

GLOBALIZATION AND RISKS TO HEALTH: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Globalization is the most controversial phenomenon having different meanings. It is the major point of shift in the world economy and basically defined in economic terms. In its broadest sense, it is the free movement of trade, service, and people across the border. It makes the world a global village and countries interconnected and interdependent. The impact of globalization varies, there is always a debate regarding the negative and positive impact of globalization. In many fields, it has very positive impact, but there are some spheres where it is very difficult to find out the positive impact. Health is one, which faced the enormous risks due to globalization. Hence, the paper tries to discuss and analyze globalization and how it imposes risks on health? Further, it explains how globalization makes the diseases travel and making local health issue a global one, and the need for collective action to tackle global health risks.

Keywords: Globalization, liberalization, privatization, Health, Global Health, etc.

Introduction

The gradually changing world with trans-border free trade, movement of people, ideas, and culture is known as Globalization. Each and every person in the world is part of this change. In the field of health, globalization formed various threats to the health of people. Firstly, through its derivative process called westernization, liberalization. It has a direct effect on the health of people. As a tempting concept, westernization, changed people's lifestyle, their food habits, agricultural process that leads to the emergence of various diseases affecting millions of people worldwide. Secondly, the free flow of trade and people across the border add fuel to the fire. The increasing rate in the people's movement and trade, doubled the chances of communicable and infectious diseases to spread easily. There are various examples of infectious diseases that travel from a local region to all over the world and devastated many societies.

Thus Globalization worsens the health of the people all over the world, making it local to global issues. As the health risks became global it is not possible for countries to manage and secure the health of their population. The global health needs collective action and efforts. There are various organizations working as global health partner and contributing towards global health. This will help to promote and protect health for all, irrespective of their countries and economy.

Defining Globalization

The term globalization is the buzz word of post-cold war era. The term was firstly coined by economist Theodore Levitt in an article entitled "*Globalization of Markets*" in the year 1983.¹ Later, it acquired considerable force during the 1990s. It includes a wide range subject matter, various approaches, and conclusion. In terms of economics it refers to intensification and stretching of economic interrelations across the globe and gigantic flows of capital, technology and trade.² In its broadest term, globalization is not limited to the free flow of economic transaction, goods, capital across the political border, but it is the expansion and intensification of connection and movement of people, culture, ideology, and technology across the globe. Globalization ended the political boundaries and vastly reduced the time and space. There are three processes of globalization. The relationship between these processes and globalization is circular. It stimulates global rules and institution which increases the opening of economies, promoting the policy of liberalization and privatization. Scholte differentiates five approaches towards globalization.³

Internationalization

The most accurate meaning of Globalization is internationalization. The term Global is used for increasing interconnection and interdependence between countries across the border. The free flow of people, goods,

¹Abdelal, R., & Tedlow, R. (2003). Theodore Levitt's 'The Globalization of Markets': An Evaluation after Two Decades.

²Steger, M. B. (2017). *Globalization: A very short introduction* (Vol. 86). Oxford University Press.

³Scholte, J. A. (2005). *Globalization: A critical introduction*. Macmillan International Higher Education.

communication, trade, and capital showed growth in international exchange which is an important part of International relations today.

Liberalization

The term is used and advocated by the neoliberals. Before the process of globalization, there was constraint on cross-border movements of goods, capital, and services. But the process of globalization promoted the free flow of trade across the border and opening of economies. Foreexample, the second half of the twentieth century saw a significant expansion of international trade and commerce as a result of widespread liberalization. The policy of liberation is the offshoot of globalization. A mainreason for the liberalization of international trade has been the multilateral trade negotiations, which culminated in the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO).⁴

Universalization

It refers to the spread of ideas, object experiences to people at all corners of the world. For example, people travel in various countries taking their culture, tradition with them and that become worldwide. Similarly, there are various religion, food habits, lifestyle followed by people across the world is another example of Universalisation.

Westernization

Westernization is a contribution of globalization. It means following the western countries in terms of culture, ideas, and lifestyle. In this, globalization is understood as a largely negative process of homogenization, a post-industrial kind of settlement. Examples include, domination of transnational companies and their development of brand names, aggressive market strategies and advertisement which attracted the consumer to purchase.

De-territorialisation

It means the spread of liberalization and cultural homogenization and elimination of barriers to the flow of trade and good to another country. In other words, it refers to that social space is no longer wholly mapped in terms of territorial places, territorial distances and territorial borders.⁵

Apart from these definitions, there is another side of the coin which include the other meaning of globalization in term of destruction, devastation. There are free flow of drug trafficking, undocumented migration, increase in illegal activities, human trafficking, and spread of various diseases across the globe. Therefore, it is significant to mind how the term Globalization is defined. Today the widely discussed debate is the effect of Globalization on human civilization. Globalization has emerged various uncontrollable situations and social risks like environmental degradation, the spread of various diseases, Human rights violation, etc. Gradually these social risks are expanding, i.e. global problems affect every single member of the society irrespective of their social status, class or power, nationality etc.⁶

Globalization and Risks to Health

As borders vanish, people and goods are free to move, generating new challenges to health. One of the major challenges is increasing health risk. The relations between globalization and health are multidimensional that can affect health in various ways. It has direct consequences at the level of whole populations, individuals and health care delivery systems, and indirect, through the economy and other factors, such as education, sanitation and water supply.⁷ Thus, there are various risks to health and health care, among them trade, travel, changes in life style due to the spread of information have a major effect on health.

