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Internet, Social Media, and Settlement: A Study on Bangladeshi Immigrants in Canada

Internet, médias sociaux, et établissement : une étude des immigrants bangladais au Canada

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Abstract: This study describes Internet and social media usage among Bangladeshi immigrants in Ontario, Canada. Using a mixed-method approach, the study conducted semi-structured interviews with 60 Bangladeshi immigrants in Ontario and gathered 205 completed survey responses. The findings show that recent Bangladeshi immigrants in Canada significantly depend on the Internet and social media tools in pre- and post-arrival contexts. Specifically, the findings indicate that the use of ethnic community social media forums among the Bangladeshi community are used for help with various aspects of their settlement into Canadian society, including learning about life in Canada, accommodation, and employment. The findings also reveal the important role that social media networking tools like LinkedIn play in recent newcomers' employment-related decision making and settlement in Canada. The author calls for further studies on immigrants' use of the Internet and social media—in particular, for studies on ethnic community social media forums and their role in newcomers' settlement. The author also urges countries welcoming immigrants across the globe such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States, and the United Kingdom to develop timely, need-based, online services for skilled immigrants and their dependents in order to meet the diverse needs of highly skilled immigrant populations.

Keywords: Bangladeshi immigrants, social media, Internet, online ethnic community forums, settlement information, employment, information behaviour

Résumé : Cette étude décrit l'utilisation d'Internet et des médias sociaux chez les immigrants bangladais en Ontario, au Canada. En employant une approche méthodologique mixte, des entrevues semi-structurées ont été menées auprès de 60 immigrants bangladais en Ontario et 205 réponses complètes ont été recueillies. Les résultats montrent que les immigrants bangladais récemment arrivés au Canada dépendent considérablement d'Internet et des médias sociaux que ce soit avant ou après l'arrivée au pays. Plus précisément, les résultats indiquent que l'utilisation de forums pour communautés ethniques sur les médias sociaux par la communauté bangladaise permet de faciliter divers aspects de leur intégration dans la société canadienne, y compris l'apprentissage de la vie au Canada, le logement et l'emploi. Les résultats révèlent également le rôle important que jouent les outils de réseautage

social comme LinkedIn dans la prise de décision et l'établissement des nouveaux arrivants en matière d'emploi au Canada. L'auteur souligne l'importance de futures études complémentaires sur l'utilisation d'Internet et des médias sociaux par les immigrants, particulièrement concernant les forums de médias sociaux des communautés ethniques et leur rôle dans l'établissement des nouveaux arrivants. L'auteur exhorte également les pays accueillant des immigrants à travers le monde, tels que l'Australie, le Canada, la Nouvelle-Zélande, les États-Unis et le Royaume-Uni, à développer des services en ligne permettant de répondre aux divers besoins des immigrants hautement qualifiés et des personnes à leur charge.

Mots-clés : Immigrants bangladais, Médias sociaux, Internet, Forums pour les communautés ethniques en ligne, Établissement, Emploi, Comportements informationnels

Introduction

Immigrants need information for their settlement in a new country. Timely, need-based information provision can support their integration and social inclusion into a new society (Caidi and Allard 2005; Caidi, Allard, and Quirke 2010; Esses and Medianu 2012). On the other hand, the lack of critical, timely information may lead to depression and social isolation (Shuva 2015). Studies such as Allard (2015), Khoir (2016), and Shuva (2020a) show that immigrants require various information in pre- and post-arrival contexts and utilize many information sources, including interpersonal networks of friends and family, and various Internet-based information sources such as Google, online forums, and blogs. Recent studies show a global upward trend of the use of the Internet and social media resources among various immigrant groups, including refugees (for example, Khoir 2016; Shuva 2020a). Although there have been some studies in the contexts of the use of the Internet and social media among newcomers (for example, Komito and Bates 2011; Alencar 2018; Borkert, Fisher, and Yafi 2018; Ihejirika and Krtalic 2020), very few studies inform our understanding of the use of the Internet and social media among skilled immigrants and their dependents in the contexts of their settlement. In other words, we do not know much about the extent to which skilled immigrants and their dependents use the Internet and social media and what role the Internet and social media play in these immigrants' settlement in a new country.

In Canadian contexts, studying skilled immigrants and their dependents is very important as the majority of the recent immigrants to Canada are classed as skilled immigrants¹ and their dependents. For example, according to Statistics Canada's (2017a) 2016 Census, Canada welcomed 1,212,075 new immigrants into Canada from 2011 to 2016. Of these individuals, a majority (60.3%) entered Canada under the "economic" category (principal applicants, spouses, and dependents). Moreover, the government of Canada aims to welcome more than 1 million immigrants by 2021, again with the majority as skilled immigrants (IRCC 2018a). Although the migration of Syrian refugees has prompted a significant number of studies on refugees' use of the Internet and social media,

studies with skilled immigrants and their dependents and their use of the Internet and social media remain understudied.

