Impact of globalization on entertaining, knowledge of information technology and sexuality among men and women in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, globalization has brought tremendous opportunities along with serious challenges to many societies around the world. This paper briefly reviews how the concept of globalization affects the Sri Lankan society. There are two assumptions in relation to the impact of globalization on human lives, one is increasing homogenization of societies and cultures all over the world and other one is, as a result of globalization societies get more heterogenization. This study focused on three broader areas in which the Sri Lankan society experienced a significant impact of globalization. They are entertainment, information technology and sexuality. It showed that still Sri Lankan society has not completely adopted the process of globalization. As a developing country, it helps to promote inequality among men and women. But, very few in the younger generation are adopting this process. Another significant finding is that educated, wealthy people are benefitted by the process of globalization. It concludes that Sri Lankan society is experiencing a competitive disadvantage in the context of globalization.

Introduction

Nowadays the term globalization is very popular in the media. People define this in different ways. Therefore, we could not find a universal definition for globalization. But everybody should know the scientific definition/idea of globalization, because it is a very influential process to every human being and further human behaviour is also influenced by the process of globalization.

Therefore, first we should understand what globalization is all about. The origin of globalization? Objectives of globalization and how does it affect developing countries such as Sri Lanka. The common usage of words such as globalization and globalising began only in the 1960s. Waters has defined globalization as "A social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding (Perera,1999)". Friedman and Koehane defined "Globalization as a state of the world involving networks of interdependence at multi-continental distances with multiple economic/financial, political, national security, environmental, social/cultural, markets and individuals" (www.countrywatch.com). Therefore we could not find any common definition to the process of globalization. However it simply says that through the process of globalization, the world is narrowing the geographical distance between societies.

Some analysts embrace it enthusiastically as a positive feature of a changing world in which access to technology, information, services and markets will be of benefit to local communities, where dominant forms of social organization will lead to universal prosperity, peace and freedom and in which a perception of a global environment will lead to global ecology concern. Accordingly they refer to globalism as having "values which treat global issues as a matter of personal and collective responsibility"(Ashcroft, 1998).

But some rejects this as a form of domination by first world countries over third world ones, in which individual distinctions of culture and society become erased by an increasingly homogeneous global culture and local economies are moving firmly incorporated into a system of global capital

(Ashcroft, 1998). Dependency school argues that the globalization process can be identified as a novel arrangement of capital hungry developing countries around the capital rich developed countries within the global economy (Perera, 1999). All these views together give an idea of the nature of globalization. The key to the link between classical imperialism and contemporary globalization in the twentieth century has been the role of the United States.

Our major concern is how does the process of globalization affect the people in Sri Lanka as a developing country, and specially how it affects to narrow the gender gap in our society and change the culture. Therefore, we selected three concepts of importance to analyse this process. They are Knowledge of information technology, Entertainment, and Sexuality.

Globalization and Culture

The global situation is in the process of rapid change in society. The collapse of the Eastern Bloc, the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union dramatically changed relationship between nations. The "New World Order" has begun to emerge and it affects all humanity.

Globalization requires more than merely physically linking the world. For it to continue apace, there must also be a set of shared cultural understandings. Part of the process of globalization is the need to develop a culture that, in a broader sense can transcend diverse economic, ethnic, political, racial and religious backgrounds. Such a global culture will have to be one that either seeks to transcend normal affinities for one's own cultural group or undermine them.

Brown has explained in his book "Globalization and Cultural Conflict in Developing

Countries: The South African example", the philosopher Francis Fukuyama termed these developments as the "end of history". For him it meant that the culmination of human cultural developments was at hand. The triumph of the West in the Cold War would inevitably lead to democracy as the only viable option for a political system, capitalism as the dominant economic system, a regime of individual rights to dominate interpersonal relations in the social arena, and governmental relations with its citizens (Brown, 1999). Fukuyama's prediction of westernization of the world presupposes that the New World Order will be based upon concepts at the heart of western societies, especially the United States.

Today, one senses an intense attraction among the young throughout the United States for so -called pop music, heavy metal or other forms and for the wearing of such typical modern dresses as blue jeans which reflect the idea of freedom from constraints and of mobility and of the individual declaration of independence from social norms.

Driven by technological advances in communications and transportation, the process of globalization has also accelerated. These advances are inexorably linking all humanity in vast economic, communications and transportation networks. Cultural ideas and images from one corner of planet can be transmitted in an instant to another part of the planet by wireless and satellite technologies. The internet, fax machine, satellites and cable TV shows are sweeping away cultural boundaries. Global entertainment companies shape the perception and dreams of ordinary citizens, wherever, they live. This spread of values, norms and culture tends to promote western ideals of capitalism (Weerasinghe, 2002).

