



## Nutrition in the Effect of Globalization: A Sociological Perspective

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Received: November 23, 2022

Published: December 08, 2022

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### Abstract

Nutrition is a vital event that is naturally affected by many physiological, psychological, economic and sociocultural factors. The need for nutrition is affected by environment and emotions which started with the human being. The nutrition was one of the basic requirements of sustaining life in the beginning and has gained various meanings with the development of humanity. It has become an inseparable part of life by affecting the culture over time. Nutrition includes eating, the production, processing, preparation and consumption of food and beverages. These stages, in which people are involved at every stage, are therefore influenced by the culture and form the eating practices of people and societies. Although the effect of sociocultural factors on nutrition is as old as nutrition, the study of this subject in sociology started as recently as the 20th century. Nutrition stands out with the socialization of health. It has led to the emergence of new research topics such as the sociology of food, sociological body perception, and the globalization of food. Globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon that describes the international mobility of knowledge, materials, capital and people. With globalization, the importance of distances has decreased and intercultural interaction has increased. With the increase in transportation, communication and marketing opportunities food has also become global, and with the universalization of habits and trends, the local nutrition cultures of societies have gradually deteriorated. Ease of access to food has reduced the importance and time allocated to food in developed societies, and societies have quickly become consumer societies. With fast and practical consumption coming to the fore in every aspect of life, the food culture has also changed, and nutrition, which used to take long hours of the day, has become a need that is passed over in a short time today. The diet which called fast food, has brought health problems and cultural discussions to the agenda. As a result of these discussions, the Slow Food movement, which started in Italy and developed against the fast-food culture, had wide repercussions. In this study, the effect of globalization on nutrition has been evaluated from a sociological perspective.

**Keywords:** Sociology of Nutrition; Globalization; Fast-Food; Slow Food

### Introduction

Since food is an essential need of human life, the search for food has also become a basic human activity. A large part of human history has passed under the threat of not meeting this need [1]. Nutritional habits have also shown many differences in the evolution of the human species [2]. Even 12 thousand years behind today, the primary purpose of human has been to find food and to meet his nutritional needs. Nutrition culture is an important factor in every life period of human existence [3]. Since ancient times, human eating and drinking activity and culture have been based primarily on the elimination of hunger and have passed through various stages and took their present form [4].

Food has a role not only in the biological approach, but also in culture [5]. Issues such as what foods, in which places and how people are fed, how and with whom they eat their food, are shaped by social influences since beginning of life [6]. Food as part of culture, health, family and society throughout history, has been repeatedly found in the center of these subjects. In addition to public health issues, family relations, power dynamics and globalization can be examined within the scope of food issues [7]. The purpose of eating, which can be examined in four dimensions as social, economic, psychological and physiological, has different explanations. The elimination of hunger can be given as an example as a physiological dimension. Providing improvement in mood, happiness and

pleasure explains the psychological dimension. Looking at eating in terms of social dimension, status, prestige, social difference and interactions come to the fore [8].

Social sciences and humanities show an increasing interest in food. Contrary to the past, thanks to new research that approaches the subject of food from many perspectives, the idea that food has no aspect other than economy has begun to lose its effect [9]. Recently, food studies have also increased as an academic field. The growth and increase in these studies have a significant impact on the understanding of various food issues in different cultures and societies [10]. Food is of interest to sociology because of the very center of the social relationship network in the process from production to consumption [11]. Food is a biological act often cited in sociological theories, but many sociologists have paid less attention to it [12]. Food has existed throughout social life and is in the midst of humanity's social nature. Sociology has touched on food since its classics, but the sociological interest specialized in food can be considered as a new situation [13]. In many cases, research discoveries in nutrition and sociology have been made in parallel, but the link has not been fully established. Qualitative research and interdisciplinary collaboration on nutrition and can help to reveal the relationship of food and nutrition to social issues [14]. One of the key elements of building cultural values and systems, people's reactions to the environment while trying to meet their food needs. For this reason, it can be said that food sociology should focus on how food determines people's lifestyles [15]. The rise of sociology to food and nutrition, which can be said to have started in the mid-1980s. Among the most important reasons for this situation, sociological interest towards consumption and various ideological foundations of consumerism can be cited [6]. Food sociology, according to the approach of Germov and Williams deals with the philosophical, sociocultural and economic factors that affect our eating habits, such as what, when, why and how we eat. Bourdieu's 'Distinction a social critique of the judgment of taste' and Mennell's 'All Manners of Food', can be given as an example of the leading studies in the sociology of food. Mennell used England and France as a case study in "All Manners of Food", which he wrote in 1985. In this work, he aimed to reveal how people's eating habits change between conformity to a particular cuisine and traditions [11,16]. With the influence of many social factors, food and food sociology has become a subject of interest again. Awareness of food risks has also increased in parallel with the globalization of food supply and the ease of access to information [17]. Food consumption practices are also one of the subjects on which the increasing interest in food has been intensified with the effect of globalization since the 1980s. Bourdieu's theory of distinction argues that food represents lifestyle, status, and class belonging, and is a valuable method in the sociology of food [18].