Using the Bangladeshi community as a case,² the findings of this study look at how immigrants seek and gather settlement information through various stages of settlement and their use of the Internet and social media in pre- and post-arrival contexts, especially in terms of employment-related decision making. The study also contributes to our understanding of the role of ethnic community online forums.

Problem statement

Studies on immigrants, including refugees, show that information has a significant role in newcomers' settlement in a new country (Caidi and Allard 2005; Lloyd, Lipu, and Anne Kennan 2010; Esses and Medianu 2012; Kaushik and Drolet 2018). Immigrants consult various sources to meet their many settlement information needs in pre- and post-arrival contexts (Allard 2015; Shuva 2015, 2020a; Khoir 2016). The Internet is a core site of information for recent immigrants in pre- and post-arrival contexts. There have been some studies that look at the use of the Internet and social media among recent refugees (for example, Alencar 2018; Borkert, Fisher, and Yafi 2018). Although not solely focused on the Internet and social media use, recent studies in North America, such as Rayes et al. (2016) and Caidi et al. (2014), confirm the importance of the Internet as an information resource among recent immigrants. There is still a gap in knowledge about how skilled immigrants make use of the Internet as they make decisions about their lives in their adopted countries. Therefore, using Bangladeshi migrants as a case, this study elicits the following research questions: what kinds of information do highly skilled migrants need and want after arrival and how do they gather the information? More specifically, do they use Internet-mediated resources, and, if so, which sources do they use and what role do these sources play in the settlement process? Are there any differences in the use of the Internet and social media resources among various cohorts of immigrants of this study? Are online, co-ethnic community forums and social media sites used, and what role do they play in the settlement process?

This analysis of the use of the Internet and social media sites as information sources draws from data gathered for a larger project that investigated the information behaviour of Bangladeshi immigrants to Canada. The findings of this study would be of interest to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), provincial immigration ministries, settlement agencies, public libraries offering services to newcomers, and other stakeholders working with immigrants.

Literature review

The Internet as a core information site

It appears to be a near-universal finding that humans prefer to consult family, friends, and other informal information sources in meeting various information needs. After reviewing studies on information behaviour within the context of roles, Case and Given (2016, 346) confirm the general preference for human

information sources among various groups such as consumers, farmers, and patients: “A frequent finding is that people still turn to other people for information and that online networks have made it easier than ever to share information with others.”

A significant dependency on family, friends, and personal networks is evident in studies on immigrants’ information needs and seeking (such as Fisher et al. 2004; Komito and Bates 2011), although recent studies on immigrants (for example, Komito and Bates 2011; Lingel 2011; Esses et al., “*Alberta Settlement*,” 2013; Khoir 2016) report a shift in preferred information sources among newcomers. Family and friends, newspapers, television, and radio were the major sources of information before the widespread availability of the Internet. In an Australian study, Khoir, Du, and Koronios (2015) found that most of the Asian immigrants who participated could meet their information needs using online resources. In Ireland, Komito and Bates (2011) confirmed the increasing dependency of migrants on the Internet as an information source. They reported the significant use of technologies and social networking tools (such as Skype) to maintain transnational social networks among their participants.

In the United States, Lingel’s (2011) study on the information tactics of immigrants in urban environments in New York describes the heavy use of the Internet for everyday life information such as locational and residential information. In the Canadian context, two large-scale studies by Esses et al. (“*Alberta Settlement*,” 2013) and Esses et al. (“*Western Settlement*,” 2013) report the significant use of Internet resources among newcomers to Canada. The study on the Alberta settlement outcomes shows a strong preference for obtaining information about government services via the Internet (Esses et al., “*Alberta Settlement*,” 2013). The participants of this study also reported the ease with which they located information on the Internet in both pre- and post-arrival contexts. Findings are similar in the Western settlement outcomes survey (Esses et al., “*Western Settlement*,” 2013). Caidi et al. (2014) report foreign-trained health professionals utilizing various immigration-related online discussion forums (for example, AllNurses) to meet their varied settlement-related information needs including those related to employment. The use of the Internet to meet various settlement information needs (such as residency-related information) among international medical graduates in Canada and the United States is also evident in a recent study by Rayes et al. (2016).

