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Recommended Citation
Inthiran, Anushia; Charania, Nadia; and Honey, Michelle, "Settling-in or Unsettled: Refugees' Online Health Information Seeking Behaviour" (2024). *ACIS 2024 Proceedings*. 6.
https://aisel.aisnet.org/acis2024/6

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Settling-in or Unsettled: Refugees' Online Health Information Seeking Behaviour

Poster Slam

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Abstract
Refugees are a high needs group at early settlement stage, requiring more intensive and frequent support. Globally, little is known about how refugees use online means to obtain health information - specifically, during settlement and the acculturation phase. Previous research studies have documented the way refugees use offline methods to obtain health information. Refugees use and prefer online sources, yet there is no information about what and how online sources are used to fulfil their health information needs. It is important to obtain answers to these key questions because using online means to obtain health information presents inherent difficulties with the likes of misinformation, which can negatively affect the online search experience. This proposed research study will be the first to contribute knowledge in this sphere. Results from this proposed research study will allow relevant authorities to proactively fulfil the health information requirements of refugees.

Keywords refugees, health, online, information seeking

1 Introduction

Refugees, at the early settlement stage have significant and specific healthcare needs, requiring more intensive and sustained support (Sheriff, Awaise and Kheir 2022). They also require health information presented in a culturally relevant way (Ward et al. 2018). Refugees receive an overwhelming volume of health information during the settlement stage but indicate not always being able to understand this information (Griffin et al. 2022), leading to refugees experiencing poor health outcomes on settlement (Griffin et al 2022; Longanga 2022).

The majority of health-based refugee studies globally have focused on healthcare services seeking behaviour (Sheriff, Awaise and Kheir 2022; Ward et al. 2018; Griffin et al. 2022). Whilst healthcare services seeking studies continue to be at the forefront of health research agenda pertaining to refugees, little is known about an equally important aspect of refugee healthcare – online health information seeking, particularly at early settlement and during the acculturation phase. Refugees use (Griffin et al. 2022) and prefer (Longanga 2022) online sources to obtain health information because they allow people time to comprehend the information and compare this understanding with others (Lloyd, 2014). Yet, little is known about how refugees use online means to obtain health information. Thus, it is important to have this information, so government authorities are able to proactively fulfil the information needs of refugees.

As such, our proposed research study will specifically focus on the following: what health information needs are being fulfilled online? Where is the search being performed online? And what challenges are faced when performing an online health search? Given that refugees bring smartphones with them (Gough and Gough 2019), this enables seamless access to health information online allowing ease and freedom to access information and to independently consume information 'from anywhere at anytime at anyplace'. Amplifying the need to provide online resources. Results from these research questions will enable the design of newly developed solutions to support refugees from an online health information seeking perspective. Results of this proposed research study will enable an understanding of the online health information seeking behaviour of refugees and the potential development and provision of focused health information systems. In addition, this will allow refugees to reconcile their previous ways of health knowledge seeking and construct their new health information landscapes whilst building their health information resilience (Lloyd 2014).

2 Methodology

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) will be used for this proposed research study. This approach enables sense making of the phenomenon of online health information seeking (Griffin et al. 2022) within the context of the participant's refugee identity (Longanga 2022). IPA focuses on the lived experience of participants (refugees'), making it a suitable methodology. There will be three phases:

2.1 Phase 1 – Data Gathering

Participants will be interviewed using open ended questions (Lloyd 2014) and data analysis conducted using the open coding method (Corbin and Strauss 2008). Translators will be used during the interviews but translated versions of the study documents (information sheet, consent form, questions) will also be provided to participants. Interviews will be conducted at public locations or at the homes of the participants. We aim to speak to 20 participants; theoretical saturation is typically achieved with 9–17 interviews (Hennick and Kaiser 2022).

2.2 Phase 2 – Development of Solution/s

Results from phase 1 will inform the development of practical solutions. Example solutions could be the development of educational sessions to inform refugees on best practices when performing an online health search, and/or a prototype website to function as a "one stop" place for healthcare and healthcare practitioner solutions. The solutions developed will be guided by needs identified in phase 1.

2.3 Phase 3 – Assessment of Solution/s

The solutions from phase 2 will be presented to refugees who participated in phase 1 for evaluation and feedback. This will be an iterative process. We aim to engage with 10 participants. Evaluation of solutions will use a mixed methods approach. Quantitative assessment using the System Usability Scale (System Usability Scale,d.u) will be used first to evaluate the solutions, followed by an interview using open ended questions (Corbin and Strauss2008). The interview will allow participants to elaborate on their responses to the questionnaire. To ensure that we incorporate participants' voices, questions

developed will be semi-structured, allowing for discussion. For example, 'what did you think of this prototype', rather than 'did you like this prototype'. This method will allow participants and the research team to assess these initiatives to ensure they are fit for purpose and user centred, whilst incorporating principles of co-design (Slattery, Saeri, and Bragge, 2020). Data will be analysed using descriptive statistics (quantitative) and the open coding methods (qualitative).

3 Conclusion and Future Work

Results of this proposed research study has substantial potential to profoundly impact healthcare accessibility and the effective dissemination of vital information within refugee populations, fostering tangible improvements in their overall well-being. Newly developed solutions from this proposed research study would be designed by refugees, for refugees and evaluated by refugees. This will instil a sense of belonging amongst the refugee community as they participate and provide input to the newly designed solutions. This knowledge will potentially empower refugees during the transition stage, allowing them to become 'health-aware'; a key outcome of this proposed study. In future work, we intent to pilot test our solutions with a wider group of refugees.

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