

## EFFECTS OF GLOBALIZATION ON MENTAL HEALTH

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### Abstract

Globalization, which refers to a process of change and transformation that concerns everyone worldwide, is defined as a process of integration that brings mutual dependency but is not equal. Globalization is spreading both hope and alarm bells to the world. The main idea behind globalization is free market capitalism. In other words, market forces and competition govern people. Globalization, or the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of countries, is generally known to involve two interrelated elements. One is the opening of international borders to increasingly rapid flows of goods, services, finance, people and ideas, and the other is changes in institutions and policies that facilitate or encourage such flows at the national and international levels. All of these changes have the potential for both positive and negative impacts on development and health. With the acceleration of globalization, time is shortening, borders are disappearing and a global village is emerging as a result of the shrinking of the world. Millions of people are changing their habits, cultures, thoughts and lifestyles without even realizing it, and are adopting the given idea. This situation reveals that globalization has not only economic, social and cultural dimensions but also psychological ones. With globalization, traditions disappear and ego-identities are renewed. The self is no longer a stable organism with a continuity but begins to define itself in the present, and postmodern identity problems arise. While we cannot imagine a world in which we do not benefit from the blessings of technology due to globalization, it is inevitable that we will be exposed to the social and psychological effects of this situation. The effects of globalization on culture and the results of its psychological reflections can come together with factors such as changes in family values, economic problems, poverty, migration, and demographic changes, as well as direct effects on identity, and can manifest as psychiatric disorders such as addiction and depression. This dominant understanding can override cultural values, change people's needs, first make them compulsory, and then make them addicted. The best example of this is technology addiction. Globalization is causing a cultural transformation and its effects are seen in many areas of life as well as on the mental health of individuals. While mental disorders have increased so much in the global world of our age, our awareness of them and taking action for treatment are insufficient. Therefore, this compilation study aims to examine the effects of globalization on mental health and what should be done in this process.

**Key words:** Globalization, mental health

### Introduction

The term globalization, derived from the English word global, refers to a process of change and transformation that is "worldwide, universally relevant, and holistic in nature" (Koç, 2003). It represents a comprehensive process underlying the social, cultural, and economic transformations that reshape nations, societies, and the global order (Bhat, 2022). In this process of transformation, our perception of time and space is undergoing significant change. With the acceleration and broader dissemination of capitalist practices across the globe, people, information, capital, and technology are flowing in a highly chaotic set of processes that, in one way or another, bring us all together (Friedman, 2008, p. 111; Makszim, 2012). Notably, this

process is marked by profound shifts in identities, subjectivities, and the sense of self (Bhat, 2022)

Globalization resonates across the world with both promises and perils. At its core, the driving idea behind globalization is free market capitalism namely, the governance of people through market forces and competition (Sparke, 2013). It is well recognized that globalization or the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of nations typically involves two interrelated components. The first is the growing openness of international borders to the accelerated flow of goods, services, finance, people, and ideas. The second involves changes in institutions and policies at both national and international levels that facilitate or promote such flows (WHO, 2025). This isn't just about money or information. People also change how they eat, think, and behave. The way we see health and what we believe about food is shifting too, often without noticing. Old ways fade as global trends take over (Csabai et al. 2022, Blendea et al. 2025). With globalization, core values such as democracy, human rights, freedom, and environmental protection have increasingly acquired a universal character. At the same time, the nation state like governance mechanisms at all levels is being compelled to transform the intense pressure of powerful trends such as democratization, localization, transparency, participation, flexibility, and accountability. Moreover, overarching identity structures such as citizenship identity have increasingly been replaced by diverse ethnic, religious, social, and political identities. Simultaneously, factors such as consumption and popular culture contribute to a process in which societies begin to resemble one another. Globalization, while eroding local identities on the one hand, simultaneously drives significant change on the other. In this process, new technologies have enabled production to expand across vast areas at unprecedented speed and scale. Although technology poses a threat to local cultures, it also provides them with opportunities to establish their own cultural communication and information networks (Kıvılcım, 2013). According to the logic of globalization, the new individual is no longer a citizen, but rather a consumer connected through the internet or the supermarket who shares the common fate of an undifferentiated humanity (Sayar, 2001). People are more likely to see themselves as consumers today, not just members of a culture or family. And as simple things like eating together or preparing traditional food fade, many lose a sense of connection. That can, over time, make people feel more anxious or even depressed (Dăscălescu et al. 2025; Vasile et al., 2024).

