Research Article

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“The journey will be relaxed. You will watch television. Just like a VIP”: Misinformation, secrecy, and the information behaviour of repatriated migrants in Bangladesh

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Abstract: This paper explores the information behaviour of repatriated migrants in Bangladesh in the context of their irregular migration. Using an exploratory qualitative research design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight repatriated migrants in Bangladesh. This study provides insights into the culturally situated, complicated information behaviour of repatriated migrants in Bangladesh. The findings of this study show that repatriated migrants did not seek any information in the context of their irregular migration. It is evident that factors such as unrealistic perceptions and expectations about life abroad, desperate desire to relocate to another country, and trust in smugglers and their agents played a key role in their information seeking in the context of their irregular migration. The study revealed that some participants were unaware of the risk of taking an irregular journey and deceived by the misinformation shared by their smugglers and their agents. Some interviewees even claimed not to attempt to move to Malaysia if they were aware of the heavy risks associated with the move. The concepts of “migration as gambling” and “Aladdin’s lamp” emerged in this study have some implications for local informational program development aiming to educate vulnerable rural population about the risk of irregular migration and connect them with reliable migrational information sources. The study identified some information grounds such as the Bazaar and Betel fields, which might be useful in offering informational programs at those grounds. The findings related to the information behaviour of repatriated migrants have potential implications for research in various disciplines, including library and information science, migrational studies, geography, and psychology.

Keywords: Information behaviour; migrants; information needs and sources; reasons for migration; information grounds; information poverty.

1 Introduction

Many people desire to move to a new country. A survey by Gallup’s Migration Research Center (2018) revealed that more than 750 million people worldwide had a desire to migrate if they could (Esipova et al., 2018). In 2019, there were around 272 million international migrants worldwide (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2020). However, not all migrations are legally authorized or done. A recent report published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) suggests that at least 2.5 million migrants were smuggled in 2016, generating an income of up to US\$ 7 billion for people smugglers (p.5). Bangladesh, a country grappling with various socioeconomic problems, including poverty, unemployment, crime, and illiteracy, is a hot point for smuggling and trafficking. Approximately 21.8 percent of people in Bangladesh live under the poverty line (Asian Development Bank, 2020), and about one-fourth of the adult

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population in Bangladesh is illiterate (Alamgir, 2019). Bangladesh is also one of the top ten densely populated countries in the world and is well known for its human trafficking and human smuggling issues.

Migrant smuggling in Bangladesh is a serious issue, and each year, thousands of people are smuggled by migrant smugglers in various countries, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Lebanon, and Malaysia. Poverty, illiteracy, and lack of opportunities are among the factors that people try to migrate to another country (Joarder & Miller, 2014; Biswas, 2015). Globally, thousands of people lose their lives as a result of attempting to cross borders illegally. In May 2015, the discovery of mass graves in Thailand containing the bodies of migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar (UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, 2015), did not end Bangladeshi people dying attempting to migrate to another country illegally with the hope of changing their financial conditions overnight. In May 2020, 30 migrants, including 26 Bangladeshi migrants, were killed in Libya in a revenge attack by the family of a murdered smuggler (Daragahi, 2020).

Although some research (such as Castelli 2018; Hagen-Zanker, 2008) has been conducted to inform our understanding of why people migrate to another country, there are still many areas (such as information sources repatriated migrants use, their information grounds) unknown to the academic world, especially in the Library and Information Science (LIS) context. We do not know much about the information behaviour of irregular migrants or repatriated migrants. The study, one of the very few studies on the information behaviour of repatriated migrants, explores the information behaviour of repatriated migrants, their information grounds, and the role information may play in reducing irregular migration.

2 Problem statement

Irregular migration is a global issue. There are many reasons people try to migrate to another country, including the fear of prosecution, war, poverty, sexual identity, and in search of better opportunities (Castelli, 2018; Hagen-Zanker, 2008). In the case of irregular migration, people risk their lives by moving to another country via air, road, and sea. For refugees, there may not be any other option except fleeing to a new country to survive, but for many fortune-seekers voluntarily taking the irregular path to enter another country with the hope of changing their lives overnight may be avoidable, perhaps to some extent, if not completely. One of the reasons people take the deadly journey is due to false or exaggerated information about the opportunities they will be getting in the country they are moving to (European Commission, DG Migration & Home Affairs, 2015; Vijayarasa, 2012). However, little is known about what information repatriated migrants received about moving to another country, their information needs, and their sources in the context of their migration, their information grounds, and whether information can truly play any role in reducing irregular migration. There are several studies on the information behaviour of migrants, including refugees, such as Allard 2015, Caidi et al., 2019; Komito and Bates, 2011; Machet and Govender, 2012; Mansour, 2018; Mason and Lamain, 2007; Oduntan and Ruthven 2019; Oh et al., 2014; Shuva, 2020a,b, 2021b. However, to the best of the author's knowledge, there is no study in LIS that explores the information behaviour of repatriated migrants, in particular the information they sought or gathered before their dangerous journey via sea and their information sources and information grounds. Using Bangladeshi repatriated migrants as a case study, this study aims to address the following research questions:

- RQ 1: What is the information behaviour of repatriated migrants in the context of their irregular migration?
- RQ 2: What perceptions do repatriated migrants hold about life abroad?
- RQ 3: What role does information play (does not play) in the context of irregular migration?

