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Investigating and Proffering Solutions to the Information Seeking Behaviour of Immigrants in the United Kingdom

Olubukola Adekanmbi
bukoladekanmbi@gmail.com

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INVESTIGATING AND PROFFERING SOLUTIONS TO THE INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

ADEKANMBI, O.F

Librarian II, Ekiti State University,

Ekiti State, Nigeria.

bukoladekanmbi@gmail.com

+2348065065543.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the information seeking behaviour of immigrants in the United Kingdom, main focus was on the asylum seekers. The research method was extended literature review type. The literature review takes the shape of a systematic review. Past studies were used to know what has been done about the study and what is missing, which helped the researcher in creating the research questions. Data were collected from different findings of several researchers, the analysis of secondary authors were collated to form the findings of this research. International studies were mostly used because more research has been done internationally than in the UK. The limitation of the study was trust issues, the findings cannot be trusted based on the research method used. The findings, answer the research questions of information needs, information source and information barriers of immigrants. The researcher provided some recommendations for informational professionals and librarians as how to solve the research problems. The role of the Library was also discussed extensively as to help immigrants upon arrival in a new environment.

Keywords: Information Seeking Behaviour, Information Seeking, Immigrants, Asylum Seekers, United Kingdom, Libraries, Librarians, Information Professionals.

INTRODUCTION

For decades, United Kingdom has been strict on Immigration laws because migrating has been a topic of discussion in Europe, particularly in the United Kingdom. The issue of Immigrants coming to the UK for different purposes have been in existence for over a period of time. So many get to the UK without getting proper information of how to go, where to go and what to do at point of arrival. So, it is essential to make life better for immigrants, which is however their aim for coming to the UK, by structuring a well-planned strategy for legal immigrants which for the purpose of this study are asylum seekers and refugees. Relevant studies like this present research is rare, just few researches has been carried out relating to this study in the United Kingdom. Most studies that have been done are international studies. So this study will make provision for information professionals on how to help the asylum seekers to acclimatise and help them with other needs.

It is an undeniable fact that United Kingdom (UK) is one of the most welcoming countries in the world, in relation to the way people gain access to the nation with easy process. This is evidence by the arrival rate of immigrants which is high. For instance, in 2012, it was reported that a total of 498,000 immigrants migrated into the country, in which 7% settled in Scotland, calculated or estimated to be 34,000 Immigrants, according to the home office for Online National Statistics (2015). According to (Rienzo and Vargas-Silva 2014, p.2) found that the rate of foreign born in the UK between 1993 and 2013 increased significantly from 3.8m to 7.8m., where India has the highest number of birth in UK whilst Poland tops the list of immigrant in the UK. .

However, the objective of this present study is to investigate and understand how recent immigrants seek information. For example, questions like; what are their information needs and requirement? How do they access information, what barriers are in place and what can be done to improve access?

Additionally, the purpose of this research is to investigate the information seeking behaviour of recent immigrants, to know the needs, sources and the barriers encountered in seeking for information and proffer solutions to the problems encountered. United Kingdom was chosen as the case study basically because, researchers have not done much in terms of getting to know the information seeking behaviour of Immigrants in the UK and secondly, the location of the researcher as at the time of the research.

Several authors, such as (Fisher, 2004a) found that the integration and adaptability into a new country strongly depends on accessibility to information. As a result of stigma and other related factors such as cultural differences, language barriers, most immigrants tends not to ask information from formal sources such as employers, agencies, police just to mention a few. But due to trust and familiarity, they most likely prefer to ask information from friends (Caidi et al. 2008). Additionally, with the presence of social networks, access to mode of information has greatly improved or has helped communication and information, which serves purpose of support to immigrants. The results gathered would inform a broad range of information professionals, public information providers beyond libraries, spanning education, employment, housing and host of others.

