

THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALIZATION TO MUSLIM YOUTHS

Hanani Harun* and Zulkifli Hasan**

ABSTRACT

All individuals are now entering a new millennium whereby all information could be accessed just through internet. Globalization is a phenomenon which involves a massive transfer of tastes and lifestyles from the centers of power in the West to the non-Western and could result in drastic changes in individual behavioral patterns. It must be admitted that globalization could undermine some morality aspect of individual as well as communities at large. Therefore, this article is intended to provide an overview on the concept of globalization and its challenges particularly to young Muslim generations. The study indicates that there are Western elements in the dominations of the globalization process, which would intervene and challenge the development of morality amongst Muslim youths.

Introduction

In general, globalization can be viewed as a borderless world, whereby there are no boundaries in acquisition of information, or in dealing with other people from other part of the world; indicating that the world is now at the peak of development. One can say that, the world is like a “shrunken ball”, where one can easily get to another within a second in reality, the issue of globalization is far too complex. What globalization is and the impact it is having, is hard to pin down. Yet, none of us can deny its significance, especially as we move into the “global village” at a pace to be line with other developed countries, throughout the world.

The rapid expansion of scientific and technological innovation in the fields of communication, as is referred by Mebrahtu, Crossley, and Johnson (2000, p. 23) actually stimulates the forces of globalization. It facilitates exchanges, speeding up production, and allowing the sharing of ideas, goods, and services worldwide. However, as a response to this development, globalization has contributed to a rise in social problems and moral decadence, particularly among younger generations. In this regard, it seems

* Pegawai Perkhidmatan Pendidikan Siswazah, Sekolah Menengah Agama Persekutuan Labu, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia.

** Lecturer of Faculty of Syariah and Law, Islamic Science University of Malaysia.

hard to achieve the great Vision 2020's goals successfully due to the high number of youths who have declined in their morality. According to the Ninth Malaysia Plan Chapter 14, it is reported that there are approximately 11.1 million youths who form 41.5 % of all Malaysian citizens in year 2005. Thus, it can be said that the youth form the majority of the population of this country. They are also the most important rising generation as they are the real assets for future leaders. Therefore, if their moral development is continuously disturbed by the hegemony of globalization, then the dream to be an advanced country having good leaders will be in futility.

The Declination of Morality among Young Muslims

There is a high rate of moral decadence among youths nowadays. Unfortunately, most of the problems detected involve young generations. For instance, it is estimated that the number of drug addicts will reach one million persons and majority of them are Muslims (Utusan Malaysia, 27/5/2004). Polis Department of Malaysia reported that from 1997 to June 2001 the youth who are missing in action or run away are 14,613 persons (Berita Harian, 22/8/01). Meanwhile the rape cases involved 4,465 persons (New Straits Times April 2002), and for juvenile delinquency, there are at least 5,500 cases were reported every year (Utusan Malaysia, 10/10/01). According to Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM) in 1998, 6,160 youths and in 1999, 5,760 youths were involved in crimes and juvenile delinquency (Utusan Malaysia, 9/10/02).

What is Globalization?

There is a wide variety of views on the term globalization. Literally, the word globalization is a noun that is derived from the root word of 'global'. Nyang (1998, p. 1) explains, that "the term globalization is presently used to denote a trend in world affairs in which several factors and forces impact on the way we view ourselves, our world, societies, cultures, the physical world, and the rest of the Universe" (p. 1). In Arabic, the term globalization is called '*al-awlamah*'. According to Mohamed and Musa (2000), the word '*al-alamiyah*' refers to an openness and enthusiasm in knowing other nations

around the world. The *Quranic* verse also states in chapter *al-Hujurat*, verse 13: “O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you might get to know one another...”. This verse manifests that Allah created mankind with diverse nations for the purpose of knowing each other, not to be in isolation, and not to be proud of one’s descendants. This is so, because all mankind are equal in the eyes of Allah and nothing will distinguish them except the degree of piety to Allah.

Technically, there is no definite and all-agreeable definition and concept of globalization. According to Robertson (1998, p. 80), globalization is “the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole”. According to Marshall (1994, p. 202) in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, globalization has been described as “the concrete structuration of the world as a whole”, that is a growing awareness at a global level that “the world” is a continuously constructed environment. Meanwhile, in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology*, globalization is described as a process in which social life within societies is increasingly affected by international influences based on everything from political and trade ties, to shared music, clothing styles, and mass media (Johnson, 2000, p. 135). Regardless of its multiple meanings, the most important thing is, it still has one common target and aim, that is, to become worldwide and to narrow the gaps separating different communities.

