



CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION AND IDENTITY CRISIS

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Abstract

Globalization is not a new phenomenon to talk about. It is getting more complex and multidimensional day by day. In recent years, from politics to the fashion industry, no social domain is now able to avoid its effects. If globalization is considered to be a positive development of the past two centuries, then is it right to say that everything that attaches to this wonder will have a positive effect too? Culture has always been considered something extremely valuable by the people it is related to. Increasing interconnectedness around the world has contributed significantly in people to know of various cultural value practices globally. This paper gives an idea of how a person's identity is formulated. After discussing globalization and culture, this paper argues how these two domains got connected to each other and eventually played a vital role in formulating the identity of a person today. All these cultural interactions are ultimately paving the way to an identity crisis. This paper reviews both its pros and cons to get a more balanced view of cultural globalization. For this purpose, multiple sources of cultural globalization have also been discussed. This growing crisis might not be avoidable considering all the modern age advancements but what we can do is restrict its impact on our cultural identities to save both our distinct culture and identity.

Key Words: Phenomenon, Culture, Identity crisis, Cultural globalization, Development, Interconnectedness.

Introduction

Globalization has become such a phenomenon that people cannot exclude or repel while living in the 21st century. The way it is benefitting numerous fields of social life, global cultures are also getting affected by it. As Vineet (Kaul, 2012) argues that Cultural globalization is bringing a homogenous culture for the world's citizens to eliminate the differences between them. But at the same time, it is endangering many local and regional cultures as well. Studying culture was never



this important because our interactions were limited in the past. Culture gives people a sense of belongingness and this also distinguishes them from the rest of the world. Opting for new cultural values completely tailors the identity. Unfollowing your culture is not only wearing away the distinct cultures but snatching the identities of the people as well.

In this context, there are several sources of globalization that are playing a vital role in altering people's identities as they are trying to follow the universalized culture so they may not feel left behind. Advancement in telecommunication is on top of the list among all the sources as it has made it extremely easy for people to interact with global cultures and these interactions are intermingling different cultural values that eventually steal the authenticity of all ethnicities. Due to this advancement, the concept of identity has become more complex than ever before. (KOC, 2006)

In addition to this debate, no one can deny the significance of cultural globalization, but admiring other cultures does not necessarily mean opting for it, and not following a certain cultural value other than yours means that you are against it. But the way cultural identities are getting inter-mixed is getting quite alarming now. Measurements should be taken by both government and individuals to not further accelerate its negative impacts.

Understanding Culture

Being a human, Culture is a terminology everyone is familiar with somehow. Everything that makes a person or group of people different from another person or group of people can be called their culture. It can be called both integral and distinguished parts of a person's behavior. Culture is not something new to discuss, it has been a topic of study for centuries because of its continuous evolution. Nothing related to human beings is stagnant so is culture. It includes both physical (the type of clothes you wear, food you eat, music you listen to, festivals you celebrate) and non-physical elements (how you treat your elders, customs you follow, and beliefs you have faith in) of our society. According to Merriam Webster, "the Characteristics features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time." United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization defines Culture, "as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society or a social group, that encompasses, not only art and literature, but lifestyles, ways of living together, value, systems, traditions, and beliefs" (UNESCO, 2001).

People around the world have formed many cultures over time and even altered the already existing cultures. These alterations have changed the way people think, feel, value, and behave while living in a society (Akshata R. Naik, 2023). One generation passes on its culture to the next generations yet none of them has transferred it exactly as they received. Every generation filters the culture they receive, adds things they find necessary and, remove everything they are unable to follow anymore. In this way, some cultures become more stable and influential while the existence of others gets in danger.



Despite of decades' research work on it, no universal definition of Culture is defined yet and the reason could be that no one is born with an ascribed culture, even if they are, humans are bound to adopt new values from the environment they live in.

Globalization

Humans have always wanted and tried to lessen the distance, trade, and settle in far-off places. It was not this easy until the 19th century after the first wave of globalization. (Kolb, 2018) This Rapid increase in technological and transportation advancement has made people around the globe more interdependent than ever before. It can be referred to as a process of increased interconnectedness of people, cultures, politics, and economies around the world. Everyone has access to unlimited information and ideas about everything happening at the international level. This increased interlink and reciprocal reliance are entitled as 'globalization'. According to the World Health Organization, "globalization is the increased interconnectedness and interdependence of peoples and countries."