3 Theoretical framework

3.1 Information grounds

The theory of information grounds was developed by Pettigrew (1999). Fisher (2005) defines information grounds as synergistic “environment[s] temporarily created when people come together for a singular purpose but from whose

behavior emerges a social atmosphere that fosters the spontaneous and serendipitous sharing of information" (p. 811). Several studies have identified information grounds in various contexts, such as everyday life information behaviour and migration (e.g., Fisher et al., 2004b; McKechnie and McKenzie, 2004; Fisher et al., 2007; Meyers et al., 2009; Khoir et al., 2015, Shuva, 2015), however, little is known about the information grounds of migrants in the context of their migration in pre-arrival contexts. Studies such as Fisher et al. (2004b), Khoir et al. (2015), and Shuva (2015) report the information grounds of diverse immigrant groups. A pioneering study by Fisher et al. (2004b) identified the information grounds of Hispanic migrant workers in Yakima Valley, USA. The participant reported various information grounds, including the church, school, workplace, farmworkers' medical clinic, hair salons, and barbershops. A pilot study of 22 Bangladeshi women immigrants by Shuva (2015) reported that family and friends' gatherings, children's schools, and religious institutions (mosques, temples) are among some of the information grounds of the participants. A recent study on immigrants in Australia by Khoir et al. (2015) identified the information grounds of immigrants in Australia, including meeting friends and acquaintances in homes, cafes and malls., campuses, and libraries. The authors report online social networking grounds such as Facebook and LinkedIn as information grounds for their participants.

In this study context, the concept of "information grounds" is useful to guide us to more holistically understand irregular migrants' information behaviour, specifically, places where they get information about the opportunity to relocate to another country. Identifying the information grounds of irregular migrants would be useful in delivering effective informational programs to help people make informed decisions about their move and reduce irregular migration.

3.2 Chatman's theory of information poverty

Chatman's theory of information poverty, with some revisions, works to explore the culturally situated information behaviour of vulnerable populations such as repatriated migrants. Using Chatman's (1996) theory of "information poverty," as a framework, the study examines whether repatriated migrants are "information poor" at least in the context of their irregular migration and what aspects make repatriated migrants information poor. Chatman's theory of information poverty is based on four concepts: secrecy, deception, risk-taking, and situational relevance. Six propositions were derived from these concepts to describe an impoverished information world:

Proposition 1: People who are defined as information poor perceive themselves to be devoid of any sources that might help them. Proposition 2: Information poverty is partially associated with class distinction. That is, the condition of information poverty is influenced by outsiders who withhold privileged access to information. Proposition 3: Information poverty is determined by self-protective behaviors, which are used in response to social norms. Proposition 4: Both secrecy and deception are self-protecting mechanisms due to a sense of mistrust regarding the interest or ability of others to provide useful information. Proposition 5: A decision to risk exposure about our true problems is often not taken due to a perception that negative consequences outweigh benefits. Proposition 6: New knowledge will be selectively introduced, and this process is influenced by the relevance of that information to everyday problems and concerns (Chatman, 1996, 197-198).

In this study context, Chatman's six propositions may be useful in examining the information behaviour of repatriated migrants in the context of their migration journey.

4 Literature review

4.1 Information behaviour of migrants

Several studies (such as Allard, 2015, Caidi et al., 2019; Komito & Bates, 2011; Machet & Govender, 2012; Mansour, 2018; Mason & Lamain, 2007; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2019; Oh et al., 2014; Shuva, 2020a,b, 2021b; Silvio, 2006; Sin & Kim, 2018) have explored the information behaviour of newcomers and immigrants globally, including refugees and international students. Different migrant groups have different information needs for their settlement in a new country and may have to consult diverse information sources to meet their needs. For example, skilled immigrants and their dependents

may have a clear focus on their employment-related settlement in their host country and may focus on gathering information on employment-related information over other information needs, such as entertainment (Shuva, 2020a, b; 2021b). Compared to skilled immigrants and their dependents, family sponsored immigrant parents usually focus on gathering information on entertainment, socialization, and healthcare over employment (Caidi et al., 2019). Studies on refugees also report that refugees require various types of information for their settlement in their host country. For example, Mansour's study (2018) on Syrian refugees displaced to Egypt revealed that they needed information related to their everyday life, information to educate their children, and information on Syria. Other important studies on various immigrant groups globally, such as Mason and Lamain (2007) on 78 immigrants in New Zealand and Komito and Bates (2011) on migrants in Ireland report participants requiring various settlement information in pre- and post-arrival contexts.

Studies on migrants' information behaviour across the globe also report a significant dependency on family, friends, and personal networks among various groups (e.g., Allard, 2015; Fisher et al., 2004a; Khoir, 2016; Esses et al., 2013; Komito & Bates, 2011; Rayes et al., 2016, Shuva, 2020a,b). However, recent studies on immigrants and refugees have also reported a shift in the choice of information sources among various newcomer populations, including refugees (Khoir, 2016; Lingel, 2011; Shuva 2020a, 2021a). Although we may generally assume that refugees have limited access to ICT and its resources, recent studies such as Kaufmann (2018), Gough and Gough (2019), Lloyd et al. (2017), and Mansour (2018) report refugees using various technology-mediated resources (such as Google Maps, YouTube) in their settlements and everyday life contexts.

Although there have been quite a few studies globally exploring the information needs and seeking behaviour of migrants, most of the studies have focused on the information behaviour of migrants in post-arrival contexts (after arrival to the host countries). These do not necessarily inform our understanding of the information migrants seek before arrival and the sources they utilize in the context of their migration. Further, we do not know much about the information repatriated migrants look for before taking the irregular deadly journey via sea, the information sources they use, their information grounds, and the perceptions they hold about the country they are planning to migrate to. We also do not know what role information may play to reduce irregular migration globally. This study contributes to our understanding of irregular migrants' information needs and seeking behaviour in the context of their migration.

4.2 Information access barriers

Several studies have reported language problems among migrants as one of the major barriers to accessing information and available services in post-arrival contexts, including health services (e.g., Mason & Lamain, 2007; Kalich et al., 2016; Stampino, 2007). In the LIS literature, in addition to the lack of language proficiency as a significant barrier to access to information, lack of information literacy skills is also reported as a barrier to one's ability to access information in a new country. Studies such as Khoir et al. (2015), Lloyd et al. (2013), and Rayes et al. (2016) highlight the importance of information literacy skills for successful integration in the new information environment. Although studies on immigrants' information behaviour report the lack of host country language proficiency as a key barrier to immigrants' social integration in a new country, very little is known about the information access barriers in pre-arrival contexts. Earlier studies on the information behaviour of rural dwellers (such as Chakrabarti, 2001; Dutta, 2008; Shuva, 2017; Okwu et al. 2011) reported illiteracy as one of the barriers to information access. We do not know much about how illiteracy plays (does not play) a role in migrants' information access. We also do not know much about the challenges migrants face in gathering information before they take their irregular journey. This study fills some gaps in our understanding of the information access barriers of undocumented migrants in the context of their migration.

