

“Globesity” An Outbreak: Asia

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ABSTRACT

As a phenomenon that brings change in various aspects of life, globalization has become one of the factors driving positive and negative changes in society. One of these changes is obesity which is a health problem in various regions, especially developing countries like Asia. Economic growth that occurs through foreign trade and investment, as well as technological developments, have had a devastating effect on the lifestyle of the world community, which increasingly relies on a small amount of its power while simultaneously consuming high amounts of calories. Lack of government regulation and public awareness related to public health increasingly facilitate the development of obesity in developing societies.

Keywords: *Obesity, Globalization, Economy, Health, Culture*

Sebagai sebuah fenomena yang membawa perubahan di dalam berbagai aspek kehidupan, globalisasi telah menjadi salah satu faktor pendorong perubahan – perubahan positif dan negatif didalam masyarakat. Salah satu perubahan tersebut adalah obesitas yang menjadi permasalahan kesehatan diberbagai wilayah khususnya negara berkembang seperti Asia. Pertumbuhan ekonomi yang terjadi melalui perdagangan dan investasi luar negeri serta perkembangan teknologi telah memberikan dampak buruk bagi pola hidup masyarakat dunia yang semakin mengandalkan sedikit dari tenaga yang dimiliki namun secara bersamaan masih mengonsumsi kalori berjumlah tinggi. Kurangnya regulasi pemerintah serta kesadaran masyarakat terkait kesehatan u.mum semakin memudahkan berkembangnya obesitas didalam masyarakat berkembang.

Kata Kunci: *Obesitas, Globalisasi, Ekonomi, Kesehatan, Budaya*

An Overview

Globalization to this era is one of the most influential phenomena in the world due to the complex results it brings to the advancement of civilization. The growing pace of movement has brought progressive changes in both the economic and social spectrum. The rising pace of movement between substances in the world is allowing the distribution of growth happens in a short amount of time and this also resulting in a more interconnected between parts of the world. Although it seems beneficiary to the world, globalization has also a rising complex problem within the society from environmental degradation, rising number of transnational crime and even health problems such as obesity and overweight. This is greatly affected by the rising pace of movements between substances and the economic and social context of globalization which happens due to the information flow and social proximity within the globalized world. (Costa-Font and Mas, 2016)

One of the most destructive problems humans always face throughout their life is food security in which this problem has been the concentration of various institutions such

as state, international bodies or non-governmental organizations as it poses a critical turn for the wellbeing of people around the world. It is not merely the matter of providing enough food for the people but also providing enough nutrition within the food that is provided to ensure the health of the people which in turn the failure in fulfilling those needs will result in various health problems such as malnutrition, diarrhea, obesity and many more. To this day the problem of food insecurities in the form of obesity is affecting the most part of the world especially the developing countries in which there is a higher number of fast-food chains spreading within the developing countries. This then results in the changing pattern of the social lifestyle of the people in which there is a tendency to purchase foods coming from the fast-food chains. This behavior is then resulting in various health problems such as obesity and high cholesterol. (Dhurandar, 2016)

The phenomenon of increasing the fast-food chain available for people around the world is closely related to globalization as its driving forces. This is because at one side food is significantly related to the history of globalization as ways of integrating the global integration of the food market and appetite. It has been responsible for the cultural interchange, economic interdependence, diplomacy and even strategic diplomacy for a state to boost their cultural dominance over the world and this simultaneously helps in providing new jobs and boosting national economies. While in one turn it helped in the spread of new cultures it has also rising numbers of concerns regarding the unhealthy changes within the global food consumption which results in a higher intake of high sodium and high fats with highly processed diets that resulting in obesity and linking to a various health problem. (Forbes, 2019)

According to the World Health Organization, the number of people suffers from obesity has tripled since 1975 and in 2016 there are more than 1.9 billion adults were overweight and 650 million of it was obese. (WHO, 2018) This rising number is significantly happening due to the rising impact of globalization ever since 1970 which is the result of a higher number of fast-food opening its branch overseas due to domestic success. (Time.com, 2009) Although the rising number of fast-food franchise is not the only driving forces of obesity and overweight it has been the primary cause which then according to WHO is also supported with the changing of social and cultural development that is not equipped with proper regulation and education towards the society also contribute as the driving factors behind overweight and obesity. (WHO, 2018)

Obesity and overweight are commonly the cause of several severe health problems such as cardiovascular disease (heart disease and stroke) which are the leading cause of death in 2012, also diabetes and cancer. WHO reported that obesity and overweight have been leading more death than underweight. (WHO, 2018) This phenomenon is even worse for children that also link to their physiological health. Globally this phenomenon is more likely to occur in developing region mainly Asia, Latin America, and Africa which currently is the prominent market for the fast-food chain. This is also supported by the fact these foods that are being sold are those that are high in fat and sodium and is highly processed which is the most appealing for the taste of majority of the world's population as well this food is marketed as the food of that upholds the western tag which is preferable to the consumer within non-western countries. Which could explain the social cause of the effect of globalization on the obesity epidemic? (Costa-Font and Mas, 2016)