The practical and theoretical issues of food sociology are also on the agenda due to the worsening food safety problem all over the world with the Covid-19 pandemic. Nutrition culture and quality, which is the most important component of food sociology, is also the criterion of food safety [19].

### Nutrition, culture and socioeconomics

Culture can be simply defined as the way people live their lives. It is a set of values, attitudes, beliefs and practices accepted by people belonging to a group. In this respect, culture can affect and change people's eating styles, beliefs in food and eating habits [20]. Cultural behaviors are learned behaviors, not inherited. This accumulation is passed down through the generations [21]. Nutrition and food can be studied within the scope of culture. Because all actions from production to use, from storage to transportation of foodstuffs are included in this scope [12]. People have cultural perceptions, psychosocial perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about food that affect their diet which are based on cultural values [22].

Each individual forming the society has different interests and needs. For a society that includes these individuals to exist, the personal expectations of all its members must be met and balanced. Nutrition is one of the needs that individuals with the same region, language and culture meet on a common ground. Anthropologists have pointed out that well-fed societies have a well-advanced culture. Nutrition culture is one of the phenomena that includes the important cultural codes of the society in terms of the preparation and consumption of food [23]. In Barthes's words, the change in the 'grammar of food' is also the change in the meanings of the food. Apart from being a necessity that only ensures the maintenance of life, food can also be a sign of belonging to a religion or being a member of a community. However, it differs from one-time period to another and from one society to another and can have varying meanings [24]. According to Giddens, food and nutrition provided the emergence of social interaction and ceremonies in all societies. Foods carry the cultural traces of the societies they belong to, so they are both influenced and influencing the culture [15]. There are many factors that affect consumer behavior related to food. Examples of these factors are cultural, personal religious values and ideals beyond hunger or feeding [25]. Food is not only meeting nutritional needs, but also an element that has effects on daily life, beliefs and socioeconomics [26]. Food is a cultural element under the influence of many factors as well as social and individual factors. Physiologically, humans are in direct interaction with food by nature. In addition, they can change their understanding of food socially with the influence of the culture they live in [27]. The food industry is closely related to global and local culture. The reason for this is one of the most important indicators of people's lifestyles

in daily life their diet [28]. The lifestyle of a society related to nutrition is also the nutrition culture of that society [29].

Nutrition affects the health of people at low socioeconomic level throughout their lives. The social and economic reasons affecting eating have not been clarified. But improving nutrition plays a role in improving health [30]. Food can be seen as a means of expressing people's social status. Scarce and high-cost foods are prominent in indicating wealth and high socioeconomic status. The availability, difficulty of importing, and rarity of these foods, which usually include animal-based foods, make them difficult to obtain [26].

The French sociologist Bourdieu's concepts of capital and habitus can be helpful in explaining the socioeconomic aspect of health inequalities. Economic and cultural capital in relation to healthy eating can be seen as the source of the constraints of healthy eating in the capacity and scarcity of capital surplus. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital is a basis for the production of difference in food consumption [31]. The interest in healthy life and nutrition has increased with the effect of the importance given by modern society to body and health. The consumption society, along with the increase in the economic level in developed societies, has tended to be hedonistic and open to pleasure, and their lifestyles are suitable for high welfare [32].