All these changes hold the potential to exert both positive and negative impacts on development and health. As globalization accelerates, time appears to contract, borders become increasingly irrelevant, and the world is transformed into a "global village" as a result of this perceived shrinking of distance. Millions of people, often without even realizing it, adopt the ideas presented to them by gradually altering their habits, cultures, ways of thinking, and lifestyles (Ritzer, 2015). Globalization is a phenomenon that exerts complex effects on health.

These effects are closely related to countries' economies, income distribution, the availability of health and social services, human resources and infrastructure, the quality of education, and the effectiveness of domestic policies. All of these processes influence how individuals perceive their own cultural values as well as the cultures of other regions around the world (Özgüç, 2021). This highlights that globalization is not only an economic, social, and cultural phenomenon, but also one with significant psychological dimensions. The transformation of existing structures can increase stress levels and negatively affect mental health. As traditions fade with globalization, our ego-identities are being redefined and reshaped (Göka, 2003). The self is no longer a stable entity with a sense of continuity; instead, it begins to define itself in the present moment, giving rise to postmodern identity issues (Kula, 2005). Through global communication networks, globalization enables access to new treatments, up to date information, and the technological benefits that constitute one of its most positive aspects producing significant outcomes for individual health (Özgüç, 2021). However, it has become increasingly evident that exposure to the social and psychological impacts of this process is virtually inevitable (Ak & Aricioğlu, 2018).

### **Globalization and Mental Health**

When considering not only the economic, social, and cultural but also the psychological dimensions of globalization, it becomes evident that this process manifests itself through the increasing prevalence of psychiatric disorders in developing countries largely as a consequence of the economic injustices driven by globalization (Roberts, 2021). Globalization refers both to the shrinking of the world and to the perception of the world as an integrated whole. On the one hand, it signifies the rise of capitalism and Westernization across the globe; on the other hand, it can also be understood as an attempt by the world's superpowers who control mass media to construct a universal culture (Göka, 2003). We are now truly living in a different world. As services in information, entertainment, communication, electronics, and finance have become the lifeblood of the economy, our lives have increasingly adapted to these dynamics. The innovations brought about by information technologies compel us to view globalization not as something distant or "out there," but as a phenomenon deeply embedded in the "here and now" one that profoundly influences even the most private and personal aspects of our lives, including sexuality, marriage, and family. Advances in transportation technologies have also significantly contributed to increased human mobility across the globe, effectively diminishing the role of geography in our daily lives (Ak & Arıcıoğlu, 2018). As a result, we are witnessing a global transformation in how we perceive ourselves and how we relate to others. Among the various dimensions of globalization, the one that most profoundly impacts mental health is the transformation of cultural life that is, its human dimension (Göka, 2003). Mental health is a state of well-being in which individuals realize their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and contribute to their communities. When considered as a concept, mental health is undeniably intertwined with social events and cultural traditions. The prevalence of mental disorders is closely linked to social, economic, and cultural conditions (Okasha, 2005). The pervasive presence of technology and its byproducts ranging from watching wars unfold in real time from our homes, to following every moment of terrorist attacks occurring in distant parts of the world, to tracking the global impact and management strategies of the COVID-19 pandemic illustrate developments unique to a globalized world. Moreover, technology enables us to witness the hardships experienced by migrants and refugees across the globe, further highlighting how interconnected and immediate our exposure to global crises has become. While it is nearly impossible to imagine a world in which we do not benefit from the advantages of technology, it is equally unavoidable that this reality gives rise to various social and psychological impacts (Ak & Arıcıoğlu, 2018). Arthur Kleinman (2001) argues that globalization celebrated as the global phase of laissez-faire capitalism poses a definitive threat to global mental health. Mental illnesses account for approximately 11.5% of the global burden of disease, with depression alone comprising around 4%. Psychiatric disorders and mental health problems are on the rise worldwide. These issues are reported to occur at twice the rate in affluent societies compared to poorer ones (Kleinman, 2001; Sayar, 2001). The urbanization accelerated by globalization, along with the resulting social isolation, has been associated with mental health disorders such as eating disorders and self-harming behaviors. Furthermore, depression, anxiety, identity crises, and suicide are widely regarded as some of the most significant negative consequences of globalization—both at the individual and societal levels (Özgüç, 2021). The prevalence of depression varies across countries, ranging from a low of 2.3% in Poland to an average of 5.6% of the population in Morocco during the period studied. In the case of anxiety, 2.0% of the population is affected in Vietnam, while the rate reaches 8.7% in New Zealand. It is important to note that prevalence also varies by country group, with average rates of both depression and anxiety being higher in developed economies (López-Villavicencio & Pla, 2019). Mental, neurological, and substance use disorders collectively referred to as psychiatric disorders are prevalent across all regions of the world and affect communities and age groups in every country. Among these conditions, depression is considered to be the most influenced by globalization and has a global prevalence rate of approximately 4% (WHO, MH, 2025). Depressive disorders alone represent the second leading cause of global years lived with disability (YLDs), accounting for 5.6% of all YLDs in 2019 (WHO, 2022). According to the report, the region with the highest