The individual learns its culture from the environment. First from the family, then through social relationships, and social environment in particular the media, politics and its professional life. Media and computer mediated communication, which facilitate the intercultural exchange and expose the

individual to cultural attributes. The media in particular has a critical role in globalization as then cultural attributes are distributed largely globally. According to Dahl (2001) media can serve to repress as well as to liberate, to unite as well as fragment society, both to promote and to hold back change. This makes an extremely powerful tool, a promoter of social, structural and cultural change. Also media contents present itself today as a global form of entertainment. The concept of game shows, talk shows and films are equally created around the world to mirror one type of society. What works in one country is exported heavily through a complex network of distribution and co-operation agreements as well as economic interests in stations in other countries than their home base. Hence the media contribute to the emergence of the global culture.

In American society another trend is the diversification of multimedia services, jointly produced with telecommunications and information providers. Television, cinema, and the Internet make the communication more active. The viewer actively chooses what she/he is prepared to see, and with whom to interact. Media is essentially a one-way communication process, where the feedback is only very marginally provided, the Internet offers the possibility of a far more interactive experience, with a feedback directly provided. Also the Internet breaks down the barriers between the more traditional entertainment services. This Internet also emerged as an USA project. By year 1996, the number of internet users were around 50 million, 100 million, in 1997, 400 million by the year 2000 (Dahl, 2001). Therefore, we can say that the Internet has experienced an enormous boom over the last decade in the world.

Globalization and Sri Lankan Culture

The Globalization process is making the world smaller; it diminishes and erases the cultural, racial, class and gender differences; making the world population similar in standard of knowledge and information, and it is one of the perspectives, currently available on this concept. (Ashcroft, 1998:111) On the other hand, the people who become objects of globalization process struggle to retain and safeguard their sub-cultures and identities. Practices and knowledge pertaining to American and European countries extended towards other countries in this process. (During Simon, 1993.233-267) It confronts drastic problems in African, Latin American and Asian countries which were former colonized and belong to the third world. Globalization has developed class, race, religious and gender differences in these countries. (Ashcroft, 1998:112) These aforementioned complex circumstances can also be seen in Sri Lanka, as a post-colonial, Asian country.

There are several forms of economies different from each other which can be seen operating simultaneously in Sri Lanka. (Silva S.B.D, 1982:417) Pre- colonial interdependent economy, feudal system, industrial capitalism and trade capitalism could be identified as these systems. These multiple systems of economics are operating in different ways and maintain different cultural values. (Silva S.B.D, 1982) Gunasinghe Newton, 1999.195-215/ Wicramasighe Martin, 1954). Therefore, Sri Lanka can be considered as a multi-cultural sphere. (Perera, Sasanka 1997:101) Two reactions for globalization, homogenizing some parts of society and heterogenization of selves can be seen in Sri Lankan context. The popular discourse says that globalization is in the process of erasing social boundaries in Sri Lankan society. Wearing jeans, using cellular phones can be presented as witnesses to prove that argument by some authors. Popular and public media of Sri Lanka always repeat the homogenization effect of globalization. The objective of this research is to analyze the validity of the above-mentioned popular concepts based on gender differences.

Methodology and the nature of the research

Focus group discussions and informal interviews, were the sources of data collection in this study. A selected community of the Ruhuna University is the sample of this research.

This study is based on three different human subjects, namely entertainment, knowledge of information technology and sexuality. This study focused to discover the existing knowledge and practice in these three areas. These three areas are closely attached to the culturally bound contemporary human beingd (Chaney David, 2002.7/ Storey John, 1993:154-179).

The feedback of the sample has been studied in relation to these three issues. The University community (Students, Academic Staff & non academic staff) of the Wellamadama complex was the subjects of this research. They belonged to different areas, different levels of society and age groups.

The research method used is qualitative data collection and analysis where group interviewing was carried out as a tool, which is considered as a developed system of qualitative data collection Knowledge practice and using apparatus of the relevant area examined through a group discussion. (Spradley James P. 1980:5) The difference in age; (young /middle age and elderly) social status (Academics/non-academics and students) gender (male/female) were given prominence.

The specimens included people who are in the range of 22 to 56 years. The interviews were conducted during the 1st week of November 2004. In our discussion, their personal experiences were focused on collecting data on entertainment and knowledge of IT. Attitudes and knowledge of the relevant subject were focused upon when discussing "sexuality".

