

Settlement Information Needs and Services: A Pilot Study with Bangladeshi Immigrant Women in Canada

ABSTRACT:

Background: This study was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the information seeking behaviour of Bangladeshi immigrant women in Canada.

Methods: In February 2015, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty-two women residing in the Greater Toronto Area to investigate the everyday life information practices, settlement information needs, and barriers faced accessing and using various information.

Results: Participants needed various pre-arrival and post-arrival information including information about important documents to bring, mental preparedness, employment information, childcare, and health. There was evidence of a high dependency on informal information networks (e.g., family members, friends) to meet diverse information needs. The study highlights the importance of offering a program of need-based settlement information services to these newcomers of Canada. The study presents a preliminary model on the connection between everyday life information practices of immigrants and their social integration and settlement.

Discussion and Conclusion: Despite the broad spectrum of services and programs available to the research participants, their accounts of immigration and settlement are filled with gaps in knowledge – gaps that could be readily filled with the provision of timely, need-based information that is accessible at the point of need. The pilot study further suggests that the provision of everyday information to help women “get on with their lives” has profound consequences for quality of life in Canada.

Interdisciplinary Reflection: The burgeoning interdisciplinary research on migration, immigration and settlement would benefit from consideration of the contributions information studies makes to understanding how newcomers, immigrants, and refugees deal with information in their lives.

Keywords: Information practices of immigrants, barriers to information access, settlement information needs, need-based settlement information services, women immigrants.