Portuguese childhood Overweight and Obesity and Regional Development

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INTRODUCTION

Across European countries, within regions or population groups the prevalence of overweight and obesity is related to social and economic deprivation. Overweight and obesity are consequences of inequalities in children’s socioeconomic status, health, life conditions, and demographic determinants of health (Adamson et al. 2007, Agras et al 2004; Branca et al. 2007, Johnson et al. 2011). Socioeconomic inequality factors may be related to obesity by diet and nutrition, healthy food choices and dietary habits and by behaviour lifestyles and physical activity, leisure-time, physical exercise and sedentary behaviour; The 2009 Portuguese national indicators of economic growth and living conditions showed high regional differences. Regarding the 2009 competitiveness index and per capita purchasing power, the strongest performances were in the metropolitan territories of Lisboa and Porto.

AIMS

to evaluate the role of the competitiveness index, cohesion index, environmental quality index and per capita purchasing power indicator on Portuguese regional variations in childhood overweight and obesity.

DESIGN and METHODS

Portuguese Prevalence Study of Obesity in Childhood 2009-2010

A random cross-sectional survey schools from all the Portuguese mainland districts. The protocol was approved by Direção Geral de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Curricular (Monitorização de Inquéritos em Meio Escolar: Ministério da Educação).

Regional development

Indicators of Regional Development

- Competitiveness index
- Cohesion index
- Environmental quality index

Levels: 1 (national average < median) 2 (national average > median) 3 (> national average < median) 4 (> national average > median)

Competitiveness index

express a region’s potential for performance in terms of competitiveness, efficiency, governance, wealth, the ability to compete in international markets, and life level and employment.

Cohesion index

social and economic cohesion, taking into consideration the population’s access to quality basic collective equipment and services.

Environmental quality index

The process placed on the environment by economic activity and social behaviour.

RESULTS

The probability of Portuguese children being overweight or obese depends on inequalities in regional development. Children were more likely to be overweight/obese if they were from territories with greater competitiveness, less lower cohesion, less lower environmental quality and lower per capita purchasing power. Therefore, the reduction of socioeconomic inequalities is fundamental to supporting healthy childhood growth.