Trade

Globalization promotes free flow of trade across the border and opening of economies called Liberalisation. The liberalization of trade affects health in two ways, firstly growing trade leads to spread of chronic diseases through the marketing of unhealthy products, for instance, tobacco, alcohol etc. Secondly, it resulted

⁴Dam, K. W. (1977). The GATT: Law and international economic organization.

⁵Savage, M., Bagnall, G., & Longhurst, B. J. (2004). Globalization and belonging. Sage.

⁶Guogis, A. (2013). Considering the negative impacts of globalization on the social sphere and the alternative of the new governance. Health Policy and Management, 1(5), 7-14.

⁷Woodward, D., Drager, N., Beaglehole, R., & Lipson, D. (2001). Globalization and health: a framework for analysis and action. Bulletin of the World Health Organization, 79, 875-881.

in the easy transmission of infectious diseases through the rapid cross border transmission. Trade in medical products also have negative consequences with respect to equity in access.⁸

According to World Health Organization, tobacco epidemics is the biggest health threat. The shift in the tobacco pandemic in the developing world has been clearly driven by the tobacco industry.⁹ Every year it killed more than seven million people worldwide. Surprisingly, around 80 percent of the 1.1 billion smokers worldwide live in low- and middle-income countries, where the burden of tobacco-related illness and death is heaviest.¹⁰ Tobacco is banned in some countries, only thirty five countries completely banned the advertising, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco. Most of these are industrialized countries. So the tobacco companies target the low and middle income countries. So these countries are at risk. Similarly, alcohol consumption is another area in which the globalization of an industry has led to more health risks.¹¹ The use of alcohol is one of the world's leading reason for death. It leads to more than sixty major types of diseases, including liver cirrhosis, some cancers, and most cases of injuries and violence.

Travel

Globalization makes travel and tourism very easy and cheap promoting health tourism. Due to liberalization of airline industry, it became affordable for more people to travel, with serious consequences and threats to global health. There is rapid increase in the number of international travel due to the advancement of aircraft technology and non-stop flights. As a result diseases, travel with the person from one country to another and spread communicable and infectious diseases. The recent example is the epidemic of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). It was first identified in February 2003 in Vietnam. By the first week of May 2003, 30 countries on six continents had reported a total of more than 7,000 probable cases with more than 500 deaths.¹² Thus the free flow of people makes the local disease regional and finally global, imposing threat to global health.

Due to increase in health tourism, people travel from one country to another country in search of medical facilities that are not available in their parent country. Health tourism can affect in two ways, firstly the travellers seeking medical attention bring the diseases with him. Secondly, health tourism incentivizes the movement of health workers from rural to urban area and from public to private facilities serving the need of foreign consumers. This worsens national residents' access to health services, especially of poorer groups less able to afford private care.¹³

Changes in lifestyle and spread of information technology

Globalization has deeply affected the lifestyle of people around the world. The rapidly growing global food trade, domination of transnational companies, development of brand name, aggressive market strategies, and advertisement attracted the consumer to purchase. The companies dominate the consumer's mind to purchase what they produce. These high fat and calorie food products replace the traditional diets. The spread of western junk food for example the cocacolaization and McDonaldisation which contributed to the global epidemic of obesity, Diabetes etc.

Access to health care through technology has potential health risk. With the growing technology there is increasing trend of Telehealth which is based on the mobile communication provide health services delivery across the globe.¹⁴ Now a days there are various advertisement globally regarding legal prescription of drugs which may be illegal in another country. For example, there are various commercially sponsored

⁸Labonté, R. (2010). Exploring the Rationale for Health in Foreign Policy.

⁹Collin, J. (2002). Think global, smoke local: transnational tobacco companies and cognitive globalisation. *Globalization and Health: Case Studies (London: Palgrave) Globalisation and Trans border Health Risk in the UK.*

¹⁰World Health Organization." Tobacco", 2018. <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/tobacco>.

¹¹Pang, T., &Guindon, G. E. (2004). Globalization and risks to health: As borders disappear, people and goods are increasingly free to move, creating new challenges to global health. These cannot be met by national governments alone but must be dealt with instead by international organizations and agreements. *EMBO reports*, 5(1S), S11-S16.

¹²World Health Organization. (2003). Consensus document on the epidemiology of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

¹³Labonté, R. (2010). Exploring the Rationale for Health in Foreign Policy.