5 Research methods

This is an exploratory qualitative study aimed at exploring the information behaviour of eight repatriated migrants and the role information plays in reducing undocumented migration. The study was conducted in Jhenaidah about 190 km from Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. Jhenaidah was a part of the Khulna division. The main source of income

for the people of Jhenaidah comes from agriculture. Using convenience sampling, the participants of the study were recruited from the Bogra and Abaipur unions of Shaillkupa Upazilla, Chandpur union of Harinakunda Upazila, and Jhenaidah Municipality.

This study was conducted in September of 2015. The participants were recruited through the help of local journalists who previously covered news on migrant smuggling and trafficking and had contact with many repatriated migrants in Jhenaidah, Bangladesh. The journalists were mainly local correspondences in national daily newspapers. The author contacted the then President of Jhenaidah Press Club through a news editor of a well-known national newspaper in Bangladesh. The president of the Jhenaidah Press Club was assured to help the author with the study but asked to stay in Jhenaidah for a few days. The participants were contacted by journalists about the study and whether they would be interested in participating in a short interview with the author. Once they agreed, the author and his team (local journalists) visited their preferred place to conduct the interviews.

The author interviewed eight participants who tried to migrate to Malaysia in 2015 via dangerous sea journeys with the help of local and international migrant smuggler gangs. They claimed that they were repatriated by the Government of Malaysia with the help of the Government of Bangladesh and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) because they did not move to Malaysia legally. All participants were men. A few of the participants were known to each other, but they did not take the journey together. Most of the participants were married and had no education or limited education (see Table 1). Only one participant studied 12 grades. When it comes to the profession, most of the participants were farmers. The lowest average monthly income was BDT 4000-5000 (US\$ 47-59), and most of the participants reported earning less than BDT 10,000 (about US\$ 120) monthly. Only one participant reported earning BDT 25,000 (about US\$295) before attempting to move to Malaysia. Many of the participants lived in a joint family with their brothers and parents. Participants of this study were interviewed at their place of convenience, including yards, village restaurant, bedroom, tea stalls, and betel leaf firms. The participants also reported not having access to internet-enabled cell phones or computers, which was not surprising. In the context of developing countries like Bangladesh, many people still do not have access to the Internet. For example, in 2019, only 12.9% of the Bangladeshi population had access to the Internet (Statista, 2021). Regarding digital literacy, a recent study on digital literacy and access to public services by the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) (2019) reports that half of the rural population in Bangladesh is not familiar with the Internet. Of the 6,500 households, 77% of rural households were found to have no to low digital skills (Shadat et al., 2020).

Table 1: Demographics.

Pseudonyms	Age	Marital status	Education	Profession	Monthly income in Bangladeshi taka	Household members	Place of interview
Akash	22	Married	No education	Farmer	5,000-6,000	11	Yard
Jamal	24	Unmarried	Grade 1	Farmer	4,000-5,000	06	Yard
Ratan	34	Married	Grade 12	Bakery business*	25,000	10	Yard
Babu	24	Married	No education	Fish business	6,000-7,000	06	Village restaurant
Mofiz	36-37	Married	No education	Farmer	7,000-8,000	20	Yard
Shamsu	26	Married	Grade 8	Farmer (Betel leaf business)	10,000-12,000	04	Bedroom
Alam	36	Married	Grade 5	Farmer	5,000-6,000	05	Tea shop
Saiful	--**	Married	Grade 9	Farmer	10,000-12,000	09	Betel leaf firm

* The participant reported earning \$25,000 a month before he attempted to move to Malaysia, illegally. At the time of the interview, he was not doing anything except looking after his dad's village shop.

** The author missed asking his age.

The participants in the study were given a document in Bengali explaining various aspects of the research, including the purposes, potential outcomes, risk involved, how the data will be stored and shared, and the author's background. They were also informed that the author will protect their personal information, and that none of the personally identifying information will be shared with anyone. The audio interview files and data analysis did not include any personal identification of participants' information. Although the author gave printed copies of the letter of information to all the participants, many of them were unable to read the letter of information because of a lack of education. For all participants, the author informed the purpose of the study, the risk involved, data de-identification/anonymization, and the outcome of the study. Participation in the study was voluntary. The participants were allowed to refuse to participate at any point or refuse to answer any questions. Because of the cultural contexts of the rural population, similar to previous studies in rural populations in Bangladesh (such as Shuva, 2017) informed consent was obtained verbally. Generally, people in Bangladesh are suspicious of signing documents. In the context of repatriated migrants, as most of them were illiterate or had very limited education, asking to sign an informed consent would deter them from participating in this study and would have given them additional stress. The interviews were recorded using a Sony audio recorder and the average duration of the interview was 20 min. One of the main reasons for some of the interviews being short was, in some cases, participants responded to the questions with just yes or no without describing or explaining situations. In addition, some of the questions related to their information needs were not relevant, as they did not require any information in the context of their migration.

Although the participants were asked to participate privately, most of them preferred to participate in front of their family members or friends. Two interviews were conducted privately, one at the participant's bedroom and the other at the betel leaf firm.

The interview data were coded following the framework of Braun and Clarke's six-phase "thematic analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The author, a Bangladeshi native speaker, transcribed and re-read the transcriptions. The author generated the initial coding of the interviews with the help of the tool NVivo 12. After that, the author combined codes into potential themes and checked and rechecked potential themes with their relevance to the coded extracts. In the following phase, the creation and revision of potential themes continued until the author felt satisfied with the themes. Finally, the codes were logically organized for analysis and presentation. The translation of the quotes was done by the author.