The Concept and Development of Globalization

Globalization is not a new phenomenon. Nevertheless, there are different views on the origins of globalization. In the Islamic perspective, the history of globalization begins in the glorious and splendid epoch of Islamic religion for instance, Golden Age. At that time, Muslims were the founders of the recording world history, knowledgeable in comparative religion, sociology, tradition of universal science, exclusive scientific institution, and world adventure (Osman, 2000). The reason of the Muslims success and development, at that particular time, is because of the Islamic spirit that they possessed.

From the Western view, it is claimed that globalization started in the West. However, people are still in conflict in determining the exact date of the existence of globalization. According to Palmisano (2001, p. 277) in his book *'World of Sociology'*, “its (globalization) origins are most properly traced to European colonial expansion in the 16th century”. While Burbules and Torres (2000) state that the origin of globalization is still regarded as a central dilemma, that is, whether it appeared around 1971-1973 or more than a century ago. Some say that globalization happened soon after World War II and the process apparently existed starting in 1989, after the fall of the Soviet Union Communist government (Lubbers, 1996). There is also a view saying that it appeared a long time ago, together with the existence of the imperialist power. At that time, big empires like Rome and Paris tried to influence other countries through new cultures and new ways of thinking. Through their power, the empires were succeeding in spreading its culture, customs, language, and ideas in order to change other nations (Osman, 2000).

It is submitted that although the intellectuals have different views in determining the exact origin of globalization, it is acknowledged that all human beings are now facing a new historical epoch; the configuration of a new world system in which the greater part of social life is determined by global processes. Although the process of globalization has been linked with concepts of comparative advantage, free trade, and open economy, its origins can be traced to a time long before such ideas appeared.

The Domination of the Globalization Process

The domination of the globalization process involves three sectors: economy; technology; and culture. These sectors are interrelated and each influences the other (Mohamed & Musa, 1999).

(a) Economic Globalization

Globalization in the economy happens through development of free-trade system and the acceptance of this system throughout the world, giving a great impact on the economic system of a country. According to Grzybowski (1995), the impacts of the system of free-

trade are the drastic development in privatization of companies in the country, deregulation of market system, and the control of the market by the free-trade regulation to be efficient and competitive.

The above situation is supported by the world economic power and support system provided by the society. Mohamed and Musa (1999) on this matter stated that the economic process of globalization is well supported by the international institution such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). As a result, the world becomes more open and borderless in terms of its economic and social control.

(b) Technological Globalization

The rapid development of scientific and technological innovation in the aspect of communication has contributed to the success of the globalization process. Hallak (2000) states that the technological innovation in the globalization era allows people to exchange ideas, services, as well as products while speeding up production. Some of the innovative tools of communication technology at the present time are telephone, satellite, International Network (Internet), and optical fiber. Mohamed and Musa (1999) note that people around the world could exchange ideas and share information of current and previous time, through the internet browse, surfing a lot of information within seconds.

The multi-channel televisions also play an important role in broadcasting as well as transferring information to the community. Rahmah (1999) has stated that since 1998, there are five terrestrial (and free of charge) television channels in Malaysia; Prime Channel (Saluran Perdana TV1), Gold Channel (Saluran Emas TV2), private network TV3, MetroVision (restricted to areas of Klang Valley), and NTV7. Also, ASTRO (a satellite broadcast with more than 35 channels) is provided for viewers who subscribe to the service.

The technologically advanced tools are responsible in compressing the world's space and time, as well as enhancing the interaction among people from every part of the world. As noted by Lubbers (1996), the expansion of technological innovation decreases time-space

and distance and upgrades the world interaction as well as quickens the integrated economic trade and democracy.

(c) Cultural Globalization

In the cultural aspect, globalization is seen as promoting similarities in terms of the way of living among people in the community. Hallak (2000) in this regard states that globalization has produced two discrepant phenomena; standardization and diversification. Standardization refers to similarity in eating habits, clothes, and cultural products whereas diversification is more about encouragement in accessing the multiple nature of world heritage. These two phenomena are considered as important parts and responsible in developing the globalization of culture. The process of cultural globalization would not be smooth without the help of advanced communication technologies. Scientific and advanced technology of communication plays a vital role in disseminating a certain culture throughout the world. Mohamed and Musa (1999) noted that the communication media, especially television and the Internet, are the tools to spread out diverse cultures and lifestyles which mostly come from Western societies. The society is exposed to the Pepsi lifestyle, McDonalds, Hollywood and Bollywood movies.

The Challenges of Globalization on Development of Morality among Young Muslim Generation

There are several processes of globalization, however, in this elaboration, we are merely highlighting the main three processes that always intervene with the morality of youth nowadays namely culture, economy, and technology.