This research method adopted is the qualitative method, because the collection of data would majorly rely on secondary studies, which will include the findings other studies found out and the results will be collated to form a novel interpretation in the analysis. The method used to analyse the data is the taxonomic description approach, which gives room for concepts to be explained in sections and sub-sections. This will lead the reader from the main concepts to the concepts under it to give efficient and effective understanding to the reader.

Immigrants who can also be called international migrants are individuals residing far away from their country of origin. Information is the transformation that occurred in an individual or in his/her surroundings. Information need is described as the gap in someone's knowledge preventing the person in attaining a task. The need will push the person to go more and get the missing knowledge after accomplishing a set task to overcome the gap. Additionally, Information seeking is the method used in getting information in human setting as well as innovative settings. This (Information seeking) is associated with, but, different in meaning from, information retrieval. Information behaviour covers deliberate information seeking as well as, unplanned information seeking, this are things that happen during the process of seeking for information, just like ignoring information purposely (Case, 2012 p.4).

RESEARCH PROBLEMS

1. Recent immigrants are vulnerable to been information poor.

2. The social network is one of the good means to pass information across, but most immigrants are not on these networks upon arrival.

3. Recent Immigrants are in more danger of lacking access to information sources because they may be new to the information environment.

4. Not much is known about the information behaviour of immigrants.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study include,

i) Focus on immigrant's sources of information.

ii) Analyse their information needs and requirements.

iii) Investigate the barriers to obtaining information.

iv) Investigate the information seeking behaviour and what can be done to improve access.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the needs of immigrants?

2. What source do immigrants prefer when seeking for information and why?

3. What are the barriers they face in accessing information and how can it be made better?

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Phillimore and Goodson, they indicated the issue about the support services to help asylum seekers deal with their immigration claims and everyday life. Previous study in Wolverhampton, shows that in year 2000 there was no knowledge about the needs or benefits of asylum seekers (immigrants) in the city. The local authority could not make translation services available; this was a problem because not all the immigrants understand English Language. This study is however providing a solution to the claim of Phillimore & Goodson study (Phillimore and Goodson, 2008 p.19).

However, various researchers expressed concerns on how the quality of provision has reduced while the demand is increasing (Phillimore and Goodson, 2008 p.41). Others call on ESOL providers to needs to take into consideration the needs of recent immigrants and suggested that effective and efficient provision should be made available. This will help immigrants to understand English language to a competence level. (Aldridge et al, 2005; Griffiths, 2003 cited in (Phillimore and Goodson, 2008 p.41). Authors as gathered by Phillimore and Goodson, have shown their concern on how difficult it is for recent immigrants to gain access to education and training. Studies show that recent immigrants do prefer in seeking advice from friends, immigrants like them than to seek from professional advisers. The team involved in dealing with how Information, Advice and Guidance are being passed to immigrants do believe they provide tangible information for immigrants, but the immigrants do see this information as disappointing, demoralising most times. For this reason, they do prefer to ask for information from friends to avoid discouragement (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008 p.41).

Asanin and Wilson (2008) article focuses on how immigrants of a particular neighbourhood in the City of Mississauga, Ontario access health care services. Specifically, this study looked to comprehend the key boundaries to health care services as saw by immigrants themselves. The outcomes are huge for understanding boundaries to give a second thought that are experienced frequently by immigrants in one Canadian group, additionally propose various approach suggestions to enhance access to give a second thought. These approach proposals might likewise be helpful to other created nations that face comparable access challenges among their immigrant populaces.

Furthermore, (Asanin and Wilson, 2008) also states that, as worldwide rates of migration are expected to increase and as health care concerns, availability needs to be more generally recognized among immigrant populaces, the presence of obstructions to critical health awareness administrations may be a central element for outsiders decision of destination nation. Along these lines, inspecting issues of openness to human services among immigrant populaces is a vital and needs research issue.