### Globalization of food

The term globalization, which refers to the international circulation of information, goods and money, and increased human mobility, has emerged since the 1980s. Globalization is a multifaceted process that includes politics, economy, culture and technology. According to Modelski, civilizations include the deepening and broadening of the relationship between political communities and nations [33]. The term globalization first appeared in a journal called 'Harvard Business Review'. This term is encountered in an article written by an American scientist Levitt, in this journal published in 1983. Levitt used the term to describe the merging process of regional markets produced by large international companies [34]. Marshall McLuhan's idea of the 'global village has started to become a common idea of people with the globalization being a process that affects sociocultural, economic and political fields [35]. Most definitions of globalization emphasize transcending national borders. The issue to be mentioned with this emphasis is that distances have lost their importance. In today's world, with the decrease in the distance between societies, there has been an increase in intercultural interaction. In today's world, globalization is a difficult issue to avoid [36].

The view that borders, economies and national cultures are opened, and decisive is one of the common views on globalization.

Although economic activities are considered as the creator of this phenomenon, it is stated that the beginning of today's global trade phenomenon dates back to the 19th century [37]. Globalization process can be explained influence from other societies in many aspects of societies such as economy, politics, culture, health and social life [38]. In a globalizing world, life is controlled not only by local conditions but by increasingly distant advances. Food with globalization is frequently on the agenda in international trade, changing the production and consumption pathways around the world and affecting many areas related to food [39]. The globalization of food production and marketing affects people all over the world, thanks to distribution networks and marketing communications enhanced by modern technologies and financial networks. Modern technologies increases consumer choice especially the internet, provide more access to the world and information [40]. Many changes have occurred in the agri-food system as food products that are included in a globalizing market. This phenomenon can be expressed as 'food globalization', and permeates all aspects including the manufacturer, industry, governments, shoppers and consumers [41]. The beginning of the break in eating habits and nature-human relations can be traced back to the industrial period. As an example of the factors that move the eating habits away from the traditional. The rapid growth of cities increases in the time spent on transportation, the participation of women in working life, the increase in the time individuals spend outside the home, the working hours and shifts, which are the conditions of the industrial age, can be given as examples [42]. With the globalized supply of food products, many people fear the loss of their local food culture. An example of this is the trend indicated by the data on food expenditures: societies are becoming more and more alike [41]. All cuisines in the world have many basic and distinctive features that distinguish any one from the other [27]. A country's cuisine is both a biological and a cultural construct. Their construction and preservation takes many years of joint effort. People interact with each other to set up and influence cuisines [43]. The phenomenon of 'internationalization of locality' is also among the issues brought by the globalization movement. This has happened in great cuisines that have spread far beyond their original localities and throughout the world. Other cuisines, perhaps just as interesting and healthy, have been neglected in the international food movement [44]. Increasing obesity rates may be supported by other globalization components besides economic globalization. 'Westernization and cultural globalization may present and promote fast food consumption such as McDonalds as modern [45].

### Consumer society

The city can be described as large continuity in space with a high population. It is a settlement formed by individuals with social differences. Over time, cities have been constantly transformed by

the changes in their meanings and functions due to some reasons. This transformation process has accelerated considerably with the homogenizing effect of globalization and globalized. As a result, adaptation to a stereotypical consumption culture has increased and everywhere has begun to resemble each other [46]. Consumption means the taking of things produced or produced. In terms of essential needs, it is the whole of the actions that people, in a broader context, all living beings must do in order to sustain their lives. Necessities such as food, shelter, clothing are mandatory for people. In modern capitalist societies, individuals tend to be interested in consumption by the marketing of products and services. The concept of consumer culture describes how modern civilizations have become market segmented and location divergent [47]. The understanding of profit can be accepted as the main reason which is the base of the capitalist system. Stating the modern world has a capitalist economy system, Wallerstein says that this modern system survives by giving importance to uninterrupted capital accumulation. The main reason why societies have become consumer societies is that capitalism is based on the sale of commodities [48]. In the world, which can be described as a big work camp, practical and snack formations have come to the fore because almost all people cannot spare enough time and resources for nutrition. With the preparation of such events, the capitalist mode of production increased its effect and pressure and caused significant changes in food and consumption practices [3]. Consumption has become a lifestyle in today's world, has many dimensions in terms of cultural, psychological, social and economic aspects. The position of people in social life and their personal identities have begun to determine what, from where and how they consume. Consumption fed by the individual's search for identity and status, becomes a state of existence. Within these thoughts, today's thinkers are preoccupied with the question of whether people live to consume or consume to live [48]. Consumption culture is a phenomenon that exists both in Western countries where product and service production is high, and in countries lagging behind in terms of production [49].