(a) Cultural Globalization

The globalization of culture cannot be disseminated smoothly without help from the technological communication and mass media. Through the television, people learn about other cultures. In some ways, it is good as one can know more about other identities. However, in other ways, it leaves a negative impact on the society, particularly on the young generations who are still searching for their own identity.

The young generations tend to follow actions broadcasted on television which is why the scenario of wearing tight jeans and shirts among girls nowadays, is very common. They are actually following and imitating what other people in Western countries do. Furthermore, they do not hesitate to put on sexy and indecent dress, which reveals their private parts of their bodies.

There are also a number of young Muslim generations who are involved in immoral activities, such as being effeminate, gay, and lesbian. Most of the time, they are influenced by the Western culture through watching movies that display the conformity of gay, lesbian, and homosexual lifestyle. This attribute is permitted in the Western countries and is considered a norm. The religious concept of marriage is no longer popular in the Western society; instead, it has legalized the sexual relationship between unmarried couples. Furthermore, in the name of democracy, Western society has also legalized homosexuality. On the contrary, homosexuality is clearly prohibited in the *Shariah* Law, since the Prophet Muhammad himself forbade his companions not to wear attire that is similar to women and vice versa. Everyone must follow the Law of Nature provided by Allah to His servants. In addition, the percentages of young Muslim girls who are involved in prostitution are increasing in number. And, most of them are Malay Muslims. It is so upsetting to see that the young Muslim generations deviating, being easily influenced by the Western lifestyles and cultures displayed through the films and movies.

In the west, people have the freedom to conduct and manage their lives and they are free to choose whatever they want to do, so long as they not hurt and disturb other people. This lifestyle is often imitated blindly by the youth since they want freedom of life and try to make their own decisions in whatever they do without considering their families. That is why there are many cases reported about the increasing number of Muslim youths loafing at the shopping complexes, entertainment centers, and fast food restaurants. Loafing, according to Yaqin (1997, p. 258) is considered earlier a lazy but harmless way of relaxing, has acquired the dimensions of a social problem.

Youth are perceptive to novelties, and they receive news from movies, TV, videocassettes, CDs, magazines, websites, and chat rooms. The fashions and tendencies of contemporary culture propagate shocking values. Youths are surrounded by various messages about what is “good” about such substances as, alcohol, tobacco or drugs. TV characters live in wealth and splendor off drug money; websites urge legalization of marijuana; the hero of a favorite movie stars in his latest film smoking cigarettes all the time. Messages related to drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes can reach youths from advertising published in popular magazines. These “messages” usually do not promote “the use” directly, but they are reinforcing impressions that use is a “normal” thing.

The truth is that the period of youth is not an easy part of human life because young individuals experience sudden body changes, accompanied by mood changes and feelings of insecurity where they seek to find out who they are and struggle to adapt. According to popular stereotypes, youths are rebels and prone to danger, sometimes even to self-destruction, and peers are very important to them. It is not surprising that during this period lots of young people try alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. For example, according to results of one American survey (Smith, 2000), the average age at which a youth starts using tobacco is a little past 12 years old; the average age at which they start drinking alcohol is almost 13; and the average age at which they start smoking marijuana is 14. Although the majority of young people do not use these substances, some children are using at even younger age than these.

Youths may be involved with legal or illegal drugs in various ways. Experimentation with drugs during youth is common. Unfortunately, youths often do not see the link between their actions today and the consequences tomorrow. They also have a tendency to feel indestructible and immune to the problems that others experience. Youth use drugs for many reasons, including curiosity, because it feels good, to reduce stress, to feel grown up or to fit in. It is difficult to know which youth will experiment and stop and which will develop serious problems.

(b) Economic Globalization

The concept of world capitalism, world trade, free market, capitalism, and industrialization are very common to all people. It seems that the economic globalization has no direct effect on the youth. However, if one looks closely, it can be said that the case of robbery, house breaking, pickpocket, 'Mat Motor', 'Mat Rempit', and burglary happen because of the urge for money. In this case, money is needed to survive and to compete with others as has been suggested through the economic globalization, which indirectly emphasizes the system of capitalism and materialism.

There were several cases reported to the Police Department of Malaysia regarding robbery, burglary, and also assaulting an individual for money. Worse case scenario, the cases reported involved youths most of whom are Muslims. There are also situations where the youths participate in assassination where they could not get the desired money from a person (Che Noraini, 2002). This recent phenomenon needs much attention from social institutions like educationist, government, parents, and also Muslim community and further actions should be taken in order to overcome these problems before they become worse.

