

**Nafiz Zaman Shuva**  
**Queens College, City University of New York, New York, USA**

# **EMPLOYMENT-RELATED INFORMATION EXPERIENCES OF BANGLADESHI IMMIGRANTS IN NEW YORK CITY**

## **Abstract**

This work in progress paper presents findings from 26 semi-structured interviews with Bangladeshi immigrants in New York City, focusing on their employment-related information experiences. It examines the role of personal networks such as friends, family, and co-ethnic community members in providing employment-related information before and after arrival. In this study, while some participants reported receiving helpful and timely employment-related information and support, others encountered outdated, vague, or misleading information and advice. Initial findings of this underscore immigrants' complex, culturally situated employment-related information experiences and offer valuable insights for scholars in information science, migration studies, public policy, and related disciplines.

## **Introduction**

New York City, a city of immigrants, is home to over 3.1 million immigrants (Pavilon & Virgin, 2022). Immigration has long played a central role in shaping the city's economic, civic, and cultural life (NYC Mayor's Office of Immigration Affairs, 2018). Among the many immigrant groups, the Bangladeshi community represents one of the fastest-growing Asian populations, with approximately 93,000 individuals residing in the city (Pew Research, 2021).

Research in information science highlights the importance of timely, reliable, and need-based information in immigrants' integration in the host country (Caidi et al., 2010; Caidi & Allard, 2005; Shuva, 2020, 2024). A significant body of research indicates that employment-related information constitutes a primary concern for many immigrant groups (see, for example, Allard & Caidi, 2018; Caidi et al., 2014; Mabi et al., 2023; Kolarić et al., 2025; Shuva, 2021, 2022, 2024). Employment consistently emerges as a central settlement need, particularly post-arrival, as securing income is essential for supporting oneself and one's family in the host society (George & Chaze, 2009; Kaushik & Drolet, 2018; Shuva, 2022).

Immigrants seek settlement information from various sources, including friends and family networks, government websites, and, increasingly, the internet and social media (Allard, 2022; Kolarić et al., 2025; Shuva, 2021, 2024). Several studies have shown that personal networks remain among the most frequently consulted and influential sources of settlement information (Allard, 2022; Rayes et al., 2016; Shuva, 2021, 2022). Although there has been an increase in information science studies related to settlement information behavior in recent years, more research is needed to understand the culturally situated information behavior among immigrants. In the context of the U.S., many immigrants enter through family-based immigration, creating

the assumption that these individuals, due to their pre-existing social networks, can make informed decisions about their lives in the U.S. Studies by George and Chaze (2009) and Teixeira and Drolet (2018) emphasize the value of social networks for newcomers in the host country. However, limited recent studies have examined the information experiences of newcomers consulting their personal networks for settlement information, including employment-related information. Previous research by Audunson et al. (2011), Marshall et al. (2020), and Shuva (2021) suggests that not all immigrant groups trust members of their co-ethnic community in the host country, and many have encountered negative experiences with their co-ethnic community networks. Key questions addressed in this study include:

1. What employment-related information do newcomers receive from informal networks before and after arrival to New York?
2. How useful and reliable is the information provided by friends, family, and co-ethnic contacts in facilitating employment-related settlement?

Informed by Bruce et al. (2014) and Shuva (2021), this work-in-progress study will explore the employment-related information experiences of Bangladeshi immigrants in New York, focusing on their personal networks, including co-ethnic community members.

### **Research methods**

Given the limited research on employment-related information experiences of immigrants in the U.S., between July 2024 and October 2024, this study conducted 26 semi-structured interviews with Bangladeshi immigrants in New York to gain a deeper understanding of employment-related information experiences. Using a combination of “convenience” and “snowball” sampling methods, the author, a Bangladeshi citizen, a native Bengali speaker, and a faculty at a public university in New York, recruited participants from New York City. The initial coding of the interviews is currently being conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis approach.

### **Initial findings**

The initial analysis reveals that most Bangladeshi immigrants consulted personal networks, particularly friends and family members in the U.S., to obtain information both before and after arriving in New York. These networks provided guidance on a range of settlement-related topics, including housing, language, and employment. Participants who immigrated through family-based immigration or the Diversity Visa (DV) Program between 2007 and 2012 relied heavily on these informal sources for navigating early settlement challenges.

Bangladeshi immigrants' informational experiences consulting personal networks varied widely. Some participants described them as helpful and supportive, especially in finding “survival” jobs and easing their initial transition into the labor market. Others, however, encountered misinformation, outdated advice, or an overall lack of guidance, particularly around professional

employment pathways. Many even reported receiving contradictory information or feeling misled by their contacts' overly optimistic portrayals of life in the U.S.

In this study, many participants felt comfortable approaching other Bangladeshis, even strangers, in public spaces like subways to inquire about job-related information or connect with potential employers. However, opinions diverged on the reliability of these co-ethnic networks. While some warned newcomers to avoid relying too heavily on Bangladeshi co-ethnic community networks, others emphasized that recent immigrants were often better sources of current, practical advice than those who had arrived earlier.

Participants also noted that time spent in the U.S. did not necessarily correlate with accurate or useful knowledge about employment or settlement services for newcomers. Some long-term residents gave outdated or overly generic advice to newcomers, such as pursuing information technology certifications, without considering their background or goals. In contrast, recent immigrants appeared more open to sharing up-to-date information with other immigrants. Several participants, based on their experiences, suggested that immigrants should consult multiple sources, including internet platforms, not just rely too heavily on personal networks, and always verify the information they receive from multiple sources before acting on it.

### **Significance of the study**

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on information behavior among immigrant populations by focusing on culturally situated employment-related information experiences. While prior research has emphasized the importance of social networks in immigrant integration, few studies have examined the quality, reliability, and dynamics of employment-related information experiences among immigrant communities consulting informal information networks. By centering the experiences of Bangladeshi immigrants, this research reveals how personal networks enable and constrain access to critical employment-related information. The findings have important implications not only for information science scholars but also for professionals in migration studies, geography, and psychology who investigate the social, economic, and psychological aspects of immigrants' adaptation to a new country. Additionally, the study may inform the development of targeted information services for newcomers to the U.S. coming from across the globe.

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