Analysis

Entertainment
The majority of the people did not insist on the discourse "Entertainment" The academic community had their own views on leisure time activities, refreshment, picnics and modern concepts like this.

The student community as a whole gave similar responses on watching T.V as a modern form of entertainment. Both male and female students are accustomed to watching programs that are up to a standard on T.V; even tele dramas of a high standard. News bulletins, documentaries, English films and the Discovery channel were given specific importance among the programmes and certain students watched cricket matches. They viewed all the presently available T.V channels as a whole.

The male non- academic population preferred to watch documentaries, news bulletins and political programs. Meantime, they were critical of certain channels. The non-academic female population noted that their busy life style restricted them from watching T.V, but when time permits they are not selective on programs. The academics and non-academics were specially interested in programmes that could be viewed with their children. They were particularly interested in programs that are up to a standard with a useful substance.

The young community did not give much importance to the standard of radio programs. They were interested in listening to pop-songs. On the other hand the academics and non- academic community focused more on news, obituaries and programmes prepared on contemporary issues.

Acquainting friends among female community was found rare. Academics, non-academics and male students alike enjoyed the companionship of their friends along with liquor at least once a month. There was an emphatic "no" to liquor among females. The academics usually frequented restaurants and hotels for food and alcoholic beverages, when time permitted. Only the academics enjoyed this benefit.

Films, art exhibitions and classical music, all these aesthetic values had a relatively high impact on the academics. The students' involvement was seen comparatively to a lesser degree. Certain factors contribute towards depriving the non-academic community, benefiting from these aesthetic endeavours as a form of entertainment. Non-academics say that they give priority to their children's needs when they watch a film in a cinema hall. Non-academic females say that possibility to watch a film is rare. Male students are watching films by means of CDs and DVDs using multimedia devices of computer than going to cinemas. Going to cinema among female students is rare. Academic males and females pay their attention to currently important films. Some academic males said that they watch all classic films shown in Sri Lanka. Female academics are concerned about the educational value of the programme for their children rather than their needs. Young males like to enjoy live musical shows. Young females are also motivated to watch musical shows in T.V rather than participating live musical shows etc. Middle aged condemned musical shows. Academic staff enjoy the privilege of watching aesthetic values like Dramas; but others are unable to experience them because of economic obstacles.

Young people prefer to get involved with picnics and the role of organizing picnics is played by males. Students say that attending weddings and arms giving ceremonies that are held in homes of friends, are automatically converted to picnics. Female students also participate in these ceremonies but their feminineness restrict having the best form of enjoyment at that time. Non-academic staff did not cite about picnics other than pilgrimages to archeologically important places that they annually organize. Academic and non-academic females said that their busy life as a housewife limits the opportunities of participating in picnics. Some academics reserve time to tour for enjoyment. Nuwaraeliya (located at the cool zone of Sri Lanka) can be named as a location that is frequently visited. Academics had deep notions on tourism and picnics, but non-academics had traditional concepts about pilgrimages. Non-academics and students visited the Buddhist temples on Poya days. They say that they enjoy it.

Some of the subjects in the sample go to the beach and enjoy during weekends and females showed a special liking towards that. Male academics read newspapers and books very much but female academics were on a secondary place in using them. Students read newspapers, but reading books was not enjoyed by them. Non-academic males read books written on astral body and orthodox Buddhism. Non- academic females are glad to read popular novels and short stories than classic literature.

Entertainment as a modern concept has been identified rationally by males relatively than females. Women had understood it in a traditional way: It can be proved through the answers of lecturers and students. Answers they gave on tasting creative means and aesthetic values, corporation with friends and picnic activities can be identified as more modified.

Entertainment could also be identified under the age difference. Young are bent to enjoy life more than others; but the middle aged had not paid any attention to it. Economic and education levels also could be identified as dynamics that changed the entertainment opportunities. It confirms the high standard of involvement by academic staff in entertainment. But female academic members have no opportunities as male academics or students.. Sports, picnics, items related to friendship can be shown as backward areas of females in entertainment. Female involvement in modernized entertainment methods can be identified as a thing that is drastically controlled by tradition.

Knowledge of IT

All members of the sample had a basic knowledge of using Computers. Many female students are able to work with Computer Software but they have no knowledge to repair even a simple tactical plot. An adequate knowledge on Computer software and hardware is with male students. Many E-

mail address owners could be found among male students than among female students. But both parties did not use e-mail for useful communication.