In their article "Social inclusion of newcomers to Canada: An information problem?" which investigates on how information providers particularly the library can meet the immigrants needs, (Caidi and Allard, 2005) indicates the need of immigrants to be between the basic individual needs which are "housing, job skills, and access to employment opportunities, education, etc. to increased civic participation and social connections. Without systems set up to guarantee that recent immigrants are satisfactorily incorporated in their recently embraced society, these gatherings may be at more serious danger of being at the edge of the just process or feeling disconnected and lacking open doors and decision. (Warschauer, 2002 cited in Caidi and Allard, 2005) beckons on the effect of isolating immigrants not only affecting the immigrants but also the society and even the economy.

Theory of information is helpful in clarifying how certain gatherings, for example, immigrants, have troublesome time acquiring information for taking care of regular life (Chatman, 2005 cited in Mendenhall (n.d). Caidi & Allard (n.d) see recent immigrants at the risk of lacking access to information sources because they may be unfamiliar with the UK information environment which makes them to be

information poor. (Savolainen, 1995 cited in Caidi & Allard (n.d) people require and seek information on a daily basis in order to manage their daily lives. "Lacking necessary resources such as adequate social networks, social capital, and information finding skills that enable everyday life information seeking" is known as Information poverty (Chatman, 1996 cited in Caidi & Allard (n.d).

Fisher et al (2004) "Information behaviour of migrant Hispanic farm workers and their families in the Pacific Northwest" explored the daily information behaviour and information grounds of migrant Hispanic farm workers with the aid of field observation and interviews with users and staff of community technology centres in a major agricultural area. They assert that with the urgent need for reliable information and support for immigrants, huge research has been carried out from the aspect of social work, education and health science but little research has been carried out from the information behaviour perspective. In particular, Safirotu Khoir cited in Peter Krieg (n.d), has noted that immigrants do have services for them, but do not know anything about it mostly. "Little is known about the information behaviour of immigrants because they are a heterogeneous group at different stages of the immigration process" Caidi & Allard (n.d). Caidi & Allard (n.d) do assert social network been helpful to get information, but most immigrants do not have access to social networks upon arrival to the United Kingdom.

According to (Pettigrew et al 2001 cited in Dol.govt.nz), see information behaviour as how people acquire, use and give information in different situations in their daily lives. "Information behaviour is the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking and information use" (Wilson 2000 cited in Dol.govt.nz). The latter further describe information seeking behaviour as "the purposive-seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal". This study will however will show how recent immigrants do seek for information they need.

By contrast Caidi, N., Allard, D. and Quirke, L. (2010) article describes the information practices of immigrants, they found that most writing inside LIS (Library and Information Science) on the point of immigration is within and centres with the availability of open library services to immigrants. This proposed study is however relevant because of the necessity of information providers to know the things recent immigrants go through in accessing information. To evaluate it and make amends in where necessary.

Therefore, Silvio (2006) describes the information needs and information seeking behaviour of immigrant southern Sudanese youth in the city of London, Ontario, indicating the shortfall of relevant information to this group of immigrants. His article serves to educate the scope and diagram of this study. Furthermore, Silvio urges library and information studies professionals to dig into exploration here, taking note of that LIS professionals have a lot to do and ought not to leave the issue of the information needs of immigrants to researchers and instructors. This study demonstrates a solid requirement for research on this subject is already in existence.

Obviously, settling in another country perfectly needs adequate information on how the environment or community is run. In this dissertation, I will study to understand the information seeking behaviour of recent immigrants, what can be done to ease access for immigrants to enable proper and easy settlement upon arrival in the United Kingdom. The review of literature illustrated above shows the need to carry out the study and of what importance the outcome will be.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed the use of data collected from other authors that have carried out the research, so the researcher collected the findings from books, journals, articles which is secondary analysis, and was interpreted through the use of taxonomic description approach, where high-level concepts (themes) are broken down into sub-concepts which can be described in separate sections.

