IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON DIETARY PATTERNS OF PEOPLE IN NEPAL

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This study was carried out by Ms Pranshu Khakurel using desk research as well as through primary data collection. For correspondence, email Pransu at: pransukh8@gmail.com.

Centre for Research Uptake - Nepal (CRUN)
Nepal Institute of Research and Communications (NIRC)
Kathmandu, Nepal
www.nepalcomms.org
Email: info@nepalcomms.org/contactnirc@gmail.com
Subidhanagar, Tinkune, Kathmandu, Nepal

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Introduction to Globalization and its impact on Food industry

Globalization can be viewed as a phenomenon which leads to the openness of the international markets, increased capital flow, migration, technological diffusion and popularity of information technology (Olayiwala, Satyibo and Atinbo, 2004). This has made countries interconnected, interrelated and interdependent in terms of economic, social and political scenarios. Globalization has played an important role in terms of opening of the borders resulting in fast flow of goods, services, finance, people and ideas and bringing changes in institutions and policies at national and international levels that facilitate or promote such flows (World Health Organization, n.d.).

The emergence of globalization and international trade has created an impact on the internationalization of the food market of the manufactured food all over the globe (Senauer & Venturini, 2005). Despite the exchange of food across national borders, regions and countries existing from centuries, the study of relationship between food and globalization is relatively new (Phillips, 2006). The trend of agri-food trade is continuously evolving from trade of agriculture raw products to agriculture processed food which has shifted the importance of agricultural product in the global market (Senauer & Venturini, 2005).

Despite the practice from years, the adoption of cross learning from the food systems began only at 1970s and 1980s with the emergence of Transnational Corporations and global governance. This shifted the focus of globalization of food from the initial exchange of commodities to good exchange at global level and expanded from closed production systems to global production systems (Miller 1995; Mintz & Du Boitz, 2002). This phenomenon of food globalization has affected dietary preferences of the people living in the developing world (Phillips, 2006), which is largely influenced by the emergence of the supermarkets and grocery retail stores, restaurant culture and by the replacement of the local diets by the imported food products (Lentz, 1999).

In context of Nepal, trade liberation, privatization and globalization fostered only after 1990 with signing of the treaty with the World Trade Organization in 2004 (Subedi et al., 2018). Along with the establishment of the first supermarket Bishal Bazar in 1973, the popularity of supermarkets flourished in Nepal with the establishment of Bhatbhateni Super market in 1984, which expanded its business prospects throughout the country with its 13 outlet in different
areas of Nepal (Bhatbhateni, n.d.). The popularity of Bhatbhateni Super market resulted in emergence of similar grocery stores throughout the urban centers by SalesBerry, KK Mart, Big Mart and other grocery stores.

**Dietary Trends and Shifting Paradigms**

The paradigms of diet have observed to shift over the years. During this study, an exploration in the consumption patterns and the thereby associated risk was made among the women in Kathmandu. With the emergence of supermarkets and grocery stores the popularity of homegrown food has been declining and higher reliance on the packaged food is seen. In this context, Mrs. Nita Khakurel, a housewife, compared the patterns of changes in grocery shopping in the period of 30 years and stated, “I remember accompanying my grandmother to Chhetrapati and Ason for buying basic necessities as she did most of the shopping. She used to grow vegetables and fruits in the kitchen garden which were the major source of vegetables for us. At times, I remember people bringing vegetables in Kharpan at home from where we used to buy vegetables on a daily basis. Now, it's different, we can buy food anytime from the nearest grocery stores, and for the supplies that are unavailable we can readily go to supermarkets around.”

This shift of popularity from the traditional process of acquiring food towards packaged food has been increasing with the increase of the popularity of packaged food, which is less costly, advertised well and more convenient in the present context (Reisch, Eberle and Lorek, 2013). As a result, “...there is a gradual shift of consumption from the traditional snacks which included popcorns and soybeans to the noodles, which is not only popular in urban context but is also largely popular in rural areas. In urban areas, it's the taste and convenience that plays greater role but in rural context lower awareness also results in promotion of the diet based on packaged food”, says Ms Uma Lohani, a community health worker at Rural Health and Education Service Trust.

Adding on to this, it was observed that youths these days largely prefer having packaged food and like visiting restaurants despite knowing what a healthy diet looks like. In this context, a respondent, Ms. Utsaha Khakurel, a masters level student who is also working in Naagi ko Honey says, “I do know what healthy food should look like. It should have less carbs, less caffeine, more fiber, vegetables and proteins everyday. Although I try, I am not conscious in
terms of consumption mainly because I get weird cravings in terms of food and have a busy schedule, so I need to have fast and quick food in the restaurants in the afternoon which are cheaper and more convenient, and can’t stop eating them on a daily basis.”

This very preference due to the cheaper price and greater convenience offered by the packaged food in short run amidst the busy lifestyle, has undoubtedly brought hidden costs in terms of economy and health in long run. Considering the health related aspects in this scenario, Dr. Aditi Agrawal, an MBBS graduate from Kathmandu Medical College states the consequences of eating packaged food as, “the food we eat are largely packaged and processed and contain preservatives, other than that to increase the production, we see people using a lot of pesticides. Both preservatives and pesticides are poisons and often remain undigested, causing different chronic non communicable diseases be it in form of diabetes, hypertension, obesity and Guillain Barre Symptom (a serious nerve disorder) in a very young age.” Likewise, Dr. Niraj Poudyal, an economist shares, “This could have detrimental effects on the economy in future”, who sees the shift of priority from productive sectors to health sectors, which can be a major factor in terms of getting lower output in the economy in the days to come due to the health risk associated with the changing dietary pattern.

CONCLUSION

Globalization has definitely made our lives easier and more convenient particularly because of sharing of ideas and innovations in international scenarios. The same holds true for food where people are having easy access and availability at low cost. However, for the long run it becomes crucial to consider the repercussions in our health and in the economy which has been realized with this shift in the dietary patterns and the lifestyles of the people.

REFERENCES