The recent take on this obesity epidemic is striking Southeast Asia region which there has been a dramatically rising weight over the population across the region. This is

greatly due to the changing pattern of lifestyle that involving in less physical activity and unhealthy consumption preferences. Once thought to be some of the leanest populations on earth currently has affected by the higher number of obese and overweight within their population. The growing consumption of processed goods as international food chains enter the local market are all contributing factors to increasing obesity rates. Both rural and urban populations are seeing the impact of traditional grains, fruits and vegetables being pushed off the kitchen table to make way for convenient, high-sugar, high-calorie processed foods. (sea-globe.com, 2018)

Economic Dimension of Globalization as the Driving Force

One of the most prominent aspects of globalization is the unprecedented economic developments throughout multiple economic activities such as an increasing the number of investments that often boost multiple aspects such as income which then support the development of the majority of the world area. One of the distinct characterization of globalization is the increasing trade liberalization in which this phenomenon then have it serious beneficial spillover on other economical aspects such as an advancement in technology, infrastructure being built to support the economy and the availability of various goods and services which allows more opportunity for employment and reduction for the price due to the elimination of tariffs. (Siddiqui, 2017) Although there is a certain degree of beneficial advancement within certain economical context, this unprecedented economic advancement is seen by the author as a driving force of various health outcomes that not entirely beneficial.

Ever since the 1970s, there has been an increasing number of capital movements to developing states through the act of foreign direct investment and at the same time the growing number of *multinational cooperation* is spreading their operational system to areas with even further distances from their home countries. This increasing scope of areas is aligned with the higher impact of interconnectedness between one area to another while also helps with the advancement in development. The investment comes from foreign investors is used by states to open new assets of the economy such as industries and means to process their natural resources. This, of course, requires labor in order to operate the business which usually absorbed from local labors that often cheaper. (Harvey, 2004)

The increasing capital movements as part of globalization is not only supporting the production and productivity but also the capability of buying certain goods. This capability is, in fact, keep increasing especially in developing areas in which that capital is greatly needed. This is greatly due to the tendency of the movement of capital is followed by it being used as a means to open a new business that will require them to absorb local employees. This then generates wage distribution towards the workers and it boosts their consumption intake of goods that are produced with industries around the world. This consumption capability is also supported by the openness of the market which then providing cheaper goods and services within the market by eliminating tariffs and also supported by the improvement of the company production system. Hence the capital movements have led the world to cheaper goods and higher capability of consuming it.

This phenomenon is, of course, spreading in variations of goods and services ranging from agricultural products, goods, fashion products, cultural products, and the newest trends is technological products and with a different form of business. One thing in common about all of the business is convenience which is the prominent demand of today's market. Hence the business that manages to provide it with the best quality as

the market demand will gain more domination towards the market. This is of course greatly affected by the increase of economic activities that involving less physical activities such as jobs that are increasingly assisted by technological advancement which requires the worker to work less physically. (Costa-Font and Mas, 2016) This increasing activity that requires less physical activity hence will be reducing the capability of exercise the sufficient amount of calories that have been taken.

The mentioned aspect of economic changes brought by globalization then acts as an underlying cause of a higher number of obesity in regions throughout the world. This is of course then affecting another spectrum such as the social dimension of globalization that strengthens the economic dimension and vice versa. This is because economic changes or social changes will follow with changes within each other as it is an aspect that aligned within the society

Political Dimension of Globalization as the Driving Forces

As the changes brought by the economy in globalization are increasing its impact hence the governments of states need to prepare and adapt itself with proper regulations and strategy to accommodate the changes. This is certainly has been done by the government around the world that depend upon the expected outcomes. The prevailing regulations that often happens are the tendency towards the neo-liberalization strategy that decreasing state interventions within the economic sectors of their state and relying on private sectors to boost the economy. State at this point mainly acts as a facilitator and ensuring the environment of business both domestic and international is favorable for corporations form their country.

Ever since the emergence of the Bretton Wood system, the political context of the economy has been increasingly intertwined. State are becoming more interconnected with each other mainly from trade activities that currently regulated under free trade principles. This is coming from the fact that in order to put up with the economy the state needs to put themselves under this adjustment which means there will be fewer tariff barriers on goods that come to their market. This is also resulting in a more open economy that allows interdependent between places around the world.