The research questions which were information needs, information sources and information barriers of recent immigrants were used as a rationale in picking materials. As illustrated earlier, the method used for analysing is taxonomic description which deals with themes. Taxonomic description is where high-level concepts such as school, are broken down into sub-concepts, such as classroom, which can be

described in separate sections. Findings were collected from researchers who have investigated studies related to the research questions

DATA ANALYSIS

INFORMATION NEEDS

Information need according to Caidi et al. (2010) is one of the challenges an immigrant face. Information need is described as "recognition that your knowledge is inadequate to satisfy a goal that you have" Case (2012). The main re-occurring needs of immigrants as shown by other authors such as; (Silvio, 2006; Shoham & Strauss 2007; Caidi et al., 2008; George & Mwarigha, 1999) are; health needs, educational need, employment, political, accommodation (housing). Caidi et al. (2010) categorized the information needs of immigrants into orienting information seeking and problem-specific information seeking.

Orienting Information are the everyday doings an individual do by monitoring everyday actions through sources, especially the media meanwhile problem-specific information seeking involves providing solutions to individual problems or undertaking specific task, Caidi et al. (2010). The orienting information seeking they (Caidi et al. (2010) highlighted as shown by various studies are, monitoring the domain to get information about the new culture and also enlightenment on life in the new country, Information about cultural and religious situations and Information about more extensive societal contexts, also identity issues. Under problem-specific information seeking are housing information, Language information (which includes learning, interpreting and translation), employment information, health information, Legal information, Education-related information, information about recreation, transportation and banking. These needs appear to be the most re-occurring in different studies.

INFORMATION SOURCE

This section recognises and examines the sources immigrants use to seek for information. Getting information to the individuals who need it is a comprehensive procedure. Individuals need to recognize what they have to know, know how to seek and find it, Mason and Lamin (2007) and also where to get it and the information resources should be accessible for individuals to find (IMSED Research 2010). To answer a specific question, people's first choice is to a trusted person or utilize the service of social networks to the proposed question(s) (Caidi, 2008). The study which investigated into the information needs of refugees and recent immigrants to Christchurch has revealed the information seeking behaviour from someone who uses the well-known and trusted source in the first place changes to formal sources if the initial search was unsuccessful.

Source: Adapted from IMSED Research (2010)

The image above represents Miar trying to get information from sources, until the need has been achieved. If Miar does not get an answer from families, will continue the procedure to members of own ethnic religious organisations. Therefore, networking is an important information source (IMSED Research 2010). Fisher et al., (2004) carried out a research in New York why individuals in a migrant perspective rely on network. Participants recorded reasons like worthiness, ease of use, ease of communication, familiarity (Fisher et al. 2004; Caidi, 2009). Individuals who do rely on some particular sources do so based on the issue of trust and the connection the individual has with the source(Benson-Rea and Rawlinson 2003), but credibility needs to be standard (Fisher et al 2004).

Despite individual's dependence on interpersonal networks, research has revealed that people do know the negative implications of asking somebody they know. Such people may not be: easy to access, able to communicate face to face or in person, expert on topic and may be; biased, difficult to communicate with, get distracted on internet (Fisher et al 2004). Silvio (2006 p.264) investigated and recorded the information sources accessible to various southern Sudanese immigrant youths in Canada, which include; the government with the use of television, internet and newspapers; through the workers and different types of agents; the churches, mosques, libraries, community centres and some job resources centres. There are some other sources of information which the immigrant youths are open to, are their elders, teachers, colleagues, counsellors, neighbours and religious personnel. But in terms of getting health information, nurses and family doctors are very essential.

Human sources are the most well-known information channel among individuals. This finding was compiled from different studies on immigrant information behaviour explained earlier, such as (Caidi et al., 2008; Aizlewood & Doody, 2002; Shoham & Strauss 2008). Family and friends were recognised as the number one information source employed by immigrants. Media sources, like internet were recognised as the second generally prominent information source. Specifically, participants in many of the studies distinguished preferred other language material. Organizations like community organizations and job centres were recognised as important information sources for immigrants.