In the consumption culture, the problem of obesity has emerged due to the spread of shopping malls and fast food culture, and the 'size zero' pressure to control the female body has come to life in the society [48]. The reason for the widespread use of fast and solitary eating habits in the consumption culture is the rise of individuality and the changes in the habits of preparing and presenting with the change in lifestyles. As lifestyles have changed, the contents of food and people's preferences have also changed. In order to understand society, it is necessary to understand what people eat, how, where and with whom they eat, how they feel with food and why they feel that way [50].

### Eating out

Eating outside the home should be described and evaluated as an important sociological phenomenon in today's and socialization. Today, with the changing social structure, most of the people are exposed to the obligation to eat out. For example, although they are different from each other, the American style fast food meal order and the fast food concept that has been found in Turkey for centuries can be given as examples [51]. The desire of people to visit new places, get to know and eat out has increased and gained opportunity with the increase in income levels. Eating out has become more and more important in meeting people's food needs, with women entering the working life all over the world. Some social changes play a role in the increase in the habit of eating out. As examples of these changes, increase in income level, women's participation in working life, increase in the intensity of business life and urbanization can be shown [38]. Although eating is an essential requirement for the continuation of life, an attitude centered on showing off has been increasing in recent years. Sharing the meals eaten on social networking sites also supports this attitude. The show of new values that emerged with the global consumption culture spreads the power of money and individuality by promoting it. Consuming fast, showing off and consuming more has created a consumption habit process that is difficult to give up today and in new generations [47].

In parallel with the increase in consumption of sugary drinks and calorie-dense foods in industrial societies, obesity has also increased. If the food environment that causes obesity in these societies is changed, it will be easier to change the eating habits. The basis of many nutrition programs and policies is to restrict consumers' access to foods that are high in fat, sugar and delicious [52]. So much so that if these public policies are successful, it is inevitable that there will be a change in eating habits [53]. It is known that the habit of eating outside the home paves the way for weight gain and unhealthy nutrition. In order to prevent this situation, it has been suggested to apply menu labeling in restaurants and other food establishments where eating out is made. Thus, it is aimed to reduce the incidence of obesity and obesity-related chronic diseases [54].

### Fast food culture

One of the most important factors affecting people's eating styles is the differentiation in the conditions of making a living and earning money. Young men migrating to cities live alone or, at most, with small families. It cannot be said that these men have enough time and sufficient experience in cooking. Workers who eat the food served in the factories and have snacks and foods that can be eaten in a short time are included in the society [3]. The new lifestyle and



