مجلة المداد

Social Transformations in Health: The Impact of Globalisation on Health Culture and Health Practices of Communities and Individuals

التحولات الاجتماعية في الصحة: تأثير العولمة على ثقافة الصحة والممارسات الصحية للمجتمعات والأفراد

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Summary :

Globalisation has a profound impact on social and cultural transformations related to health. This study examines the effects of globalisation on health culture, family structure, and society, focusing on the differences between developed and developing countries. The results indicate that globalisation leads to noticeable changes in dietary patterns and health behaviours, contributing to increased health disparities between communities and countries.

In developed countries, globalisation has led to the spread of unhealthy lifestyles, such as reliance on fast food and decreased physical activity, which has increased rates of obesity and non-communicable diseases. Conversely, in developing countries, globalisation has contributed to widening health gaps between urban and rural areas, where some may experience improvements in access to healthcare while others remain deprived. Additionally, globalisation leads to changes in family structure, including shifts in family roles and lifestyles.

Recommendations highlight the importance of enhancing health education and awareness, improving access to healthcare, encouraging healthy lifestyles, and reducing health disparities among social groups. By implementing comprehensive and sustainable strategies, the benefits of globalisation can be achieved more equitably.

Keywords: globalisation, health culture, health disparities, family structure, social transformationst

ملخص

تؤثر العولمة بشكل عميق على التحولات الاجتماعية والثقافية المتعلقة بالصحة. هذه الدراسة تستعرض تأثير العولمة على الثقافة الصحية وبنية الأسرة والمجتمع، مع التركيز على الفروقات بين الدول المتقدمة والدول النامية. وتُظهر النتائج المتحصل عليها أن العولمة تؤدي إلى تغييرات ملحوظة في الأنماط الغذائية والسلوكيات الصحية، مما يساهم في زيادة التفاوتات الصحية بين المجتمعات والدول.

أدت العولمة في الدول المتقدمة، إلى انتشار أنماط حياة غير صحية، مثل الاعتماد على الأطعمة السريعة وتقلص النشاط البدني، مما زاد من معدلات السمنة والأمراض غير المعدية. في المقابل، ساهمت العولمة في الدول النامية، في تعزيز الفجوات الصحية بين المناطق الحضرية والريفية، حيث قد يحصل البعض على تحسينات في الوصول إلى الرعاية الصحية بينما يظل الآخرون محرومين منها ، كما تؤدي العولمة إلى تغييرات في بنية الأسرة، بما في ذلك تحول في الأدوار الأسرية ونمط الحياة.

و تشير التوصيات إلى أهمية تعزيز التعليم والتوعية الصحية، وتحسين الوصول إلى الرعاية الصحية، وتشجيع الأنماط الحياتية الصحية، وتقليل الفجوات الصحية بين الفئات الاجتماعية. من خلال تنفيذ استراتيجيات شاملة ومستدامة، يمكن تحقيق فوائد العولمة بشكل أكثر عدلاً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العولمة- الثقافة الصحية -التفاوتات الصحية-بنية الأسرة-التحولات الاجتماعية

Introduction

Globalisation has become one of the most intriguing issues in social studies today, particularly in the context of health. Globalisation is considered a driving force that profoundly impacts the structure of societies and their way of life, necessitating a thorough examination by sociologists, especially regarding its social transformations and effects on health.

Globalisation, defined as increased interconnectedness and interdependence among countries, has profound implications for health systems worldwide. Giddens (1990) posits that globalisation alters traditional social relations and cultural norms, leading to new health paradigms. As societies become more integrated, the diffusion of health-related ideas, practices, and technologies can significantly reshape local health cultures. For instance, the World Health

Organization (WHO) (2008) notes that globalisation facilitates the spread of health information, which can empower individuals but may also lead to the adoption of unhealthy practices.

The social transformations in health refer to the changes in lifestyle and health practices resulting from the interaction between different cultures and the increasing economic and technological openness. Globalisation is not limited to exchanging goods and services; it also includes exchanging ideas and cultural practices that directly influence the health culture of societies and individuals.

One of the most significant transformations in health culture due to globalisation is the commodification of health. The emergence of a global health market has resulted in commercialising health services and products, often prioritising profit over holistic health outcomes (Peters et al., 2008). This phenomenon is particularly evident in low- and middle-income countries, where multinational corporations often penetrate local markets with health products that may not align with traditional health practices. For example, studies by Labonté and Gagnon (2010) illustrate how the marketing of pharmaceuticals can lead to the erosion of indigenous healing practices, creating a dependency on Western medical models.