` TOP INFORMATION SOURCES
Interpersonal Sources   • Friends and Family

Mediums (particularly in languages other than English)
    • Newspaper
    • Telephone directory
    • Radio
    • Internet
    • TV

Organizations
    • Community organizations
    • Public Libraries & Institutions
    • Job Centres
    • Settlement Agencies
    • Language Training Centres
    • Immigrant organizations
    • Authorities & Professional Association

Top Information Sources Accessed by Immigrants

Source: (Caidi et al. 2008; Shoham & Strauss 2008; Salaff & Greve 2004; Aizlewood & Doody, 2002).

INFORMATION BARRIERS

Various barriers do prevent immigrants from getting information upon arrival in a new country. Researchers like Mwarigha (2002) describes the barriers to finding information needs with the wider context of migrant settlement issues and classifies barriers to;

- Feeling of not belonging and segregation.

- Mistrust of authority.

- Social isolation

- Ignorant of how to ask

- Emotional stress (Mwarigha 2002).

The following barriers to Information seeking for immigrants were seen to be the major barriers by the researcher.

- Difficulties in Access

- Inadequate Language Proficiency

- Structural Barriers

- Cultural Differences

THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY

Public Library is an organisation, which one of its structured services is providing immigrants with services such as; language and information literacy learning, ICT access and social integration. Language and literacy teaching has always been a traditional library service for members of host countries and immigrants (Krolak, 2005). Additionally, Clay III (2007) illustrates the assistance rendered by public libraries in North American to immigrants by helping students who face challenges with English language by providing English language classes for the students in the library.

Similarly, Gunter (2006) sees the library as a place to obtain information, particularly asylum seekers who do fear the citizens of the host country (Czech Republic), the need to develop new means of connection erupted and social networks to help in providing job and housing. However, libraries can serve as a good place to get information and get contacts.

> ...libraries realised the precarious social position of foreigners and granted them free library access. Gunter (2006, p. 10)

In addition, public libraries give room for a friendly, free and safe public environment for immigrants to learn ICT access and language. However, Clay III (2007) makes it clear that recent immigrants in America are not used to public libraries due to the conditions of their home country. Libraries are thriving at getting the attention of immigrants by making available of free internet access, free teaching of the host country language (Clay III, 2007; Krolak, 2005).

One of the importance of libraries illustrated by Naficy (2009) is that libraries serve as interpreters of the government of the host country in interpreting the government online services to immigrants. Another factor that draws immigrants towards the use of library is the educational technology services accessible to immigrant's children especially in schools.

Jonsson-Lanevska (2005), describe international experiences of library services for immigrants by comparing the services of Swedish library with library experience in Denmark and Finland. In the case of Denmark, the Danish Central Library for Immigrants directs all public libraries in Denmark in realising for refugees and immigrants. The services offered are;

- Availability of books and other materials appropriate;

- Updating the awareness of public libraries of the immigrants circumstances pertaining to language and culture and advancement of libraries within the area;

- To be the intermediary when dealing with refugees and immigrants, to make sure immigrants are fully informed about library services.

- To help the public libraries in getting and presenting of materials.

In the case of Finland, the Central Multilingual Library Service tasks are;

- To help library services focus on people with another international language as mother tongue living in Finland.

- To give guidance and information.

- Create connection with partners and collaboration, locally and internationally.

- To acquire materials rare in Finland and to be used with other libraries.

Audunson et al. (2011) carried out a research that studies the role of public libraries in the lives of immigrant women; most of the respondents make use of the library. The use of library covers many needs of the respondents:

1) Literatures from country of origin as well as movies from country of origin help the respondents to reduce the level of their homesickness.

2) They use the library to answer their needs for updates from their country of origin. Newspapers and Journals are more important to the respondents than the use of the Internet.

3) Parents use the library to tutor their children to the language, way of life (culture), and literature of their country of origin.

One of the respondents reported that she does not know her country so well while she was living there. The library made her understand and know her culture better with videos of showing places where she had never been.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LIBRARIANS OR INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS
Libraries operate a free for all service which allows people to come into the library to fulfil their needs. Information professionals as well as librarians should adopt different methods in understanding the information needs of immigrants and make provision for the needs. Librarians should be welcoming to Immigrants to make them experience relieve or relaxation in the library (Silvio, 2006). Therefore, Librarians must not take immigrants for granted; by thinking they do not need information on language, welfare and host of others. Tutorials should be given to immigrants on subjects like racism and how to face it when it comes, how to upgrade themselves.