Ronald Robertson, a renowned sociologist has described Globalization as "the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (Robertson, 2000).

What is Cultural Globalization?

Cultural Globalization is the most observable and directly experienced form of globalization as people around the world are watching international news, watching cross-border dramas and movies, interacting with foreigners, and shopping from international brands on daily basis (Chung, 2006). Globalization has made it possible for the whole world to be wired and plugged into TV programs, movies, news, music, lifestyle, and entertainment of those advanced countries (AbdulRaheem).

What is Identity? And how it is formed?

The two most common approaches to describe Identity can be quite opposite to each other. If we talk about the traditional approach, 'Identity' is the feeling of sameness, unity, and belongingness. According to Mustafa, Stuart Hall defines identity as a constitution based on the recognition of familiar and mutual descent and he did not restrict these to only ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical, territorial, cultural, and political domains. However, the discursive approach defines identity as 'a never-ending process'. The continuous process of 'becoming' rather than 'being'. It is continuously changing due to the cultural, political, and social developments along with technological advancement and globalization (KOC, 2006).

While trying to explain the same term, the conflicting point of both approaches is the nature of the term being 'fixed or fluid'. the traditionalists entitled it as an 'eternal' --- the other approach sees identity as a 'conditional' thing (Woodward, 1997).

How to know if you are going through Identity Crisis?



Having a strong sense of identity leads to other positive approaches in a person's life. He feels more confident, capable of getting out of his comfort zone, trying new things, and fostering a more meaningful presence in society, etc. A person's identity changes throughout his life span and it is not a bad thing at all as far as he feels confident about what he is, what he is doing, or what he wants to do in his life. The actual problem occurs when a person starts questioning his self. When he is not happy with himself or he does not exactly know what he wants to do with his life.

People are bound to counter multiple desired or undesired changes in their lives. Some of them may prove to be minor and do not affect them at all but a few of them have the power to completely alter their identity. These can be a sudden change in environment, loss of a dear one, cultural barrier with people around them, change in other's behavior towards them, any unacceptable trauma, becoming a parent, and physical or mental illness, etc. (Villines, 2024).

Sources of Cultural Globalization

- **Technological Advancement**

Innovations in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have contributed a lot to the ongoing increased identity crisis. Whenever a new technology or gadget is introduced, people tend to have more knowledge about it or want to purchase it to maintain their self-made obligatory presence on social media platforms and be a part of the globalized society. The more the world is shrinking and interconnecting, the more this problem is increasing in society. Mustafa states this cause as "the international mobility of capital, services, and technology can result in the mobility of ideas, social forms, and ultimately cultural integration; therefore, boundaries between cultures and their ties to territory or place becomes transcended and difficult to determine or maintain" (KOC, 2006).

It is costing people their individuality, ethnicity, uniqueness, and their own culture, followed and fostered by their ancestors for centuries to become a noticeable part of the global community.

- **Travelling/ Tourism**

Media might have become one of the biggest channels of cultural globalization but people are still the most significant carriers of the cultural traffic. Tourism is now considered more cultural than economic. Local cultures, festivals, arts & crafts, traditions, historical sites, etc. are the main attractions for a tourist while travelling. This phenomenon is known as 'cultural tourism' which affects both cultures and societies both directly and indirectly. The nations need to protect their cultural differences and diversities in to order to attract more tourists. Cultural tourism not only affects the traveler but the host as well (Basouli, 2020).

The acculturation effect (the process of adaptation and adjustment), hybrid culture (mixture of different cultures), and cultural commodification (transformation of culture from authentic to artificial) are some of the negative effects that tourism is causing on local culture. Tourism is not only endangering the local cultures but also raising concerns about the authenticity of those



cultures as well. The local people now try to make the local culture more attractive to sell it to the tourists even if they have to compromise their originality and despite knowing the fact that this whole process will eventually make their culture disappear, they are happy with the little financial benefits they are gaining (Shahzalal, 2016).

- **Media-Imperialism**

Media imperialism is a homogenization theory that is growing because of all the recent information and communication technological advancements. It is not only about the people making, editing and spreading the content globally but the driving forces behind them. Those who control the media control cultural globalization. This cultural globalization is eroding all the individual cultures around the world in the name of cultural globalization that is eating away the individuality and cultural identity of the people as well (Chung, 2006).