prevalence of depression is Southeast Asia. This highlights the significance of the cultural dimension of globalization. One of the negative outcomes of globalization in this context appears to be the imposition and spread of individualistic cultural norms now increasingly emphasized through global processes which may contribute to rising levels of depression in Eastern societies (Ak & Arıcıoğlu, 2018). It is emphasized that understanding the relationship between culture and depression is crucial for the effective treatment of depression. Cultural factors should also be taken into account in the diagnosis and treatment processes of depressive disorders (White, 2013). The World Health Organization (WHO) has been leading efforts to achieve the objectives of the Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2020, which was adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2013 and later extended to 2030 at the 72nd World Health Assembly in 2019. It is emphasized that scaling up the treatment of common mental disorders such as depression and anxiety would yield positive outcomes both for public health and for economies. The importance of investing in mental health is strongly highlighted, with the argument that if global targets are to be met, a substantial increase in resource allocation will be necessary (WHO, 2022). Globalization has influenced psychiatry in terms of the prevalence and course of mental disorders. From a cultural perspective, it can enable clinicians to stay informed about psychiatric innovations and facilitate access to novel treatment approaches in psychiatric services across the world (Özgüç, 2021). In summary, globalization affects psychiatry in three main ways:

- Through its impact on individual and collective identity
- Through the influence of economic inequalities on mental health
- Through the dissemination of psychiatric knowledge, shaping psychiatric practices worldwide

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the cultural impact of globalization and its psychological repercussions manifest not only through direct effects on identity, but also in combination with factors such as shifts in family values, economic hardship, poverty, migration, and demographic changes. Together, these dynamics can contribute to the emergence of psychiatric disorders such as addiction and depression. This dominant paradigm can override cultural values, reshape human needs by first turning them into necessities, and eventually create forms of dependency. Globalization has led to a cultural transformation, the effects of which are evident in many aspects of life including its impact on individuals' mental health. In today's globalized world, despite the sharp rise in the number of mental illnesses, awareness and action toward treatment remain insufficient. Globalization can undermine psychological resilience by eroding ethnocultural identity a key source of self-esteem, a contributor to social cohesion, and a potential buffer against the effects of racism and discrimination. As distinctive characteristics are lost, it is no longer individual selves but relational selves that emerge. Cultural transformation uproots individuals from the lands and traditions that provide their psychological resilience, while simultaneously expecting them to quickly adapt and take root in new and complex environments. However, human nature does not seem to be fully compatible with the pace and scale of such rapid transformation, which may facilitate the emergence of mental disorders. If globalization has a significant impact on the risk of developing psychological disorders, then additional mechanisms are needed to protect mental health throughout the globalization process. In response to the challenges caused or accentuated by globalization, it is essential to address issues in psychiatric education, service delivery, and social policy, and to place greater emphasis on transcultural psychiatry within mental health curricula. Recognizing the impacts of globalization can contribute to the development of appropriate mental health policies. Moreover, respecting human rights does not require financial resources. The most effective way to ensure respect for human rights on a global scale is to increase awareness and implementation of the United Nations principles concerning individuals with mental disorders. The globalization of mental health services requires greater research on the psychological variables that influence mental illness, the establishment of more

effective psychosocial intervention frameworks for both developing and developed countries, and a more equitable distribution of global resources.

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