

PHYSICAL CULTURE AND THE FIGHT AGAINST HYPODYNAMIA AND OBESITY
AMONG STUDENTS OF UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the critical role of physical education in addressing the growing problems of physical inactivity and obesity among university students in Uzbekistan. Due to increasingly sedentary lifestyles due to academic demands and changing social habits, students are at risk of developing various health problems. This article examines the prevalence of physical inactivity and obesity among Uzbek university students, analyzes the factors contributing to it, and proposes strategies for implementing and promoting effective physical education programs to combat these problems. Particular attention is paid to integrating enjoyable and accessible types of physical activity into students' daily lives, creating a favorable campus atmosphere, and promoting healthy lifestyles to form long-term beneficial habits.

Key words: Physical education, physical inactivity, obesity, university students, Uzbekistan, sedentary lifestyle, health promotion, physical activity, campus environment, health education.

In recent years, physical inactivity and obesity have been on the rise among students in Uzbekistan. University life, which is often characterized by long study hours, limited physical activity, and the availability of processed foods, contributes to a sedentary lifestyle. Physical inactivity, or lack of physical activity, leads to a range of health problems, including weight gain, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and mental health issues. Obesity, a direct consequence of energy imbalance, further exacerbates these risks. Addressing these issues through targeted interventions is critical to promoting the health and well-being of Uzbek university students and ensuring a healthy and productive future generation.

Prevalence and contributing factors

Data suggests that a significant proportion of university students in Uzbekistan are physically inactive and overweight, sometimes to the point of obesity. This worrying trend arises from a complex interaction of factors related to the academic environment and wider societal influences. Due to the high academic demands placed on students, they often feel overwhelmed and time-constrained, leading to a perceived lack of opportunities for regular physical activity. The pursuit of academic success often takes precedence over concerns for their own well-being, leading students to sacrifice exercise and active pursuits in favour of studying and completing assignments. This sedentary lifestyle is also fuelled by the long hours that students spend studying, often in a sedentary position, which further minimises movement and reduces energy expenditure. Prolonged inactivity disrupts metabolic processes and increases the risk of weight gain and associated complications.

Unhealthy eating habits also play a major role in the rise of physical inactivity and obesity. The availability and low cost of processed foods and drinks high in sugar on college campuses and in the surrounding areas contribute to poor food choices. These easily accessible foods often contain empty calories and lack essential nutrients, leading to an imbalance between energy intake and energy expenditure. A lack of nutrition information and guidance further compounds the problem,

leaving students unable to make informed decisions about their diets. Adding to these factors is a lack of awareness among students about the importance of physical activity and healthy eating. Many students may not fully understand the long-term effects of a sedentary lifestyle or underestimate the impact of regular exercise on their physical and mental health. Lack of awareness may lead to decreased motivation to develop healthier habits.

Additionally, some universities, particularly those with limited resources or infrastructure, may have limited access to adequate sports facilities and opportunities for physical activity. This lack of access can be a significant barrier for students who want to engage in physical activity but lack the means to do so. Finally, cultural factors may also play a role, as traditional cultural norms do not always prioritize physical activity, particularly for female students. These cultural norms may create social pressures that discourage women from participating in sports and other physical activities, leading to differences in physical activity levels between the sexes.

Strategies for the promotion of physical education

To effectively combat physical inactivity and obesity among university students in Uzbekistan, a comprehensive and multifaceted strategy is needed that addresses all aspects of campus life and promotes a culture of health and well-being. Central to this strategy is the integration of physical activity into the university's core curriculum. Compulsory physical education courses should be introduced so that all students, regardless of their major, have access to structured and supervised physical activity programs. These courses should not be seen as just an additional requirement, but as an integral part of a comprehensive education that provides students with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to lead a healthy lifestyle throughout their lives.

Beyond compulsory courses, it is vital to encourage active transport. Having students walk or cycle to and from campus will significantly increase their daily physical activity levels. This can be achieved by investing in safe and convenient infrastructure such as dedicated bike lanes, well-lit footpaths and secure bike parking. Universities should also actively encourage the use of public transport and explore initiatives such as car sharing to reduce reliance on private vehicles and encourage more active travel.

Creating a positive campus environment is also of paramount importance. Accessible and affordable sports facilities, such as well-equipped gyms, swimming pools and sports fields, should be located in close proximity to university campuses. These facilities should be designed to accommodate a wide range of interests and abilities, ensuring that all students feel comfortable and safe. Universities should also consider extending working hours and flexible working hours to meet the needs of students with busy academic schedules.