6 Findings

The findings of this study are divided into six categories. In category I, the study set the context by illustrating the reasons described by the participants regarding their irregular journey to Malaysia. In category II, the study shows the migration-related information needs and sources of the interviewees. Category III shows the findings related to misinformation and the lack of information in the context of irregular migration. Category IV on secrecy about the migration plan shows participants not sharing information about their migration plan with their family members, including their spouse. Under the Category V findings related to information grounds in the context of irregular migration are described. Finally, category VI illustrates some participants' strong desire to move to another country despite being informed about the risks involved with that move.

6.1 Getting Aladdin's lamp: Life changes overnight

One of the main reasons people move to other countries is that they perceive life abroad as full of opportunities, especially when it comes to earning money. The repatriated migrants in this study, with no education or very limited education, perceived their lives in Malaysia as full of opportunities. They believed that once they moved, they would be able to quickly change their fortune. The fortune-seekers thought if they can move to Malaysia, they will find the "Aladdin's lamp," and will be able to become financially rich overnight. Although they do not speak Malaya (the official language of Malaysia) or English, they did not feel that it was a problem for their economic integration into Malaysian society.

When asked why they wanted to move to Malaysia, everyone reported that they wanted to earn money to change their family's financial condition in Bangladesh. For example, Babu, a fish businessman in Jhenaidah, described that he believed it was easy to earn money in Malaysia and almost everyone earns BDT 50,000 (about US\$ 600) there. Similar to Babu, Alam believed that he will earn more money in Malaysia and will be able to change his family's fortune.

If I earn BDT 40,000-50,000 (US\$470-600), I would be able to meet my family's financial deficiency. I expected that.

Similar to Alam, for Mofiz, the reasons for moving to Malaysia were also to change their fortune:

People go to Malaysia with one dream. We will get rich. We will do many things. Everyone has hope and desires.

Mofiz even claimed that he noticed people earning a lot of money working in Malaysia and changing their economic status overnight. When asked how he heard people earning a lot of money in Malaysia, Mofiz replied:

Many people from my area moved there [Malaysia]...Many people did that [those who moved to Malaysia earlier]. Those who have been in Malaysia for some time built homes, some bought trucks, and some bought agricultural land. For example, one of my relatives, who lived in Malaysia, bought two trucks, built a home, and bought an agricultural field.

Another participant, Akash, even perceived that there were many work opportunities. He believes that anyone and everyone can work in Malaysia. Similar to Akash, Jamal also believed that he would earn a lot of money and would be able to change his financial condition if he was successful in settling in Malaysia.

6.2 Migration-related information needs and sources

Although we may assume that people will look for information before they attempt to move to a new country, especially in relation to their accommodation, employment, and health, surprisingly, when asked about the information needs before leaving Jhenaidah for Malaysia, all the interviewees in this study reported not needing or feeling the need for any information in the context of their irregular migration, except what they received from the smugglers and their agents. For example, Akash recounts not requiring any information before leaving Bangladesh.

I did not think about those [gathering information about irregular migration]. If I would think about those, I would not go. ...At that time, my only thinking was how I would go to Malaysia. Those who moved there had the same thinking (no information need). What I will do, what would happen, I did not think about them.

Another participant, Babu, also claimed not to be worried about looking for any information before he left for Malaysia. Similar to Babu, Jamal recalled not requiring any information before arrival.

No, I did not want to know anything. I just thought one thing, he [the smuggler] will take me to [Malaysia], I will go. That's all.

It is evident from the interviews that one of the main reasons people do not need information or verify the information they receive from the smugglers and their agents is due to trust in the smugglers and their agents. Local smugglers and agents were the only sources of information for their attempts to move to Malaysia. As local smugglers and their agents were from their own community and they were successful in helping others crossing the borders illegally, interviewees were not very worried about verifying the information or gathering more information than those provided by the smugglers and their agents. Some of them who moved to Malaysia via the same route and were working in Malaysia were also involved in this migrant smuggling business. Therefore, people have seen generations to generations their friends and families moving to Malaysia and other countries via irregular journeys and quickly changing their fortune. Therefore, interviewees were not likely to suspect or question the information they received from smugglers and their agents. For example, Ratan, who studied 12 classes and was able to speak some English, in the following recounts trusting the information received from the smuggler as the smuggler was previously his neighbor:

The agent told me that he had taken many others in Malaysia. The agent also connected me with a guy who had previously traveled to Malaysia via ship. He was so normal when talking to me. I confirmed my trip to Malaysia. After contacting the guy, I was just crazy to go to Malaysia and thought if the guy could settle in Malaysia, why I could not. The guy is a neighbor. After I went to Malaysia, the agent never contacted me and tried to trap my family to get extra money. The uncle of the agent works at our jewelry store. Therefore, we trust the information provided by the agent.

Similar to Ratan, Saiful and Jamal also reported that local smugglers were their neighbors.

Saiful: The smuggler is our neighbor. That house [pointing to his house] next to primary school.

Jamal: He [the smuggler] was known to me as our neighbor. He went to Malaysia that way [via an irregular journey].

Alam recollects agents coming to his betel field to talk and set grounds to convince him to move to Malaysia. He claimed to know the agent that the smuggler sent to him.

NZS: Did you know the agent?

Alam: Yes. I know him. [Name] He lives in another village.

6.3 Misinformation and the lack of access to information about the irregular journeys

It is evident in this study that some interviewees did not have much information about their irregular moves to Malaysia. Many of them received misinformation from migrant smugglers and their agents. The migrant smugglers and their agents provided information in a way that some repatriated migrants did not worry about their irregular move to Malaysia. Some repatriated migrants were assured by their comfortable, life-changing journey to Malaysia by their agents; they did not even consider verifying the information received from their agents. Many participants claimed the information they received about their journey, and the actual journey was the opposite. Some repatriated migrants in this study even claimed that they would not move if they were aware of the danger of the journey to Malaysia.

