods and added sugars. The report emphasizes the need for policy change to enable healthy cities, physical activity, and healthy eating. Further, focus is needed on physical activity and dietary patterns to reverse current health trends and curb the burden of long-term lifestyle disorders

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Introduction

Global health trends have changed over the past few decades due to swift changes in lifestyle. People's exercise habits and diets have changed dramatically because of urbanization, factories, and swift technological advancements. Industrialization has improved living standards and quality of life and boosted the economy, but simultaneously, it has caused some health problems. These are significant reasons for the rise in non-communicable diseases like diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and high blood pressure. The increased use of modern technology has encouraged sedentary lifestyles, and decreased physical activity has become a significant risk to public health. Based on secondary data analysis of national and global health assessments, the article discusses how changes in diet and exercise are influencing health worldwide.

Literature Review

Extensive studies have already been done worldwide regarding the effects of lifestyle changes on health. As reported by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2022), and the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES, 2019), a sedentary lifestyle, unbalanced diet, and a rise in non-communicable diseases are strongly linked. According to the WHO Global Status Report (2020), lack of physical activity is one of the significant risk factors for mortality. It is a major cause of approximately five million deaths each year. The United States' obesity rate increased from 30.5% in 2000 to 42.4% in 2020, according to the CDC's 2022 report. Furthermore, NHANES (2019) demonstrates a shift in eating patterns due to a rise in processed foods and a decrease in the consumption of fruits and vegetables.

Changes in Dietary Patterns

The immediate change in the eating pattern leads to over-dependence on high-caloric foods and processed food worldwide. Our old diet style consisted of whole grains, fibre, fresh fruits and vegetables, and natural proteins. Due to urbanization and modernization, fast food culture and convenience foods have replaced traditional diets. The overall nutritional value has decreased as a result of these dietary adjustments. Overconsumption of refined carbohydrates, saturated and trans fats, sugar, and salt has resulted from increased processed food consumption. According to studies, a diet high in ultra-processed foods is linked to obesity, cardiovascular disease, and metabolic disorders (Popkin, 2017). Consuming large amounts of processed and packaged foods with high level of added sugar and salt can lead to lifestyle diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure. (Malik et al., 2019).

Dietary Trends (2000-2020)	Increase (%)	Decrease (%)
Consumption of processed foods	45%	-
Use of Sugar-sweetened beverages	60%	-
Intake of fruits and vegetables	-	30%
Whole grain consumption	-	25%

Reduced Physical Activity and Related Health Hazards

One of the most harmful effects of modernization was the abrupt drop in physical activity. The widespread use of motorized cars has supplanted walking and bicycle riding. Furthermore, employment involving sedentary sitting has become extensive in all civilizations.

Now, most jobs demand a low level of physical activity, which results in less energy expenditure and leads to body weight gain. Ng and Popkin (2012) found that the global labour force has transitioned from manual to office work, a cause of rising obesity.

Screen time is another major cause of sedentary behaviour. Digital technology such as smartphones, TVs, and computers decreased the time devoted to physical activity. Tremblay et al. (2017) recognize that screen time has replaced active recreation, like playing games, leading to lower fitness levels across all age groups. Moreover, most cities do not have sufficient open spaces and recreational or sports facilities, which is the reason for discouraging people from engaging in physical activity. Findings by Giles-Corti et al. (2016) state that the lack of parks and pedestrian-friendly roads contributes to decreased exercise, physical activity and mobility.

Global Physical Activity Trends	2000	2020
Adults meeting WHO exercise guidelines	70%	55%
Daily walking and cycling rates	40%	25%
Sedentary behavior (screen time >5hrs)	20%	45%

The aftereffects of the lack of physical activities will lead to significant risk factors for many chronic diseases. According to WHO (2020), people who do not meet minimum physical activity are at increased risk of developing cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and mental illness. Cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of death globally, and physical inactivity is a significant factor. Lack of physical activity or exercise negatively affects mental health. It will lead to anxiety, depression, cognitive impairment, etc. (Sallis et al., 2016).

Conclusion

In modern society Unhealthy eating habits and reduced physical activity are the major causes behind the steady hike in non-communicable diseases like diabetes, hypertension and cardio vascular diseases. This study based on the secondary analysis of the data identifies the negative health impacts associated with modernisation and industrialisation. Swift change in the food habits, fast food culture especially the use of processed and high caloric foods etc. happened worldwide. Decrease in physical inactivity due to modernisation is another alarming issue, contributes to Non communicable diseases. This study shows the urgent need for public health interventions to counteract the negative effects. Strategies to promote physical activity, healthy diets, and enabling urban environments should be given high priority. Future policies should aims to make awareness about health risk of sedentary lifestyle and improper diet. Central and state governments, local self-government bodies, NGOs and other organizations should take initiative for making awareness and create entertainment facilities like play grounds, open gymnasiums and parks etc. Addressing these issues will be very important in reversing the adverse health trends observed globally.

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