Moreover, globalisation has been linked to the spread of lifestyle-related diseases, such as obesity and diabetes, which are often attributed to the adoption of Western dietary habits and sedentary lifestyles (Popkin, 2006). The proliferation of fast food chains and processed foods in developing nations exemplifies this trend, as traditional diets are supplanted by calorie-dense, nutrient-poor options. The World Health Organization (2015) emphasises that these dietary shifts are not merely individual choices but are influenced by broader economic and cultural forces associated with globalisation.

Cultural exchange facilitated by globalisation also plays a critical role in shaping health behaviours. The migration of individuals and the transnational movement of ideas can lead to hybrid health practices that blend traditional and modern approaches. For example, a study by Kearney (2010) highlights how immigrant communities often navigate between their cultural health practices and the dominant health culture of their host countries. This negotiation can result in innovative health solutions that synthesise diverse cultural influences.

However, the impact of globalisation on health culture is not uniformly positive. While some individuals may benefit from increased access to health information and services, others may experience adverse effects, particularly in marginalised populations. The disparity in health outcomes often reflects broader social determinants of health, such as socioeconomic status, education, and access to resources (Marmot, 2005). As Farmer (2003) noted, the inequities exacerbated by globalisation can lead to increased vulnerability to health risks, particularly among those already disadvantaged.

From a sociological perspective, globalisation represents a shift in how individuals and communities define health and well-being. These transformations include changes in dietary habits, patterns of physical activity, and perceptions of health and illness. Globalisation has introduced new dietary patterns, such as fast food, and increased reliance on technology, significantly affecting health behaviours and lifestyles.

The effects of globalisation are evident in developed countries through the increased prevalence of non-communicable diseases, such as obesity and diabetes, resulting from changes in diet and physical activity patterns. In contrast, in developing countries, globalisation may sometimes improve access to healthcare, but it also exacerbates health disparities between urban and rural areas.

This study highlights how globalisation influences health culture and practices from a sociological perspective, focusing on how the social changes associated with globalisation contribute to shaping health and well-being among individuals and communities. By analysing these transformations, we can better understand the complex effects of globalisation on health and work towards developing strategies to achieve more balanced benefits and sustainable community health.

−1 Globalisation and Health Culture:

Globalisation currently contributes to the unprecedented spread of health information and medical resources. Media and technology enable individuals to access new health information and the latest medical research, changing people's perceptions of health and illness. However, globalisation also promotes the spread of unhealthy lifestyles, such as the increasing reliance on fast food and reduced physical activity. (Zhang, Y., et al. 2017.(

Globalisation is a process of increasing integration and interaction between countries and people on a global scale, impacting various aspects of daily life. From a sociological perspective, globalisation is understood as a process that leads to changes in cultural identities, social structures, and social relationships. It involves the expansion of cultural, economic, and political influences across borders, resulting in more complex interactions between societies.

Several sociological theories have addressed globalisation, including:

Cultural Globalisation Theory: This approach focuses on how cultures and cultural influences are exchanged across borders. It views globalisation as enhancing the spread of Western culture and disseminating Western health values and standards (Tomlinson, 1999.(

Economic Globalisation Theory: This theory emphasizes the impact of economic globalisation on societies, including how global markets influence lifestyles and health (Held & McGrew, 2002.(

While health culture can be defined as the set of habits, practices, and perceptions related to health and disease prevention adopted by societies and individuals, it encompasses social values, beliefs, dietary habits, and lifestyles that influence how individuals manage their health and interact with healthcare systems. Among the sociological theories that have addressed the topic of health culture are:

Lifestyle Theory: This theory suggests that health patterns are shaped by social and economic factors, including income level, education, and social environment (Bourdieu, 1984.(

Social Health Theory focuses on how social identities and social status affect individuals' health perceptions and behaviours (Cockerham, 2005.(

−**Effects of Globalisation on Health Culture**

Globalisation affects health culture through various channels, including:

−**Spread of Health Knowledge**: Globalization provides access to global medical information and health resources online, contributing to improved health awareness. However, it can also lead to disparities in the quality of available information.

−**Changes in Dietary Habits**: The spread of fast food and Western diets has led to changes in eating habits, impacting public health and increasing obesity rates and chronic diseases in many countries. For example, in developed countries like the United States, globalisation has led to a shift in dietary habits, with increased reliance on fast foods and sugary drinks, resulting in higher rates of obesity and related diseases such as type 2 diabetes. Here, the impact of

globalisation includes the promotion of high-calorie, low-nutrient foods (Mokdad et al., 2001.(

Globalisation has influenced dietary patterns in Japan by introducing Western foods such as burgers and pizza, changing traditional eating habits. However, Japan has managed to integrate global foods with its dietary traditions, helping to maintain some healthy habits.