Non- academic and students say that they use Internet for reading Internet edition of daily News Papers. But female students and non- academics have no awareness to use even the free Internet service provided by the university. Academic females use both Internet and e-mail for their academic activities. The group that is using it most is academic males. Young academics take a special place among them. Listening to radio, watching the T.V and using chat box are some of the things that they use.

The computer has not been identified as a multi purpose apparatus by females. When compared with males, females use it only as an alternative machine for typewriter or telephone. Their bent towards multimedia access is much rare. Many students use computer for enjoyment. Multimedia access was used for this purpose.

When we compare ability, knowledge, and opportunities obtained by males with females, the latter is taking a secondary place. Females have no awareness to update their computer knowledge and taking experience further and it has caused some backwardness. On the other hand, males try to gain knowledge on new software and operating tactics.

As well as, differences of using it can be seen in education and social levels. It proves the fact that academics are the only people who could be identified as using Internet for their communication. The other two groups owned e-mail addresses but didn't bother to maintain them.

Difference of IT usage can be identified in social levels and significantly in gender. Age difference is also a variable to be considered in IT usage.

Sexuality
As Chaeny explains the most significant change in later modernity is the change of typically structure ordinary life. "General indifference towards the moral conventions that ordained that heterosexual relationships should only be enjoyed by married couples. Not only are parents increasingly tolerant of their children's open sexual activity, couples can also live together without any sense of shame whether or not they become parents."(Chaney, 2002 : vii)

This study concerned to find out how globalization exposes this concept among males and female of Sri Lankan society. Most of our interviews revealed that this concept is more exposed than earlier.

Sex as a human subject, is a broad and widespread circumstance on account of globalization. But a country like Sri Lanka, with long cultural traditions, and cultural values, it is difficult for people to be moved away by any world situation.

Many females in our sample showed less knowledge on sexuality. Though males have enough knowledge on newly emerged cultural elements of sexuality, females have less knowledge. Commonly, sexuality is still a confined area in S.L society. But we could observe a relative openness among the young. Many of the young tried to answer openly. Though we asked attitudes, some were fond of explaining their personal experience on areas like films and publications, which depict sexuality. But elders had attitudes that are highly controlled by traditional culture. All males had experience on "Blue Films" and sex-depicted publications. Some female students had experience on such publications. Commonly they have had no experience in these areas.

Academic females had watched classical adult films and non- academic females had not watched them. They are spending a life that strongly focuses towards their children and because they have no inspiration to watch them.

Knowledge of Gay and lesbian sex can be seen in the members of the sample. But males showed broad knowledge.

Pre – marriage sexual connections and Living Together can be identified, traditions as developed in European countries. But some elders of our sample showed a lack of knowledge on this two practices. One told that it causes the birth of illegitimate children. The common attitude of academics and students and non-academic males is that it is a threat to traditional culture. But they did not deplore it and some of non –academic females deplored. Knowledge on Prostitution, abortion, birth control and sexual stimulation, drugs was significant in males than females. Males had enough knowledge on modernized areas of sexuality, but females did not show as much as the males. The knowledge on sexuality changes according to gender difference than social level and age difference.

Conclusion

Different impacts among people on entertainment, knowledge of IT and sexuality can be identified according to the above analysis. Our major object was to examine these three aspects. Does globalization erase or develop gender difference in Sri Lankan society? Response of our sample shows clearly that the process has developed differences. All these were in same knowledge and attitudes of traditional society. But all the members belonging to the sample have not admitted to globalization equally and have not received similar knowledge and opportunities. It has been a source to increase differences between male and female than they are equalized.

Differences of age and social levels have also been developed by globalization in addition to gender differences. A significant difference could be examined among the youth and elders in new practices and attitudes in the way of entertaining. When elders disparaged musical shows, the youth appreciated. Attitudes on new concepts of sexuality such as living together were also the same. Most females are still bound with cultural attitudes, but educated females in all levels are aware of these new concepts which are in western countries.

Education and Economic level differences have also increased with regard to impact of globalization. Because of lack of money, non-academics and students could not obtain some of the entertaining opportunities. Spending their leisure at the hotels or any other relaxing places are limited only to academic people. Therefore it is clear still the majority of the people are not fully adopting that process. In the area of information technology, it was clear most of the males are very familiar with IT rather than females. In using E-mail address for inter communication is also limited to academics. The Department of Statistics in Sri Lanka showed only 9.7% are involved with information technology. Also they found Colombo based community is in the top level, Second Kandy and third Matara and Matale. These examples prove that globalization increases difference of social levels rather than the equalization and also high income people are much benefitted from globalization.

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