Saiful, who earned decent money monthly, claimed that he would not take the risk of moving to Malaysia if he was aware of this. He recounts the misinformation received from the agent.

NZS: If you were aware, you will be in this trouble, did you try to move to Malaysia?

Saiful: Never, ever.

NZS: Have you ever thought about how you will go to a country without a passport?

Saiful: I asked the smuggler without a passport, how would I [move to Malaysia]? He replied, "If you take the water path, no one needs a passport."

NZS: Did he tell you, you will get a job after arriving in Malaysia?

Saiful: Yes. He told me, "You will get a job immediately after arrival."

Jamal, a young local farmer, when asked what the smuggler told about his journey to Malaysia, replied:

The journey will be relaxed. You will watch television. Like a VIP [a very important person]. Everyone has their own seat [on the ship].

Babu also believed in the information shared by his smuggler about the journey and overall about the prospects of his settlement in Malaysia. He did not hesitate to take the journey on short notice.

NZS: Did the smuggler say he will give you a job immediately after moving to Malaysia?

Babu: Yes, he told me 'you will rest [relax] 2-3 days, then you will get your job.'

NZS: What did he say about the journey?

Babu: We will go through big ships. Told me "We will reach Malaysia in 15 days." However, it took two months for me.

NZS: How much will you earn?

Babu: I was supposed to earn BDT 30,000 (US\$ 350) first, and then it will increase.

NZS: Did you verify the information you received?

Babu: He [the smuggler] was in Malaysia. I did not have regular contact with him.

NZS: Whatever he said you believed him?

Babu: Yes

It is evident in the study that participants were severely trapped by misinformation; they even did not think about requiring a passport for their travel. Akash claimed that he did not think of requiring a passport to move to Malaysia.

NZS: Did you know that you cannot visit a country without a passport?

Akash: We did not think about this. This did not enter our heads.

Ratan, who had a passport, did not take it as the smuggler did not ask for it.

The agent assured me of taking me to Malaysia and giving me a job. They did not ask for passports. I had my passport home.

Some repatriated migrants claimed that they would not attempt to take an irregular path to move to Malaysia in the future. For example, when Saiful asked whether he would try to go to Malaysia via sea again, he replied:

No, no. I will never go that way even if they offer me one core taka (about US\$ 120,000). If they offer me one core taka [the way I tried to move], I will not go.

6.4 Secrecy about the migration plan

Throughout the interview transcripts, it was clear that all the participants in this study were information poor. Participants reported having limited access to information related to their deadly journey to Malaysia, maintaining secrecy because of the fear of not being able to pursue their dreams if they shared the information with their family and friends, and had limited or no access to government and other formal information sources such as local NGOs.

Almost all participants reported maintaining secrecy about their sudden move to Malaysia, as instructed by their smugglers and their agents. They did not tell anything about their plans because of the fear of their family members, ruining their plan to move to Malaysia. Participants reported how mentally captured they were by the smugglers and their agents that they believed everything told by the smugglers and their agents and did not share the information with their close family members, including spouses and their parents.

It is evident that everyone strictly maintained secrecy about their plans to take the irregular journey to move to Malaysia. For example, Akash, Alam, Saiful, and Shamsu explained that they were asked not to share their plans to move to Malaysia with anyone, not even their spouses.

Akash: [Smugglers] Asked not to inform anyone [about the plan]. [The smuggler] Told whoever went previously [to Malaysia] did not inform anyone before moving there. They did not even tell their wives.

Alam: [Agent asked] "Do not tell anyone. No one. You cannot tell this to your home [family]." He took me to the [bus]terminal and got me on the bus. That's my last communication with him. He told me "do not tell anyone [about my plan]."

Saiful: No, no. He [agent] asked me "if you tell anyone, they will not allow you to go."

Shamsu: The smugglers always asked [not to share the plan]. Perhaps, as there are many risks moving to [Malaysia] illegally, sharing [the plan] would bring more challenges [family members not allowing to go].

Participants also claimed to rush to move to Malaysia, restricting the chances of carefully deciding their irregular movements. Some participants even reported leaving their place of residence within a few hours of contact with the agent. For example, Jamal, although his dad was living in Malaysia at the time of his dangerous journey to Malaysia, he did not get much time to talk to his dad and decide.

The smuggler contacted me around 5.00 pm [about my move to Malaysia], I left [my village] at 9.00 pm.

Another participant, Mofiz, also claimed that he left his village within two days after he was contacted by the smuggler.

6.5 Information grounds

Participants were asked to report their information grounds in the context of irregular migration. People in rural areas in Bangladesh are very social and meet each other regularly at different places, including local Bazaar, tea stalls, and village restaurants. People without access to televisions regularly spend time at local shops with televisions. Participants reported socializing at different grounds and receiving information about the opportunities to move to Malaysia, including at the village Bazaar, tea stalls, and village restaurants. Although the purpose of their visit to these places was not to gather information about opportunities to move to Malaysia, it emerged as a discussion of everyday life. Akash and Mofiz described how he met their agents at bazaar and obtained information on the opportunities to move to Malaysia.

Akash: We used to go to Bazaar [local bazaar]. We usually go to [Moksud Bazaar]. Everyone we know comes there. So, one day, [the agent] told me I am sending people [to Malaysia] if you know anyone interested to go, bring them to me. I will send people. I myself [expressed my interest.]

Mofiz: [On the day, I left for Malaysia] I gossiped with him, ate with him at the Vetor Bazaar [name of the local farmers' market]. I know him for a long time...He usually comes to our Bazaar.

For Jamal, Bazaar and agricultural fields were his information grounds.

As most of the participants were farmers, they also indicated agricultural fields as their information grounds for receiving information about moving to another country. They reported that smugglers' local agents came to their field and shared information about the opportunity to move to Malaysia.

Alam: At my betel field near my house. He sent agents to my betel field. They were talking about many things, and at some point, information about the opportunity to move abroad [Malaysia] comes up. They said, "If you want to move [to Malaysia], I will take you. You will pay [the fees of the smuggler] from your income there." I thought this was an opportunity. I wanted to move as I hoped I would pay money from my income in [Malaysia].