) Fukuda, 2006.(

In developing countries like India, urbanisation and globalisation have increased the consumption of fast and packaged foods. In major cities, rates of obesity and non-communicable diseases such as heart disease have risen. Here, globalisation has contributed to introducing unhealthy dietary patterns that were previously uncommon.

) Popkin, 2014.(

In Nigeria, also a developing country, there has been a widespread increase in the consumption of fast food and unhealthy diets due to more significant interaction with global markets, leading to changes in the traditional diet and higher rates of non-communicable diseases like diabetes and hypertension (Akinpelu et al., 2013.(

Based on the social and economic context, globalisation has varying impacts on health culture. In developed countries, globalisation contributes to the enhancement of specific health patterns by improving access to health information and services, but it also contributes to the spread of unhealthy lifestyles. As for developing countries, globalisation exacerbates health disparities by altering dietary patterns and increasing individuals' exposure to unhealthy foods, intensifying these societies' health challenges.

Globalisation has also led to significant shifts in healthy lifestyles in developed countries such as the United States and Canada. For example, the consumption of fast food and industrial products has become a part of daily life, contributing to higher rates of obesity and related diseases. Reports from the World Health Organization indicate that globalisation exacerbates nutritional imbalances and increases health disparities within societies (World Health Organization, 2021.(

2-The Impact of Globalisation on Family and Social Structure:

Globalisation contributes to changes in family structure and lifestyle in many societies. In developed countries, economic pressures and cultural changes reduce the time allocated to healthy activities such as home cooking and physical exercise. In developing countries, urbanisation and global cultural influences also result in changes in eating habits and physical activity patterns. Among the most significant transformations in the family and society are:

-Nuclear Family vs. Extended Family: With globalisation, there is an increasing trend toward the nuclear family (a small family consisting of parents and children) as opposed to the extended family (which includes grandparents, uncles, and aunts). This shift is associated with the economic and social changes imposed by globalisation, such as increased job mobility and migration to major cities.

-Role of Women and Changes in Employment: In many countries, globalisation has contributed to changing the role of women in the family and society. The participation of women in the workforce has increased, leading to changes in the distribution of household roles and new challenges related to balancing work and family life.

-Single-Parent Families: The rates of divorce and childbirth outside of marriage have increased in some societies, leading to a rise in the number of single-parent families (families headed by a single individual). This change reflects the

cultural shifts brought about by globalisation, including changes in values and attitudes toward family relationships.

–Urbanisation and Urban Expansion: Globalisation accelerates the urbanisation process, changing the nature of society. In major cities, social patterns change, and new problems emerge, such as congestion and pressure on infrastructure, which affect health culture and practices.

–Changes in Cultural Values:

Globalisation contributes to the spread of Western cultural values, leading to changes in traditional cultural values within societies. These changes can impact health culture, such as an increased reliance on fast food and a sedentary lifestyle.

–Impact of Media and Technology:

Media and technology influence how individuals receive and learn about health information. The expansion of internet use and social media is changing the ways health communication occurs and leading to shifts in health practices. With increased dependence on technology, physical activity in daily life has decreased. It is evident in reduced exercise and a focus on sedentary activities, which contribute to growing health problems.

–3Globalisation and Health Inequalities Among Societies:

Health inequalities refer to differences in health status and access to healthcare among various social or geographical groups. These differences can arise from variations in income, education, geographic location, and race, impacting individuals' quality of life and overall health. Globalisation tends to deepen the health gaps between social groups in developed and developing countries. In developed countries, individuals with higher incomes can access better health options and medical resources, while those with lower incomes face difficulties

accessing these resources. Meanwhile, impoverished communities in developing countries often suffer limited access to healthcare and healthy habits, exacerbating health disparities (Labonté & Schrecker, 2007.(

-Increasing Income Inequality:

Globalisation can lead to widening economic gaps between individuals within the same country and between different countries. High-income individuals in developed countries may benefit from improved access to healthcare and high-quality health services, while low-income individuals struggle to obtain these services. Globalisation may further exacerbate the gaps between urban and rural areas in developing countries, as previously mentioned.

