

Obesity and labour market outcomes in Tanzania

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Obesity has been an increasing global challenge in terms of prevalence, health outcomes and economic burden. Overweight ($25 < \text{BMI} < 30$) and obese ($\text{BMI} > 30$) individuals have been discriminated against in the labour market in terms of probability of employment and earnings. In developed countries, studies have been conducted to keep this in check, but this study aims to shed light in the African context, specifically Tanzania and inform policies that will enhance equitable and fair outcomes in the labour market for all regardless of the weight status. Using longitudinal data from the National panel Survey three waves (2008/09, 2010/11, 2012/13), this study analyses the labour market outcomes of obesity. The study employs logit, multinomial logit and Heckman sample selection techniques to estimate the impact of obesity on the probability of being employed, probability of being employed in different types of employment in different types of employment and earnings of individuals respectively. In the first model, the study findings show that, overweight and obese individual have a higher probability of being employed than the normal weight individuals. The second model which determined the impact of obesity on employment depending on the type of employment shows that, overweight and obese individuals are more probable to be employed in government and self-employment while, being overweight and obese reduced the probability of individuals to be employed in private sector. Being underweight was positively correlated with the probability of being employed only in the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and insignificant in other sectors. Obesity was found to positively and significantly correlate with earnings of individuals. Overweight and obese individuals earned more than the normal weight individuals while there was no significant relationship between being underweight and earnings. Policies against discrimination, health policies reduce obesity and educational policies are suggested to help with the sectors that obese and overweight individuals were discriminated in hiring process. Further studies can be conducted since there are few studies done in Africa, specifically Tanzania, with specific attention to be paid to agricultural sector which is the backbone of many African economies.