(c) Technological Globalization

As we discussed earlier, the scientific innovation of technology in this modern world has contributed to the success of the process of globalization. Technological advances play a great role in generating and realizing the concept of globalization. Modern technology has become a very powerful instrument in the hands of human beings to cultivate or destroy moral values, to affect and control the minds of people by those who have the power over these media.

International Network (Internet)

The Internet is composed of many interconnected computer networks. It has made possible for people all over the world to communicate with one another effectively and inexpensively. Unlike traditional broadcasting media, such as radio and television, the Internet does not have a centralized distribution system. Instead, an individual who has Internet access can communicate directly with anyone else on the Internet, make

information available to others, find information provided by others, or sell products with minimum overhead cost. The use of the Internet has grown tremendously since its inception. The Internet's success arises from its flexibility. Internet technology allows interconnection of any kind of computer network.

The World Wide Web (WWW) replaced file transfer as the application used for most Internet traffic. The Web consists of programs running on many computers that allow a user to find and display multimedia documents (document that contain a combination of text, photographs, graphics, audios, and video) (Thomas & Kobayashi, 1987).however, there are cases where this technological tool is misused. When the flexibility and availability of the Internet sources is met, ten people can easily access those web sites that expose pornographic pictures, sexual, and erotic pictures and so on and so forth. Unfortunately, the youth are much inclined to access the so-called web sites at the Cyber Café or at the Internet kiosk. Even though some rules and regulations are laid down by the management of Cyber Cafés prohibiting access to pornographic sites, the youths are still keen to explore these sites (News Straits Times 10/3/2001).

Rahmah (1999) in this regard stated that when an incursion was operated by the police officers in some Cyber Cafes, it was evident that most of the underage students caught in the incursion involved Muslim youths wearing school uniform. The above situation reflects that the young generations nowadays are easily being influenced by the negative elements of the Internet and web sites services. Rather than, utilizing it properly as a source of information, they utilize the opportunity wrongly, by accessing the pornographic sites by their own pocket money.

The above situation is very dangerous where the youth who are always watching the pornographic pictures tend to practice it in real life, which is why rape cases were reported which sometimes involved youth who are still underage. The problems happen when there is an uncontrolled passion and strong desires in the youth's innate body that arises as they watch the pornographic sites. This is so since they always surf and view the

sites, and when it is watched regularly, then the youth will be influenced with the pornographic styles on the web sites.

In the Western countries, those who have access to the WWW can easily find a wealth of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender resources. Gay and lesbian people and organizations are aware of, and in contact with, each other in unprecedented ways, especially in the advanced industrial nations. According to Adam (2001), the International Lesbian and Gay Association bring together gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender organizations from every continent and connect them through its bulletin and web sites. As a matter of fact, there is also quite number of effeminate man or 'softies' in Malaysia nowadays most of whom are Muslim youth. With the existence of the tools of communication today, they could easily contact each other and this will strengthen their bonding especially through the gay and lesbian organizations.

Online Chat

In online chat, people are allowed to carry on discussions using written text. Once logged on to a server, it is possible to join a channel (chat group), which has open membership (Morris, 1996). Channel members can interactively exchange views and ideas from any point on the globe where there is a suitable Internet client. Instant messaging enables people to exchange text messages in real time. Scientists and scholars use the Internet to communicate with colleagues, perform research, distribute lecture notes, and much more. Individuals use the Internet for communication, entertainment, finding information, buying, and selling products, goods, and services.

However, not all people go for chatting in order to exchange information and to have an educative discussion. Some of them, especially youth, go to the Cyber Café to have chatting with anonymous persons in whom they will use a certain name like Mysterious Man, Cinderella, and many more pseudo names to conceal their true identities. Then, they make a blind date with their chatting members even though they are still underage. In another condition, they forget to fulfill their responsibility to Allah, for example, not performing the regular prayer.

Multichannel/Satellite Television

The significance of the multi channel and satellite television to people has been discussed earlier. In Malaysia there are more than five terrestrial or television channels, which are Prime Channel (TV1), Gold Channel (TV2), private network TV3, NTV7, Channel 8 and Channel 9.