-Disparities in Access to Medical Technology:

Globalisation accelerates access to advanced medical technology, but this improvement is often available only to individuals in wealthy countries or affluent areas. The digital divide can lead to significant health disparities, with some benefiting from modern medical technology while others remain deprived. For example, in the United States, high-income individuals can access the latest treatments and medical tests, while low-income individuals face challenges in obtaining these services (Krieger, 2012.(

-4The Impact of Globalisation on Public Health:

One of the most significant impacts of globalisation on public health is the increased interconnectedness of populations. Global travel and trade have not only facilitated the spread of cultural practices and health innovations but have also accelerated the transmission of infectious diseases. For instance, the rapid global spread of diseases such as H1N1 influenza and COVID-19 illustrates how interconnectedness can lead to public health crises that transcend national borders. This reality necessitates a reevaluation of traditional public health

strategies, which often prioritize localized approaches. Countries must now adopt more integrative and cooperative measures, collaborating internationally to monitor disease outbreaks and implement responsive interventions.

Moreover, globalisation has contributed to the emergence of new health challenges, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. The influx of foreign investments, while beneficial for economic growth, has often led to increased urbanisation and changes in lifestyle that contribute to non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The rise in sedentary behaviors, unhealthy diets, and substance abuse linked to globalisation underscores the need for comprehensive public health strategies that address both communicable and non-communicable diseases. Public health policies must evolve to incorporate preventive measures that align with these emerging health trends, recognizing that the burden of disease is often a reflection of broader socio-economic changes.

The globalisation of health care systems has also introduced disparities in access to care. While globalisation facilitates the flow of medical knowledge and technologies, it has simultaneously exacerbated inequalities in health care access. Wealthier nations can leverage advancements in telemedicine and digital health, while many low-income countries struggle with inadequate health infrastructure. This disparity raises ethical concerns about health equity and the right to health care. It calls for global health governance frameworks that prioritize equitable access to health resources and technologies, ensuring that advancements benefit all populations rather than a select few.

Furthermore, the impact of globalisation on public health extends to health systems and policies. The World Health Organization (WHO) and other international bodies play crucial roles in shaping global health policies, yet their effectiveness often hinges on the political will of member states. The tension

between national sovereignty and global cooperation can hinder collective action in addressing health threats. For example, vaccine distribution during pandemics has highlighted the challenges of equitable access, as wealthier nations often secure supplies before lower-income countries. This situation calls for robust international agreements that mandate equitable distribution and support for health systems in resource-limited settings..

-Spread of Diseases:

Globalisation may contribute to spreading diseases across borders due to increased international mobility, affecting countries and communities unequally. Some countries may need more resources to deal with pandemics. A prime example is the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), demonstrating how globalisation can facilitate the rapid transmission of pandemics worldwide. Countries with more developed healthcare systems were better equipped to handle the crisis than those with weaker ones (Ghebreyesus, 2020.(

Thus, globalisation significantly impacts health inequalities by widening economic gaps, spreading unhealthy lifestyles, and affecting public health. While globalisation offers opportunities to improve healthcare services and technology, the uneven benefits among countries and communities exacerbate health disparities.

Conclusion:

Globalization is a major driving force reshaping health practices and health culture globally. This study has shown how the impact of globalization manifests in social and cultural shifts that affect the health of individuals and communities. By increasing access to health information and services, changing dietary patterns, and influencing physical activity, globalization offers opportunities to improve health but also contributes to widening health disparities among individuals and nations.

In developed countries, globalization has led to changes in dietary habits and increased rates of non-communicable diseases, while in developing countries, globalization has shown mixed effects, including improved access to healthcare in some cases and worsening health disparities in others. These changes highlight the need for effective strategies to address the negative impacts of globalization and ensure that its benefits are shared equitably.

Among the proposed strategies:

-Enhancing Health Education and Awareness: It is essential to increase efforts in health education and awareness about proper health habits and nutrition, especially in areas significantly affected by changes resulting from globalization. These efforts should target all social groups to ensure access to important health information.

-Improving Access to Healthcare: Efforts should be made to improve access to healthcare in rural and remote areas, whether in developing or developed countries. This includes investing in healthcare infrastructure and providing the necessary resources to deliver quality health services.

-Promoting Healthy Lifestyles: It is important to encourage physical activities and adopt healthy lifestyles through public policies and community initiatives. This can be achieved by providing sports facilities and promoting physical activities in schools and public spaces.

-Addressing Health Inequalities: Strategies should be developed to reduce health disparities among different social groups. This requires strengthening social healthcare programs and providing support to low-income individuals or marginalized groups.

-Monitoring Cultural Impacts: The cultural impacts of globalization on health culture should be closely monitored to ensure that traditional health values are

not undermined. This includes studying the impact of Western dietary patterns and developing strategies to maintain a balance between traditional health culture and global influences.

Understanding the impact of globalization on health culture and health inequalities can provide the foundation needed to develop policies and strategies aimed at promoting public health and reducing global health disparities. By taking proactive and integrated steps, societies can benefit from globalization in a more equitable and sustainable manner.

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