nutrition style that emerged in America started to take place in life with the developments in trade and industry that took place after the World War II and reached its peak in the 1980s. Students and employees, who have to spend less time on their eating needs, have started to adapt to the fast flow of work and daily life. As a result, fast food chains that first emerged in the United States, then spread to Western countries experiencing similar industrialization developments, and finally to the rest of the world, came onto the scene [55]. An important example of the transformation in food and eating habits is the eating habit called 'fast food'. McDonaldization has changed not only the food industry but every aspect of society such as health, education, occupations and entertainment [24]. The term 'McDonaldization' was first used in *The McDonaldization of Society*, published by Ritzer, as 'fast food restaurant principles dominate more and more industries' [56]. The effect of globalization on food and consumer behavior has been the subject of many studies. As a result of these researches, it has been found that globalization and McDonaldization are parallel and cause homogenization of consumers globally [57]. It can be argued that economic globalization and trade liberalization have increased the spread of obesogenic foods, such as sugar-sweetened beverages and packaged foods, to middle- and low-income countries and global weight gain. Numerous sources have drawn attention to this contribution [45]. The daily energy needs of individuals differ by being affected by age, genetic and physiological characteristics, gender, occupation and the environment. In the increased energy intake, which causes the energy taken to be more than the energy spent, the excess energy accumulates in the body's fat stores and prepares the ground for obesity. With globalization, the diet of families has changed and the tendency to obesity has increased. The basis of this increase is the acceptance of fast food-style nutrition by children and their families [38]. Production forms and contents of foods have also changed with the nutrition culture of the modern world. Genetically modified products, antibiotic and pesticide residues, food additives, increased salt intake, trans fats, along with ready-to-eat foods, have taken a place in today's life and played a role in increasing health problems [42].

### Slow food movement

As a result of the spread of capitalism in the globalizing world, the fast world has come to the fore. Accelerating the flow of life is an inevitable end in the global economy system where the value of time increases. However, many people need a slower flow in the flow of life, which has become more complex with the increase in technological development [46]. Technological advances and globalization in the world have dictated to people to become monotonous and to benefit from the benefits brought by the globalization process. It is inevitable to constantly change with globalization

and to keep up with the speed of this change, because speed is the building block of globalization. In today's world, individuals aim to move faster in every field and, so to speak, turn into speed enthusiasts [58]. This change in eating habits was not accepted by some communities and was subject to resistance. As a reaction to this rapid change, Slow Food, that is, the slow eating movement, took the stage in Italy. Among the ideas that form the basis of the movement are the ideas that the importance given to traditional food should be increased and that local organic foods should be preferred [24].

"Slowness" is expressed by Honore not as a reaction to fast living or against the world of technological developments, but as a situation that makes the world a center of attraction [46]. In 1986, in Italy, Carlo Petrini started the Slow Food movement in response to the fast food restaurants opened in Rome. This year, the McDonald's branch, a fast food chain restaurant of American origin, is desired to be opened in the historical and most important square of Rome, known as the Spanish Steps. Opened as a McDonald's restaurant, this new venue claims that ordered food will be prepared and served in less than two minutes. This claim represents a complete contradiction to the traditions and habits of the Italian people, who regard eating as a pleasure that cannot be rushed [55]. Today, as an international movement with thousands of members from many countries of the world, Slow Food also focuses on the modern world and related issues. It aims to present its members with traditional food preparation and cooking techniques, tastes that have been forgotten by the majority, and the pleasure of local flavors [38]. Today, the movement, which has representatives from 132 countries and more than 100 thousand members, gained an international reputation in Paris in 1989 with the representatives of 15 countries. The world's first international slow food congress was held in Venice in 1990. Germany's first slow food movement started in Königstein in 1992, and Switzerland's first slow food movement started in 1993. The movement was first formalized in 1996 and is based in Bra, Italy [59]. The Slow Food movement is sometimes referred to as feeding off globalization and using the tools of globalization. Although it is claimed to have an elitist nature, it should be considered in terms of different views on consumption principles. The slowness movement, on the other hand, aims to get rid of the wearing effects of globalization and speed, not only in food but also in different areas [58]. As a separate issue, it is seen that traditional cuisines that offer local delicacies are also chained like fast food. The presence of chain restaurants serving traditional food in places such as large shopping malls can be confounding. It can be claimed that this situation paves the way for contradictions and discussions about the Slow Food movement [55].

Although not all food is considered equal, food attracts attention as a tool for environmental and social development. However, organic and local foods, unlike other types of food, stand out because they are the source of the sustainability of our future and positive changes. The Slow Food movement was based on the idea of more domestic and traditional food [60]. The philosophy of good, fair and clean food has also been the basis of the Slow Food movement and attaches importance to the environment, animals and the income levels of the producers. As the definition of Slow Food, 'sustainable quality food', which is a combination of good, clean and fair food, can be given [59]. To explain this definition, good food can be expressed as food that has a real taste, aroma and appearance. Food is clean and sustainable. Fairness refers to its social sustainability. The definition of fair food includes production processes that favor employees, ethical and sustainable food, and the preservation of good products [38].