Some people support the idea of the world being a 'global village' while others are against it. Dawei Wang is raising this question as "does globalization turn our planet into a world society, a global village? Or conversely, does it disintegrate the nation-state system, and dissolve stable national identities?". Critics of globalization argue that the media directly or indirectly is controlling and invading other cultures. The powerful countries are somehow imposing their culture on the rest of the world and the people around the globe adding it to their day-to-day life so they may not be considered old-fashioned or conservative. On the other hand, people praise this smooth and worldwide flow of information that globalization has made possible (Wang, 2008). This worldwide spread of one uniform culture is increasing nothing but a shallow commercial culture that is endangering the local cultural identities of the people.

- **Growth of Urbanization**

Urbanization is a multifaceted process in which people not only have demographic shifts but social, financial, educational, and traditional alterations as well. This shift changes a lot in the personal and social behavior of a person. "The interplay between tradition and modernity is a central theme in understanding the impact of urbanization cultural practices. Tradition represents the inherited customs and beliefs passed down through generations, while modernity embodies the contemporary values and practices influenced by current socio-economic conditions" (Nguyen, 2024). This transition introduces rural people to new social values and urban lifestyle which results in the loss of the traditional culture and values.

Positive Impacts of Cultural Globalization

- It brings people around the world closer and interact with each other to promote the global civil society. It makes them work together, and exchange their ideas. Telecommunication sources have made it possible for people to do all this even if they are living in the most remote places. It is promoting cultural growth. People now can adopt a culture of their own choice and utilize it as they want or need.



- To some people, cultural globalization may be just a broad range of choices to select or opt but there are so many people out there who just opt for other cultures just to get out of the shackles of old and conservative traditions. Sometimes, women living in conservative societies want to get out of it just to have the basic rights of getting the education and to do something professionally.
- Trade between the countries was never been this easy in the history of mankind. It is much beneficial for the local industries to grow and make their place in international markets. Korean Beauty Products for example are now in demand globally and because of that its domestic industry paved its way to the international markets and generating huge profit.
- People are now having a great sense of basic human rights as they are experiencing cultural exchange. There is plenty of evidence now that this exchange might lead to the creation of a civil society that will prove to be a great achievement for the people around the world.

Negative Impacts of Cultural Globalization

- In their attempt to be part of a global civil society, people are losing their native identities. Having a mixture of all the cultures they interact with, they are eventually creating and following a shallow culture with no authentic values. Homogenization of the culture is eroding the distinctive cultures that have been protected and followed by their ancestors for centuries. It is a kind of 'cultural genocide' according to (Akintoyese, 2018).
- The receiving end of cultural globalization is the one that suffers the most. They not only lose their own unique culture but it also cost them financially as well. They need to spend a huge amount of money to buy things from the host countries if they are not locally available for them.
- Both inter-generational and intra-generational conflicts are also arising. Not all people want to be part of the global civil societies and this case is mostly giving birth to inter-generational conflicts as the old people are more conscious about the generational values passed down to them by their ancestors.
- It is making people less aware of their actual identities. The identity crisis is increasing drastically among young generations specifically. Following a particular culture, going elsewhere, interacting with others, and starting following a whole new culture leaves people with no reliable identity.

How to overcome this crisis?

Discussing both advantages and disadvantages suggests that cultural globalization is not a completely bad or good development of this modern era. It's completely up to the people who are on the receiving end of this cultural flow. We need both collective strategies and individual efforts to turn threats into opportunities.



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- The people following a certain culture must feel proud of their distinguished identity and promote their cultural values.
 - Educational institutions should spread cultural awareness among the students as the youth is getting more affected by this.
 - The government should introduce policies for a balanced global cultural flow and build different museums to display distinct cultures for their people to admire.
 - The media platforms must be observed on a regular basis as they are the biggest promoters of global culture.

Conclusion

Globalization has contributed a lot in the modern world but every new advancement comes with a price. It would not be wrong to say that the interconnectedness we are experiencing today in this so-called 'global village' is endangering our identities now. The price we are paying to become a global citizen is the sacrifice of our individuality and giving us a commercial culture that might also not survive in the long run. In the coming years, things may get even worse if not taken appropriate measures to avoid its further shortcomings. We must adopt such living styles in this culturally globalized world without compromising our identities and cultural originality.



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