Shamsu: I talked to the agent in the Betel field next to Biswa Road [Jhenaidah]. I talked to him face-to-face on the first day [he met him] and the other day over the phone [about my journey to Malaysia].

6.6 Migration as "gambling"

There is a noticeable phenomenon that some interviewees considered migration as "gambling." As they were poor, they placed their lives in place of money. Some participants were aware of the challenges and risks associated with irregular journeys, but they did take that risk with the hope of gaining some economic benefits like others who were previously successful in moving to another country via dangerous sea journeys. After telling stories after stories about their sufferings during their journey via the sea, some participants expressed their intention to try again to move to another country. Some of them even claimed they narrowly escaped death, but that feeling did not stop them from considering moving to another country if opportunity came up.

For example, Jamal, a fortune-seeker, claimed that he was aware of the risk of illegally moving to Malaysia, but decided to take the journey:

Jamal: I heard about risks. I thought as they went [his friends and relatives], we will go [to Malaysia]...As they [who moved earlier via the same route] were able to go, what's wrong with us? As they went, we will go.

Jamal, although he told stories after stories of his and others' suffering on the journey to Malaysia, he expressed his interest in attempting to move to Malaysia again. Next time, he claimed that you will try to move to a new country with the help of the Government of Bangladesh. Similar to Jamal, Shamsu was also aware of the danger of an irregular journey to Malaysia. When asked whether he was aware of the risk involved in moving to Malaysia via an irregular route, he replied:

I certainly knew it was an illegal way to move [to Malaysia]...Many of my brothers [referring to people in the village] went [this way] previously. They told me stories about it [risk]. They told me that the path was more or less very risky. It is better not to take that path.' Even though there were risks, we did not think we would be unsuccessful [moving to Malaysia following this route].

Ratan is an excellent example of a person losing everything previously in his life to try to move to another country and continue to keep his dream of moving to a new country. He tried to move to another country several times and was unsuccessful. He sold his family's properties and left his decent bakery job. He claimed that he was earning about US\$ 300 before attempting to move to Malaysia via the sea. In his words:

I wanted to go to Malaysia. I lost so much money in my life. I lost about 50 lacs (approximately US\$ 60,000). We had to sell our homes. Now we stay in a rented house...Mainly, wanted to change my fortune. This is why planning to emigrate to Malaysia. I was suffering from a financial crisis. I became zero. After I tried to emigrate to Malaysia, I added an extra zero to my life. Now, I do not do anything. I just sit at my father's metal shop all day...I have always had the intention to go abroad. I have been cheated several times earlier. I wanted to migrate to Libya earlier. I lost my money there. I did not get the money I paid for migrating to Libya. I also attempted to move to Malaysia. The smugglers asked for money. I did not get the visa. We had a gold business before. We had two gold-jewelry stores. Now, we do not have any.

After losing everything, Ratan claimed that he still wishes to move to another country and claimed to try again through the government. The intention to move to Malaysia remained strong among the other participants. Although many of them told stories after stories of their sufferings, including no access to water and food during their dangerous journey to Malaysia and how they escaped from death, they still claimed they would try to move to Malaysia or other countries if opportunities came up. For example, Babu, who suffered mentally and physically during his journey to Malaysia via sea, expressed his disappointment in not being able to successfully move to Malaysia and settle there. He claimed to try to move to Malaysia again this time, although with the help of the Bangladesh government.

7 Discussions and policy implications

The information behaviour of repatriated migrants in the context of their migration is very complex and culturally situated. The participants of this study reported not requiring any information or feeling the need to gather information about their irregular migration journey. Although studies on migrants' information behaviour globally (see, for example, Allard 2015, Caidi et al 2019; Komito & Bates 2011; Machet & Govender 2012; Mansour 2018; Mason & Lamain 2007; Oduntan & Ruthven 2019; Shuva 2020a,b; Silvio, 2006) show that migrants gather information in pre- and post-arrival contexts, including information related to accommodation, employment, and health in their host country, the repatriated migrants in this study reported not needing or gathering any information in the contexts of their irregular migration. Many factors, such as their perceptions about life abroad, their strong desire to relocate to another country, and their "trust" in smugglers and their agents played an important role in their information behaviour in the context of their irregular migration. Among the factors mentioned by the repatriated migrants in this study, trust in smugglers and their agents seems to be the core factor affecting their information seeking in the context of their irregular migration. Many interviewees claimed that they did not worry about their journey, reported not asking any information about their journey to Malaysia, and not questioning the (mis)information (such as passport not required) they received from their smugglers and their agents because of their trust in their agents. People trusted their smugglers and their agents as they were part of their community, and some of them were already living in Malaysia. Trust in smugglers and their agents is the result of people moving to Malaysia or other countries via irregular path generations after generations. In many cases, local smugglers were also repatriated migrants' neighbors, so they easily believed the information shared by their smugglers, which is an important finding in information access barrier research on migrants, where focus is mostly given to information access barriers in post-arrival contexts and host country languages (Mason & Lamain, 2007; Kalich et al., 2016) and the lack of information literacy skills (Lloyd et al., 2013).

The findings also challenge the general assumption that having friends and family networks is beneficial for accessing information. In the context of this study, the smugglers were part of their local community; however, they did not receive reliable and comprehensive information about their journey to Malaysia. Although studies on LIS (such as Allard, 2015; Khoir, 2016; Esses et al., 2013; Komito & Bates, 2011; Shuva, 2020a,b) informal networks such as friends and family as the core information sources for immigrants, including refugees, we do not know much about the information behaviour of migrants in their pre-migration context. The study highlights the importance of investigating the information behaviour of migrants in pre-migration contexts to comprehensively understand their information

needs and seeking in the context of their migration. The current study contributes to our understanding of some of the factors affecting migrants' information seeking in the context of their irregular migration. The findings of this study also contribute to the existing research on the barriers to information access by highlighting how factors such as migrants' perceptions about life abroad, migrants' strong desire to relocate to another country, and their "trust" in smugglers and their agents may impede migrants' access to reliable information. Further studies on migrants in interdisciplinary contexts such as LIS, migrational studies, geography, and psychology should explore the factors that hinder migrants' access to reliable information in the pre-arrival context.

