**Research Paper: Childhood Obesity**

Tackling weight issues in children is of great importance as the nation’s future lies in this group. Recent cases of increasing obesity are alarming as lifestyle changes coupled with technological advancement has seen people in developed as well as emerging economies struggle with obesity. Children have not been spared with low-income US families being the hardest hit (Ogden, et al, 2014, p.810). To avoid getting involved in vices like gang activity and substance abuse, parents in high-risk neighborhoods prefer to keep their kids indoors leading to inactivity and hence weight gain. Effects of this phenomenon are immense as they start early and haunt the affected individual for the most part of their lives. From teasing and taunting by friends and enemies alike to medical issues like diabetes and cardiovascular complications, the negative effects of being on the heavy side never end. The issue, however, can be approached and solved from an advocacy perspective.

It would be in the best interest of all involved if policies regarding obesity are implemented. The best proposal would be based on providing information to the affected, whether directly or indirectly. This would involve visiting education centers, distribution of printed educative materials, and organize diet informative seminars where both kids and their parents attend. This method will be effectively employed without much of legislative changes apart from maybe school timetables and advertisement rules. Participating students will need to create time for the visits as well as allow distribution of brochures within the institutions which might be illegal in some (Chambers, 2015, p 34). Their schools would have to squeeze the program in their rosters which might require some changes. No new laws need to be created on a national or state level to enable the provision of information. However, while tackling the issue of fast foods and unhealthy eating habits, the governments need to step in with legal changes.

Currently, the United States being a totally capitalist economy allows sale and advertising of all types of foods that pass the standards for consumption fitness. The trading laws thus allow stores to stock and companies to market their products in a way that consumers cannot miss them on the shelves. Media advertisements have been cited to be a major driver of consumerism (Hawkins, 2016). These laws allowing such businesses will work against the campaign as the information will be cancelled out by numerous adverts promoting the fast foods. The advocacy will provide some positive changes but it definitely will not outdo the numerous campaigns promoting fast foods. It will also take time to reconfigure the minds of a population already addicted to unhealthy consumption and lifestyles. The laws have been challenged in the Supreme Court where it was ruled that the administration should not interfere with commercial speech as it is against the constitution to restrict expression. On the positive side, the government is committed to tackling obesity and has formed units to promote healthy lifestyles in line with growth and urbanization. This will greatly impact the campaign as the proposals will be backed by the law.

The most effective of the three arms of lobbying will be a grassroots influence. With a large group of students, teachers, parents, and other interested bodies, the campaign will be further boosted by encouraging them to communicate to their legislators (Griffin, 2016, p.47). Mass letters and phone calls will do the trick. This being a national issue, raising it in important functions as well as calls to radio stations will catch the lawmakers’ attention. Direct lobbying can be effected by identifying influential participants who can directly consult and represent the advocacy’s agendas directly to the policymakers. On the political end of lobbying, encouraging legislators to support the cause as a way to ensure their endorsement as well as votes will go a long way to push for laws’ changes. Although the campaign will not be politically affiliated, compromises are usually considered in advocacy as political influence is required to obtain the desired results. The last method, however, may be ineffective during periods when office campaigns are not taking place.

Among the proposed changes that lawmakers and other stakeholders can come up with include law amendments and strengthening of existing ones. Since fast food sale and advertising ban is illegal and impossible, the best they can do to combat these unhealthy delicacies is imposing stricter taxation on them (Reeve, 2015, p.445). This was one of the pieces of advice offered by the Supreme Court upon dropping of the case against them. Higher tax and strict observation of consumption standards will discourage some players from the business thus lowering their availability. The promotion of physical activity will be the next major goal. With schools and parents doing their best to encourage the children to engage in sports, the policymakers will contribute by creating friendly environments and events to facilitate these practices. Construction of pitches and playing parks in schools and neighborhoods is one thing but the provision of security is the main agenda. Especially in low-income areas, cases of shootings, kidnappings, and drug trafficking have been to happen in basketball courts and children parks.

**References**

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