In order to provide a good service to Immigrants, there are some yardsticks needed to be considered to have this effective. Based on past studies like Stefkova et al (2006), some recommendations for libraries in providing effective and efficient service to immigrants has been discovered to be;

1. **KNOW THE ENVIRONMENT:** Collection of data such as demographic, to know the number of immigrants in the area, the number of ethnic groups, the age bracket, language, education level, the type of immigrants that live in the vicinity, employed or not. Similarly, the attitude of community organizations needs to be known, if they are ready to support the library or not. Support from teachers, churches, information centres and others will be necessary. Information professionals need teachers or translators who can understand the different languages of Immigrants.

2. **GET LIBRARY WELL PREPARED**: Libraries should include in their vision/mission statement of rendering support to multicultural groups in the vicinity. By doing this, the library has set to achieve a goal which is a necessity to evidently state the objectives to be attained by identifying the services

and limitations attached to it, which helps in overcoming any barrier when providing the services stated. To have a vision is one and to implement it is another, so therefore, it is necessary to know if the library staff and the management are willing to support the vision effectively. To be successful in achieving this, the librarians need to know the reason behind it. Seminars can be organised to let them know as well as scenarios can be made known to the library staff to enable them have same vision which helps in achieving the stipulated goals. Library staff needs to have an outstanding ability to be able to interact efficiently with immigrants, likewise able to face challenges whenever it shows up. Libraries should have a good structural plan for this group, in terms of how the library is created in having a good atmosphere for learning. Books, movies, newspapers should be arranged in line as what the needs of this group are.

3. **RECOGNIZING NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND NEW SERVICES OF THE LIBRARY**: It is necessary to know the needs of immigrants and know how the library can work towards meeting them. To know the needs of immigrants, councils and organizations of Immigrants needs to be contacted to know the needs and know if these organizations will want to help the library in providing these services to immigrants. Communication with immigrants with different languages needs careful consideration based on the fact that people are different, what seems right in the UK might not be accepted in other cultures. Conversation should always be respectful, free and fair. Addition of materials like dictionaries, books in other languages to the library collection is essentially needed, because most of them will be interested in the material that mirrors the society by which they come from. Set up a leaflet that contains how to use the services of the library in other necessary languages and signs in the library are available in appropriate languages. Libraries can link up with refugee councils or any immigrants club to organise a trip for immigrants to libraries around to make them know the services available to them in case the need arise. The use of Interpreters will be good for the immigrants, so they benefit from the excursion fully well.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study is to investigate the information seeking behaviour of recent immigrants and proffer solutions. This study has answered the set research questions, comprehensively, that were proposed. It shows the information needs, sources and barriers of immigrants as proposed by several authors.

The researcher advises information professionals to adapt the recommendations explained above to help immigrants settle well in the society and this will also help the immigrants to have all their information answered. Health practitioners as well can help by taking cognisance of differences in culture when implementing services. Employees can make jobs available as well for immigrants by making the requirements low and keeping the language simple.

Lastly, the researcher however urges information professionals, community organizations to work closely with each other to have this changes or solutions implemented.

FURTHER STUDIES

Regrettably, it appears that informational professionals do not bother to carry out research about information seeking behaviour of immigrants, to know their information needs, sources and the barriers they face in seeking for information in the UK or other countries. In spite of this, information professionals, librarians need to carry out research in this field more than usual. Information professionals should help community organizations, health practitioners, social scientists, educators to deal with this issue. Librarians or information professionals need to   take it upon themselves as their responsibility to help immigrants settle properly. The fact is, immigration will never stop and people are moving to have a better life. Therefore, the need to have a proper plan for them to settle quickly and achieve their goals is essential.

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