Besides the elimination of tariff other forms of political context as the driving forces of obesity are the regulations coming from developing countries that often comply with investors' needs. Meaning that the state would provide less strict regulations to increase their competitiveness to gain more investment from *multinational corporations*. This less strict regulation and government attitude that often in favor of the investor has led to an increasing amount of new foreign companies to open across the world.

The logic behind this is that the political dimension that has been favoring investors then allow more business to be presented towards the domestic market. This business that is mainly in touch directly with the society at the level it could drive obesity is mainly operating in food and beverage such as McDonalds and KFC or manufacturing processed food alone such as Nestle, Cadbury, Coca Cola and many more. This then provides the consumer with more products that are nutrition-wise is not necessarily beneficial but only provides flavor preferences that often accompanied by high calories, fat, and sugar.

Another level of that is the absence of proper nutrition education towards the society which should be provided by the government which should be done at earlier stages of education primarily through school. (Consta-Font and Mas, 2016) With the underlying

political dimension that is supporting globalization hence putting the citizen at risk of suffering from obesity and higher calorie intake without the proper use of it. (WHO, 2018)

Social and Cultural Dimension as the Driving Force

As it is mentioned before there are several aspects of globalization that could be the driving forces of obesity and higher calorie intake within the current society and social and cultural aspect is prominently the most influential aspect that driving this phenomenon. Globalization as a phenomenon is changing the most aspect of our life which is our social life. This is greatly due to the increasing tension between one part of the world and the other that is spread through a lot of means such as cultural product, economic expansion, the television and the most advanced yet which is the internet and the necessary technology that comes with it. This is of course accordingly will spark new forms of social custom and cultural custom around the world. Globalization as the phenomena that attack any aspects of the world needs to be accompanied by the necessary adapting capabilities from its human. This is supported by the economic changes as the driving forces of other changes within the social spectrum as it is described earlier within this paper.

One of the main changes brought by these social change is the increasing dominance brought by western countries especially the United States of America that once was the world hegemon. The changes brought by them is penetrating through their economic dominance through investment and other cultural product that is produced and distributed across the world. Both of that matter also supported by their strategies in impairing other state policy and cultural dominance which able to shape the current global culture and customs. According to Mary Footer with the results of globalization then the values within the global culture are formed by the globalization that is spread by technology and the internet which helps with the diffusion of various values and customs which then becomes the global culture. (Habermas. 1998 on Footer and Grabber, 2000)

One of the few examples of social changes brought by the changing pattern of calorie intake and the discouraging expending of calories. It is argued that within today's world that there is decreasing pricing of foods within the market which is due to the elimination of a good amount of tariffs and increasing efficiency in food-producing. This decreasing price of foods then allowing the society to purchase and consume more food. This increasing consumption of food is accompanied by the emergence of processed food within the market that often is full of fat, sugars, sodium, and low nutrition compounds but manages to provide convenience and flavor which is a huge success for the market. This higher consumption of food that is low in nutrients is unfortunately accompanied by the decreasing capability of expending it with the appropriate amount of physical ability. With the increasing technological advancement in transportation that allowing people to travel more with less amount of physical activity. Besides that, the changing pattern of lifestyle such as there are more jobs that require less physical activity and more about creativity and brainstorming (shifting from manufacturing to service). This sort of activity does require energy but not as much as it is on an intensive physical activity. (Poser and Philipson, 2003)

There are other changes within the social culture which is the needed convenience for providing meals during the day. With the increasing economic activity "rising to the bottom" often resulting in busier and task intensive work for people but at the same time the need to consume sufficient energy is demanding. Hence people often decide to

convert and purchase their meals may it from food vendors or processed food that could be easily cooked at home. Another reason is that there is a decreasing involvement of women in preparing foods in the household due to their involvement within the workplace and has not been completely replaced by their male counterparts in preparing food often turning people to choose fast food that has a delicious taste without necessarily carrying the required nutrients and energy. (Costa-font and Mas, 2016)

On the cultural level, it is often the prevailing delicacies that being massively consumed is food coming from western cuisine which is high in fat, sugar, and sodium but it is a flavor profile that is delicious and enjoyed by people around the world. This of course then becomes the dominant commodity in the market which is a cycle that is perpetually demanded and supplied by the market. This is also supported by the growing economy of those areas that boost their foreign investment to extend MNCs which based on their culture take which means the dominating food industry is coming from those cultural backgrounds. (Pan et al, 2013)

From the above preview, it is clear that there is the social dimension that primarily causing the rising calorie intake around the society that is mainly due to the increasing influence of cultural changes and social adaptation on economic changes brought by globalization. This is in narrow explanation is the increasing activity that requires less physical movement which then doesn't help at the expense twice the calories taken by our body. (Poser and Philipson, 2003) That is supported by the decreasing involvement in meal making due to the “convenient” culture within globalizing society. This is, of course, resulting in a society that concerns less on nutritional value and more on their convenience and flavor. (Costa-font and Mas, 2016)