ASTRO is the satellite broadcast that has more than 35 channels and people are free to choose any of the favorite channels to subscribe to. This reflects the globalization process as a person could watch and witness occasion and functions happening in other countries directly by merely pressing the remote. Within, the informative channels, there are Sports, Discovery Channel, National Geographic, Animal Planet, Discovery Travel and Adventure, Art, TVIQ, TV “*Pendidikan*”. There are more channels that are less informative but they provide entertainment to viewers, for example, Hollywood Box Office (HBO), CineMax, Star Movies, Hallmark, AXN, Star World, MTV, and so on. Some of these channels provide movies rated 18SG, that contains aggressive elements, and 18SX rated movies that contains some sexual, love, and erotic elements. The scenes of actions like kissing between unmarried men and women, hugging, and sometimes, sexual intercourse is freely displayed in those channels. The female actors in the movies also wear indecent clothes that expose and reveal more than half of their bodies. There are also movies that emphasize on aggressive men and over-stress violence. This situation leaves a great impact on the viewers particularly the youth, because observing those bad actions on television easily influences them. Some parents subscribe to numerous channels from the ASTRO to enjoy without realizing that it may give some negative consequences and effects to their children. Children who constantly watch movies overstressing violence and sexuality will most likely practice the wrongful behavior in the future. This is so because it has been argued that through observational learning, children learn to behave aggressively by watching violent role models on television in a similar manner as they learn behaviors from parents, peers, and others (Milgram & Scotland, 1973). In other words, the youth learns through imitating what has been observed on the television.

Gangsterism of youth at school nowadays has become an interesting topic and has attracted much attention from the authorities and government. Youths are brave enough to bring harmful weapons into the schools and would use those weapons, such as, knives to harm or to kill other students who are against them or do not want to negotiate with them. Even students from boarding schools are involved in bringing such weapons into the school. If this situation continues to occur among Muslim youths, then the hopes to achieve good leaders in the future would not be actualized.

Besides, there is also a case whereby youths who watch the sexual actions on the television tend to do the same thing in real life. Their mind is greatly influenced through continuous viewing of the above-mentioned movies. For instance, there is a case where a female youth had a free sex with a male youth to feel the same thing as the actor and actress in the television movie shown. In addition, a few of them will be involved in dating. Recently, there was shocking reports on television regarding sex at the stairs of buildings, parks, and apartments which involved youths particularly Muslims (sources from the NTV7-Edisi Siasat). The case above indicates that media and modern communication are influencing youths. Youths are neglecting what has been laid down by the Islamic principles, that is, not to go for dating and not to have any intimate relationship between males and females except after marriage. In this regard, it can be said that the bad influences broadcasted on the television and any other media tools have contributed to a high number of immorality amongst youth. According to Ashraf (1997), an erotic picture would affect the brain and one cannot easily forget what one sees; the type of thing which religion regards as sexual depravity has an adverse effect on the brains of children. That is why it is of no use for an individual to say that children should make a choice after seeing the pictures, whether to follow or not to follow it. These are some of the challenges of the globalization process that is indirectly influencing the youth at the present time. As a result, individuals are exposed to negative deeds and this is particularly to the Muslim community, which has led to the morality of the young Muslim generation nowadays to degenerate.

Conclusion

In conclusion thereof globalization brought a great change in the economic, political, and cultural system of our present society. The process of globalization, which includes economic, politic, technological advancement, etc, plays a great role in developing a country. Malaysia, as an aggregate of the global community is experiencing this phenomenon of highly sophisticated technology ranging, printing to telegraphic, telephonic and cinematography, which covers almost every aspects of human endeavor from sport, education, and business to entertainment.

The challenges of globalization are presented in a way of how its affects the development of morality amongst Muslim. We can conclude that the challenges that are posed are very indirect and sometimes the bad element s be traced to the domination of globalization process. However, the challenge is obvious in the aspect of entertainment and technological advancement. Some of the characteristics of the youth that may be considered as factors that the youth to be involve in immorality and misconduct have also been mentioned that may lead to Muslims to be backward communities and unsuccessful.

To sum up, it can be said that the effects of globalization may influence the young generation in term of their lifestyle, character and level of intellectual. Hence, it is parent's role to educate their children at the beginning of the children's life, much suited with the Malay proverb "prevention is better than cure". This can be done being aware of the punctually in performing regular prayer and if possible, it is worthy if the prayer is done congregationally.

Besides, the parents must also take care of their children and teach them on how to read and understand *al-Quran*. The parents must be very consistent in educating their children since the environment always compete with the parents in influencing the children's mind to the wrong and misleading way. Furthermore, the parents should display a good to their children since they are the best role models to their children. Regarding watching television, the parents should be firm and very selective in determining the channels that are suitable for children to watch.

The government should be alert and aware of the problems that have arisen nowadays involving the youth. Beneficial youth activities should be actively organized in order to provide them with a good experience living within the society. Additionally, authorities should be concerned with the over-stressing of sexuality and violence in television programs. They must control and remove any unfavorable and unsuitable television programs so that the children will not be inclined to what has been broadcasted on TV.

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