To further enhance engagement, a variety of physical activities should be offered to suit a wide range of interests and skill levels. In addition to traditional team sports such as football, basketball, and volleyball, universities should offer individual sports such as running, swimming, and weightlifting, as well as alternative activities such as dance classes, yoga, and martial arts. This variety will help all students find activities that they enjoy and that motivate them to engage.

Promoting healthy lifestyles is another critical component of a successful strategy. Integrating comprehensive healthy lifestyle programs into the curriculum can increase students' awareness of the importance of physical activity, healthy eating habits, and the risks associated with physical inactivity and obesity. These programs should provide students with practical information and skills they can use to make informed decisions about their health and well-being.

Strategic use of technology can also play a major role in promoting physical activity. Fitness apps, online workout resources, and wearable activity trackers can provide students with personalized

workout plans, track their progress, and motivate them to stay active. Universities can partner with tech companies to provide students with access to these resources at reduced prices, or develop their own apps tailored to the specific needs of the university community.

Organizing regular campus events that promote physical activity can also be an effective way to engage students and build a sense of community. Fun runs, sports tournaments, fitness competitions, and other events can create a fun and social atmosphere that encourages students to engage in physical activity. These events should be well publicized and accessible to all students, regardless of their fitness level.

Engaging student leaders as advocates for physical activity can also be very effective. Student leaders can serve as role models, organize campus events, and promote healthy lifestyles among their peers. By empowering students to take charge of their own health, universities can create a sustainable culture of well-being.

Finally, collaborating with health professionals can provide students with access to valuable health screenings, nutritional counseling, and personalized exercise recommendations. Health professionals can also host seminars and workshops on campus to educate students about health-related topics and provide guidance on how to develop healthy habits. By collaborating with health professionals, universities can provide students with the support they need to make informed decisions about their health and well-being.

Problems and Considerations

Successful implementation of the above strategies to promote physical activity and combat physical inactivity and obesity among Uzbek university students depends on overcoming a number of potential challenges and carefully considering key factors. First and foremost, these include budgetary constraints that may prevent some universities from allocating sufficient resources to support comprehensive physical activity programmes and state-of-the-art facilities. Ensuring adequate funding for these initiatives requires strong support from university leadership that demonstrates the long-term benefits of investing in student health and well-being. Innovative funding models, such as partnerships with private sector organisations or grant applications to government agencies and philanthropic foundations, should be actively explored to supplement existing university budgets.

In addition, incorporating required physical education courses into an existing curriculum may require significant curriculum reform. This process may be resisted by faculty or academic departments who feel that it takes up valuable instructional time or detracts from core academic subjects. A collaborative approach involving open dialogue and compromise among university administrators, faculty, and students is needed to successfully address this issue. Demonstrating the importance of physical education to overall academic success, emphasizing its positive impact on cognitive function and stress reduction, and demonstrating innovative curricular models that seamlessly integrate physical activity into existing courses can help build support for this reform. Effectively engaging students in physical activity programs is another important consideration. Students often face competing demands on their time and energy, juggling academic responsibilities, extracurricular activities, and social commitments. Motivating students to prioritize physical activity in the face of these competing priorities requires creative and engaging approaches that take into account their diverse interests and preferences. Gamification strategies, peer-led activities, incentives and rewards, and technology integration can be used to increase student engagement and make physical activity more appealing .

Finally, cultural sensitivity should be a guiding principle in the design and implementation of physical activity programmes. Uzbekistan has a rich and diverse cultural heritage, and it is important that physical activity programmes take into account traditional norms and customs. Programmes should be inclusive and accessible to students of all backgrounds, genders and abilities, taking into account cultural preferences and sensitivities regarding dress codes, participation in gender-specific activities and the types of activities offered. Involving local community leaders and cultural experts in the planning and implementation process can help ensure that programmes are culturally appropriate and successfully received by students. By carefully considering these issues and cultural sensitivities, Uzbek universities can create effective and sustainable physical education programmes that promote the health and well-being of all students.

Conclusion:

Combating physical inactivity and obesity among university students in Uzbekistan requires concerted efforts from university administrations, faculty, students, and health professionals. By integrating physical activity into the curriculum, creating a supportive campus environment, promoting health education, and addressing related issues, Uzbek universities can play an important role in promoting the health and well-being of their students and shaping a healthier future for the country. Further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of various interventions and identify best practices in promoting physical activity among university students in Uzbekistan.

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