Asia the Emerging Land of Obese

One of the most prominent regions that currently experiences intense economic growth in Asia as one of the largest inhabited continents in the world that both high in natural and human resources is being one of the sexiest destinations for investment. This is due to the fact that Asia manages to provide a market for that investment and all necessary traits for a good investment environment. (Cohn, 2012) This investment is then is the driving force of economic changes in certain places such as explained above, which promotes the transfer of capital to the region and boosts their economy as it is used to promote trade and industry that needs to absorb local workers. This then promotes an increasing income to the domestic worker which allows them with a sufficient amount of capital to buy products that coming from this investment which in return this even more appealing for investors to invest in Asia and open a new branch of their business in Asia as a large market for them.

One of many kinds of investment that coming to Asia is dominated by Western Style Fast-Food outlets from around the world such as McDonald's, KFCs, Burger King, Pizza Hut, Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts, Wendy's are opening their outlet massively throughout Asia and even more there is number of similar business emerging from Asia such as Chatime, J.Co, Jolibee and many more which also dominating the Asia market with their Western-Style menus that often enjoyed by locals palate. This is then become a local favorite for everyday intake that does not necessarily provide enough nutritional value but offers robust flavor and junks. (Pan et al, 2013) At the same time, there is an increasing number of sales for processed food and soft drinks within Asia from 1990 to 2006 which is up to 127% in Asia although there are a decreasing sales in 2017 on soft drinks it is still a high percentage. Moreover, there has been an increasing adaptation

for this western-style food to be adapted with local businesses such as fried chicken in different branding with a cheaper price such as Hisana Fried Chicken, Chicken Geprek Bu Choy and many more which then giving more access for the people to those sorts of food.

This could result in a damaging outcome which is obesity and other health risks such as diabetes to the Asian population. The undergoing economic and social change is resulting in massive changes in lifestyle and dietary style as mentioned above which is heading towards the westernized patterns of diets and less physically active activities. This is, of course, happens under the influence of intense food marketing of those vendors that are not equally assessed with government policy regarding public health which currently hasn't been well implemented. (Am J, 2007 on Pan et al, 2013)

These changes in the long term will result in a severe health risk to the population of Asia as it is prone to the severity of obesity and relevant health risk. The tendency of the society that is not equipped with basic nutrition knowledge and health education which could put Asia at risk of obesity outbreak such in the US previously. A similar pattern was seen in regions such as the US and resulting in a devastating increase of deaths caused by non-communicable disease and cardiovascular disease caused by obesity and a high intake of cholesterol. (WHO, 2018)

This is even more severe for children that grow up with the rapid advancement of technology which limits their physical activity. Originally children could spend more time on activities outdoor but now mostly dominated with indoor activities and relying on their devices to surf the internet. This is, of course, prone to increase weight for them which also equipped with consumption over less nutritional high-fat foods.(WHO,2018) In 2016 18% of children, age 5-24 were overweight and obese and this number is expected to grow over the year if necessary changes is not being made.

Changes on Demand

The severe changes brought by globalization on contributing damaging changes in health are demanding changes and solutions from the relevant sector which on this point is the responsibility of the government and their organization. In this matter they could act as the contributing actors especially in constructing public health policy such as providing standards on foods which covers food that is also coming from industry (processed foods), educational measure for the society at earliest level, limit non-nutritional value high fat sodium and sugar foods, and regulating investment regarding opening new fast food vendors within their region.

Of course, other relevant sectors such as the World Health Organization also need to take their part such as imposing standards and frameworks measurement for countries especially developing countries as the mainland of obese. In the long run, if necessary action does not take place the health of the population will be in danger which resulting in a shorter life span.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is an alignment between the intensity of globalization with the growing epidemic of obesity, especially in developing the region. This matter is brought by the economic, political and socio-cultural dimensions of globalization which intertwined and produce a new pattern of lifestyle and dietary which is not entirely beneficial to each other. The increasing economic activity which boosts the growth of important sectors has also reduced the need for the human to physically work

themselves but at the same time, their consumption habits and calories intake is increasing which in return there is an imbalance between the two. Also with the increasing dominance of western-style products which shaped the culture has allowed the changes happen within every aspect especially dietary pattern that shifts from healthy full of vegetables and grain to foods high in fat and sugar and is highly processed. These changes took place due to the lack of regulations and public awareness regarding health and nutrition which is currently should be the job of the government as the party with access to policymaking and implementing it to the society.

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