In addition, the phenomenon of "Aladdin's lamp" in this study highlights that the repatriated migrants in this study are believed to be able to change their fortune overnight if they are successful in moving to Malaysia. Their belief originated from the success of their friends and relatives who previously moved to Malaysia via the same deadly route and through migrational stories. The participants of this study have seen people moving to Malaysia in an irregular way, being able to change their fortune by sending money regularly and buying lands, trucks, and investing money in business locally. Thus, they expected that if those who previously moved to Malaysia were successful via an irregular journey, they would also be successful. Participants' preconceived notion of Malaysia as full of opportunities and believing that their financial condition would be changed overnight if they could move to Malaysia played a key role in participants' information behaviour related to their migration plan. Previous studies such as Belloni (2016), also report migrants including refugees having perceived life abroad full of opportunities and getting the opportunity to live in their desired country is like winning a "jackpot" (Belloni, 2016). In the context of this study, through the information lens, the findings on the Aladdin's lamp provide some insights into the widespread unrealistic perceptions and expectations about life abroad among repatriated migrants, and the prevalence of migrational stories in the rural community. This finding emphasizes the importance of introducing informal and formal education about migration among vulnerable rural populations, where the rate of irregular migration is high. The widespread notion of Aladdin's lamp and similar phenomena such as winning a "jackpot" (Belloni, 2016) hint that many people are not aware of the recent changes in border security, streamlined policing, the requirements of biometrics, difficulty in getting health and other essential services if they move to another country as undocumented migrants, and inhuman torture, abuse of low-skilled migrants in some countries. Local public libraries, educational institutions (such as schools and colleges), religious institutions, NGOs, international agencies such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and local government agencies should partner to introduce some informational programs that would inform the vulnerable rural population about the risk of irregular migration, ways people can move to foreign countries legally along with available information support people may get if they want to verify the information they receive from various information channels. Collaborative informational programs such as opera, local radio programs, and door-to-door awareness programs may be effective in educating people about the risk of irregular migration and may, to some extent, reduce the rate of irregular migration locally.

In this study, it is evident that some repatriated migrants were heavily trapped by the misinformation shared by migrant smugglers and their local agents. The smugglers and their agents gained trust in the local community and pictured the dangerous journey as comfortable and risk-free. They also assured them of giving jobs to some interviewees once they had arrived in Malaysia. The smugglers and their agents were also able to pursue the repatriated migrants in this study to maintain secrecy about the irregular journey. For repatriated migrants with no education, grappling with poverty, desperate to change their fortune overnight, and limited access to information, it was not unexpected that they would be convinced by whatever information was shared with them regarding their migration journey. In LIS, recent studies such as Shuva (2020a) report the misinformation shared by some immigration consultancy agencies in Bangladesh and how that information affected the post-arrival settlement of some Bangladeshi immigrants in Canada. Further studies in LIS should look at information immigrants, including refugees receive, from various agencies, including immigration consultancy agencies before arrival, and to what extent these agencies provide misinformation and disinformation. While numerous studies focus on the spread of misinformation and disinformation in the online environment, in particular, via social media tools, the current study emphasizes the need to study the misinformation shared in traditional information environments such as face-to-face interactions.

The repatriated migrants in the current study were information poor. Their state of secrecy indicates their "information poverty" (Chatman, 1996), at least in the context of their irregular migration. Although in rural areas in Bangladesh, people usually do not hide information with their families (Shuva, 2017), the participants in the context of their attempt to migrate to Malaysia did not share any information about their plans with their families, including their

spouses and parents. Because of their "information sharing fear" (Shuva, 2020a,b) related to not being able to move to Malaysia if they share information about their irregular move with family and friends, they were not able to even get advice on their plan from their family and friends. The participants not only maintained secrecy about the migration plan, but they also did not have access to government-sanctioned official information sources such as government agencies. As they were mostly poor, uneducated, and did not have access to the Internet, they were not able to harness the benefits of the Internet in verifying the information they received from the smugglers and their agents. Although recent studies on refugees, such as Kaufmann (2018), Gough and Gough (2019), Lloyd et al. (2017), and Mansour (2017) found various refugee groups utilizing technology-mediated information sources, in this study, participants had no access to the Internet and its resources. None of the participants had access to smartphones. They mostly depend on their families and friends for their day-to-day information. For future studies, it would be interesting to explore the "information poverty" among various migrant groups. Utilizing Chatman's theory of "information poverty, future studies should explore information poverty among various migrant populations. What is the information behaviour of migrants? How do they seek information in the context of migration? What information do they receive in the pre-arrival context? What sources do they access? What challenges do they face in accessing reliable information? Addressing these questions would be useful in our understanding of the culturally situated information behaviour of diverse migrant groups.

The participants of this study reported some unique information grounds (such as the betel field). The findings related to information grounds have some policy implications. The identification of information grounds in the context of migrational information is useful in delivering informational programs aimed at informing people about the risk of irregular migration. For example, as evident in this study, almost all participants received information about irregular migration at the Bazaar. Offering extensive informational programs, including dramas featuring the local people who previously took the journey and lost everything, involving local religious leaders, schoolteachers, and locally respected people being part of the Bazaar-based informational programs may efficiently educate local people about the danger of irregular migration as well as the information that exists in the local community. In addition to policy implications, the findings related to the information grounds contribute to existing information ground research focusing mainly on the information grounds and their role in newcomers' settlement in the post-arrival contexts (Fisher et al., 2004b; Khoir et al., 2015; Shuva, 2015). Further studies should explore the information grounds of various migrant groups and information sharing and dissemination in those information grounds.