The vision of the Slow Food movement includes establishing unique relationships with food and what the producers of food are. The movement tried to globalize this vision and was successful. For example, the main concerns of the Slow Food movement based on Italian local food cultures quickly resonated in Europe and even further afield [61]. In 1999, the 'Slow City' movement started in Italy. The concern that globalization is trying to create a uniform human model by destroying the differences between people and the concern that an ordinary order will prevail formed the basis of this movement. Today, it is not difficult to encounter the effects of both Slow Food and Slow City movements in dozens of cities in many countries [59]. In our age, we are exposed to the discourses that it is necessary to be fast in order to survive and that it is unacceptable for modern people to keep up with the times, in almost every field. Encouraging individuals to live fast, emphasizing speed advertisements containing beverages, instant shampoos and instant food products are frequently encountered. However, researchers who do research on globalization often show fast food chains as examples in their works. Fast food chains, which are the common subject of both globalization and the penetration of speed into life, have also been the focus of those who struggle with these issues [58]. Pajo states that cities involved in the Slow City movement have many activities to increase the success of Slow Food applications. The most important among these was raising children's awareness about local consumption and production. It is recommended that local drinks be offered instead of harmful drinks in schools and that local products are available in public spaces and school canteens [38]. Again, as stated by Spicer and Van Bommel, the Slow Food movement has also made progress in becoming a global structure through common discourses, institutions and practices. This practice, discourse and institutions can be adapted

to other sectors; slow city in cities, slow journalism in journalism, slow travel in travel [61].

## Conclusion

Nutrition is undoubtedly one of the most basic human needs. The instinct of finding food, which has existed since the first people, has developed over time, being affected by various factors. People living in the same environment formed societies and had many interactions. This interaction can be briefly explained as culture. Culture has numerous effects on the life of a society. The beliefs, thoughts and actions of the people living in the society have also affected the culture and provided the two-way interaction between culture and society. The welfare levels, psychosocial and economic phenomena of the individuals who make up the society have also affected the culture. Nutrition, which is the main subject wherever people exist, can naturally be examined within the subject of culture. Nutrition culture is one of the important factor that constitute the social, psychological, economic and cultural values of societies. A person who needs food to live can move the issue of nutrition far from a physiological action with the meanings he bestows on food. What, how, with whom and even with what emotions we eat is shaped by the nutrition culture. Over time, different societies have also made contact with each other, making it possible for cultures to influence far away from the lands where they were formed. This interaction, together with the development of industry and the increase in all kinds of technological possibilities, has brought the term globalization to us since the 1980s. With globalization, distances lost their importance, and an event in one end of the world could affect the other in a very short time. The increase in opportunities, capital, communication and interaction has also brought up a series of issues that can be considered positive or negative. The globalization process, in which human is the basic element, naturally includes the subject of food, which is the basic element of human beings. This phenomenon can be explained as the globalization of food and has also allowed the spread of various dietary habits. The most striking of these today is the fast-food eating pattern called fast food. Food and nutrition trends have also focused on speed in this mobility where time passes rapidly, and consumption comes to the fore. Fast food type foods, which are consumed in a short time without spending effort and time, can easily find a place in this fast life. However, the number of those who react to this consumer society, which focuses on speed and pleasure, is increasing. The Slow Food movement was started in Italy in 1986, and the pioneer of these reactions, still maintains its members and influence today. With this movement, the advocate of local and traditional foods, clean agriculture and the meanings given to food, the slowness movement has taken its place in many areas. Cities, people, manufacturers have embraced the slow movement by re-

sisting the speed pressure of globalization. When all these issues are taken into account, it can be seen that the globalization of food is an ongoing phenomenon. It is not clear yet to what extent the food is affected by slowness or fastness. Nutrition in globalization includes a wide variety of factors and can be described as a phenomenon open to a wide range of research with the characteristics of societies and individuals.

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