¹⁴Kay, M., Santos, J., &Takane, M. (2011). M-Health: New horizons for health through mobile technologies. *World Health Organization*, 64(7), 66-71.

advertisement which encourages self-medication has dangerous effect on human health. Another example includes the easy access to illegal drugs for illegal traders with thousands of counterfeit incidents and increasing drug trafficking. Information technologies and sales via online pharmacies have allowed the criminal element to thrive in an unregulated environment of anonymity, deception, and lack of adequate enforcement.¹⁵

From Local to Global Health

The free mobility of people and trade disease travel easily from one place to another. It easily spread a local diseases all over the world. There are various examples which showed that a disease occur in a place had spread across the world having devastating impact on human civilization. These issues no longer limited to the territory of a country.

Global health refers to the health of the population in the global context. It refers to trans-national health or health concern that crosses national borders. The impact of globalization has increased the health risk across the world. Every day new types of diseases emerging some of them we know and some we don't.

The occurrence of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003, acted as a public health emergencies throughout the world. The advent and rapid international spread of SARS revealed to all global leaders, prime ministers, ministers of health, and heads of state that how an infectious disease could quickly cross borders and deliver health risk and economic setbacks on an unbelievable scale. The spread of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Virus (H5N1) in poultry flocks of Asia, Europe and in Africa, has put the world on high alert for an influenza pandemic.¹⁶ Another example include the occurrence of HIV/AIDS, which was started from Congo, however it is now spread all over the world. A person with tuberculosis can infect 15 people a year, wherever they are. According to an estimate in the Causes of Death in 2008, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) caused 70 percent of deaths globally.¹⁷ Thus globalization possess serious health risk as the boarder disappear it is impossible for a country to manage such diseases which spread easily and rapidly. The growing realization that in a globalized world, national or even regional healthcare management unable to tackle the health risk single headedly. The unprecedented risk to health need for collective action for global health.

Collective Action for Global Health

Due to globalization led trans-border health risk there is a serious need for collective action for global health. There are many international organisations working for global health. WHO, the Rockefeller Foundation, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and only in the last two decades, the World Bank¹⁸ have increased influence in global health priorities. Health risks and health issues are no longer confined within the department of health, now it become a matter of discussion for various multilateral organisation like G8, BRICS. World Health Organisation, an UN specialised agency for health continuously working as a guardian of health for all. Now WHO joined by many partners. Another major step was taken by UN Security Council which addressed HIV/AIDS. Nowadays many private and non-profit sectors have joined for international health as relatively new players like the Global Fund for AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis (TB), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation,¹⁹ contributing towards global health.

Global health is an area which need the collective action and global partnership of all the state, non-state actors, NGOs, INGOs etc. The major global health partnership include, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. It is a global fund established by UN which aims to eradicate these three disease for the attainment of Millennium Development Goal. The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) is a global health partnership for increasing access to vaccine in poor countries. Another example of global partnership includes The Stop TB Partnership to eliminate Tuberculosis. It include more than

¹⁵Mackey, T. K., & Liang, B. A. (2011). The global counterfeit drug trade: patient safety and public health risks. *Journal of pharmaceutical sciences*, 100(11), 4571-4579.

¹⁶Rodier, G., Greenspan, A. L., Hughes, J. M., & Heymann, D. L. (2007). Global public health security. *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, 13(10), 1447.

¹⁷Boutayeb, A., & Boutayeb, S. (2005). The burden of non-communicable diseases in developing countries. *International journal for equity in health*, 4(1), 2.

¹⁸Ruger, J. P. (2005). The changing role of the World Bank in global health. *American journal of public health*, 95(1), 60-70.

¹⁹Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Global Health Program. [Retrieved on 2nd August, 2018] from <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/GlobalHealth>.

1500 partner and organizations include international, nongovernmental and governmental organizations and patient groups.²⁰ Apart from these partnership there are other alliances and public-private partnership including Roll Back Malaria, The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) The World Bank's Multi-Country HIV-AIDS Program (MAP), and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) etc.

Conclusion

International mobility is responsible for the risk to health of people across the globe. The development leads to the emergence of uncontrollable threats to health either directly or indirectly. Despite of the hot debate regarding globalization, it cannot be denied that it created unprecedented challenges and risks to health. Now a days it has become very complex to understand the health related risk. It is possible to track the direct effect of globalization on health but impossible to track the indirect effect of it. The nature of these risks are trans-national so most of the countries are unable to tackle it. In such situation it is important that the international organisation should co-operate with various actors and support them to minimize risk through policy recommendation, regulation and advocacy.

Major UN agencies like WHO, UNICEF, World Bank along with other multilateral organisation continuously working for global health in partnership with other non-state actors for eradication of various diseases. As the health issue become global it is not easy to tackle all these problems but working for common cause will definitely leads to success. So Global health needs a global partnership of multilateral organisation working for a common interest of protecting and promoting health of all.

²⁰ Stop TB partnership. Our partners. [Retrieved on 15th August 2018] from http://www.stoptb.org/about/partners_landing.asp.