Finally, the phenomenon of migration as gambling that emerged in this study has practical implications in terms of information service development. First, some fortune-seekers reported taking the risk of trying to move to Malaysia with the hope of gaining economic solvency. As they are poor, they invest their "lives" in the place of "money" or other valuable items. Similar to gambling, although some participants lost everything because they tried to move to Malaysia, and all of them escaped from death, some still claimed to try to move to Malaysia or another country if another opportunity came up. The phenomenon of "migration as gambling" may challenge the effectiveness of "information campaigns" (see, for example, Nieuwenhuys & Pécout, 2007) targeted to reduce irregular migration by informing potential migrants about the risk of taking the irregular journey. The findings related to some repatriated migrants in this study considering migration as gambling are consistent with findings from an important ethnographic study by Belloni (2016) on Eritrean refugees in Italy. The author described Eritrean refugees in Italy as "gamblers". Belloni (2016) reports that the participants of the study were informed about recent national and European refugee policies and initiatives (such as Dublin Regulation and Eurodac) restricting people to submit refugee applications to more than one European country. Despite being aware of the regulations, the participants of Belloni's study took the risk of trying their luck to move to another European country with better benefits. The findings of Belloni's study and the current study may hint to some extent why people may still try to cross the borders with the help of migrant smugglers and their agents despite being aware of the risk associated with taking the irregular journey.

Despite studies such as Belloni (2016, 2019) hinting towards people taking the risk of moving to another country even being informed, the prospect of reducing irregular migration through locally designed, appropriate informational programs should not be underestimated. As evident in this study, some participants were trapped by the misinformation shared by their agents. In addition, almost all participants had unrealistic expectations about life abroad. Locally prevalent migrational stories also consist of false, outdated, and unreliable information. Some participants affirmed that they would not take the dangerous journey if they were aware of the risk involved in irregular migration. This highlights the necessity of offering timely, culturally, and locally appropriate informational programs in order to educate local

people about the risk of irregular migration, opportunities available to move to another country legally, and help them at least to connect with local information resources would probably reduce their regular migration attempt, at least to some extent. The author of the current study believes that locally designed, appropriate collaborative informational programs would be useful in reducing irregular migrations, at least in the long run.

In order to reduce irregular migration, in the long run, the author believes organizations such as IOM in collaboration with national and local NGOs must create long-term policies that would inform vulnerable populations of the risk and the consequences of crossing borders via irregular routes. The programs should aim to inform the vulnerable population of alternative ways to move to another country legally, helping them locate information related to migrational opportunities, and connect them with local community people who might be able to help them verify the information, and identify whether they are victims of fraud. Neither the Government of Bangladesh alone nor local agencies, including NGOs, would be able to significantly eliminate irregular migration trends. It would need cooperation from everyone in our society. Public libraries including non-government local public libraries, local NGOs (for example, Brac), and agencies such as Room to Read (<https://www.roomtoread.org/countries/bangladesh/>), can play an important role in information dissemination and make people aware of the risks and consequences of taking irregular migration routes, showing them the ways of moving to another country legally, and helping them gather and verify information in the context of their migration. Similarly, incorporating stories about how people suffered in taking an irregular path in the past in the school curriculum may have a positive outcome in the long run. We may see a future generation who is aware of the risk of irregular migration and may be able to make an informed decision before relocating to any country. The author also thinks that while designing the program, we must keep in mind that it may take several generations before people properly understand the risk of irregular migration, understand their potential in their own country, and may be less trapped by misinformation in the context of irregular migration.

The findings of this study have implications for future interdisciplinary research on migrants. For example, in LIS, although some studies have been conducted on the information behaviour of immigrants, including undocumented migrants, most of the studies focus on information behaviour in post-arrival contexts. Future studies in LIS on migrants should focus on exploring the culturally situated information behaviour of immigrants, including refugees, in pre-arrival contexts. Further studies on migrants' information behaviour should focus on exploring the challenges migrants face in accessing reliable information related to their migration as well as factors (such as trust in human sources and perceptions about life abroad) affecting migrants' information needs and seeking.

8 Limitation of the study

This study had some limitations. Using a non-probability sampling technique, this study conducted eight interviews with repatriated migrants in the Jhenaidah district of Bangladesh. Because of the nature of the study, the results were not generalizable. Moreover, although the author tried to reach as many participants as possible staying in Jhenaidah for a few days, because of the limitations of time and resources, the author was not able to recruit a large number of samples to comprehensively understand the behavioral phenomena of this vulnerable rural population. Despite its limitations, this study is the only study in LIS to understand the information behaviour of repatriated migrants, including the sources of information they use in the context of irregular migration, their information grounds, and the role information play (does not play) in the context of irregular migration.

9 Conclusion

People's desire to move to a new country is not going to diminish soon, nor fortune-seekers' unauthorized attempts to migrate to a new country will be reduced. Poverty, illiteracy, perception of life abroad, misinformation, migrational stories, the lack of information, greed, and other factors would continue to play in irregular migration. This study, through the lens of LIS, paved the way for future studies in various disciplines including LIS, migrational studies, and psychology to understand the information behaviour of migrants, including their information seeking behaviour in the

context of their migration, their information grounds, and the factors affecting irregular migration decisions (such as unrealistic perceptions about life abroad and misinformation).

The author calls for collaboration among various stakeholders, including local agencies, international organizations, local schools, and public libraries including non-government public libraries to partners in various capacities to inform local citizens about the risk of irregular migration, the reality of life abroad, and ways to relocate to another country legally. Migrational information policies should also focus on taking initiatives to connect rural people with appropriate information sources to gather and verify information in the context of their migration. We may not see a significant reduction in irregular migration unless local, national, and international organizations work together to implement policies aimed at educating vulnerable populations, as well as implementing strict policies that would identify the routes taken for irregular migration through strong policing, including community policing. The author hopes that the study has set the grounds for introducing some culturally sensitive, locally designed collaborative programs and initiatives to reduce irregular migration through informational programs in the long run. Future studies in LIS should further explore the complex, locally situated information behaviour of diverse migrant groups.

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