Social media usage among immigrants

Studies on newcomers’ use of the Internet and social media is gaining interest among the migration researchers. Social media is increasingly becoming an important information source in various contexts including the everyday life contexts for various groups (Kim, Yoo-Lee, and Sin 2011; McCay-Peet and Quan-Haase 2016; Aillerie and McNicol 2018). There have been some studies that focus on migrants, including refugees’ social media use in various domains. For example, a recent study by Ihejirika and Krtalic (2020) reports the use of social media among migrants in New Zealand. The authors found participants

using social media for various purposes in pre- and post-arrival contexts, including making decisions about their move in the transitioning phase, making informed decisions in the new country in the settling phase, and connecting with family and friends in their home country once they were settled in the new country. [Alencar's \(2018\)](#) recent qualitative study in the Netherlands on the use of social media among 18 refugees from Syria, Eritrea, and Afghanistan in the contexts of their integration reported that participants consulted social media networking sites daily for acquiring language and cultural competencies as well as for building social capital. The participants used various sites such as Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Viber, and Google.

In their study of 26 Polish nationals in Ireland, [Komito and Bates \(2011\)](#) found that participants used various Internet resources including co-ethnic social media platforms on a day-to-day basis to keep in contact with friends. Significant use of Polish social networking tools was evident among the participants. The authors discovered that, because of the availability of these social networks, Polish nationals interacted with Polish, rather than Irish, people in Ireland, which, in turn, seemed to lead to minimum levels of integration into Irish society.

In an important study of refugees' use of social media through smartphones for their settlement, [Dekker et al. \(2018\)](#) found that the majority of their participants had access to social media tools such as Facebook, Google maps, Viber, and WhatsApp to gather information and to make contact with friends and family pre- and post-migration. Dekker et al conducted in-depth interviews with 54 Syrian asylum migrants in the Netherlands and described the role that social media played in refugees' information needs, including information related to planning a route to Europe and learning about accessing European countries. Another recent study by [Borkert, Fisher, and Yafi \(2018\)](#) report that participants utilized tools such as Facebook and WhatsApp for learning about the best travel routes and for maintaining contact with their friends and family networks. The participants exhibited a heavy dependency on their mobile phones and the Internet in their everyday lives.

In studies of refugee populations such as [Kaufmann \(2018\)](#) and [Gough and Gough \(2019\)](#), smartphones play a strong informational role by allowing mobile access to various online resources. The participants of [Kaufmann's \(2018\)](#) study used resources such as Google Maps and YouTube to cope with everyday life challenges. [Gough and Gough \(2019\)](#) described participants using phones to find online refugee communities to help with information about where to stay and the cost of travel from one place to another. A study in Sweden by [Lloyd, Pilerot, and Hultgren \(2017\)](#) on Syrian refugees also reports on the informational role of smartphones, online sites, and social media in meeting various information needs of the participants in their host country. Another recent study by [Mansour \(2018\)](#) on Syrian refugees displaced to Egypt shows how Internet resources were used to gather information on local rules and regulations and information on Syria as well as for maintaining transnational ties.

Another newcomer group—international students—may not always have settlement information needs similar to skilled immigrants because of their focus on pursuing education. Similar to any immigrant group, international students face various challenges settling in a new country (Zhang and Brunton 2007). A study on the information behaviour of international students in the United States by Oh, Butler, and Lee (2014) describes how web searches, online/mobile maps, and online community were used to help meet settlement information needs. A recent study using interviews with 12 Saudi international students in the United Kingdom by Alsuhaibani et al. (2020) reports initial findings on how these students perceive their transition to the new culture and society and their use of social media during this period. The study highlights the important role played by social media during international students' transition, including helping students build bridges with their new society in the United Kingdom. Some participants also indicated that they use social media to maintain their connections with friends and family networks in their home country. In the US contexts, a study by Sin and Kim (2018) highlights the role social networking sites such as Facebook play in international students' everyday life information seeking. This study also reports international students' use of social networking sites to gather information related to finance, health, news of one's home country, housing, and entertainment. Sin's (2015) study with 112 international students in a US public university highlights the role that the Internet plays in international students' everyday life information seeking.

So, while we have a picture of how certain groups of migrants might use the Internet, questions can still be asked about skilled immigrants and their dependents' use of the Internet and social media in the contexts of their settlement in a new country. What is the pattern of usage of Internet and social media among immigrants in their settlement contexts? What role do the Internet and social media play in newcomers' settlement in a new country in terms of various aspects of their settlement? How do the emerging co-ethnic community online social media forums help newcomers with their settlement in a new country?

Research methods

Using a mixed-method study approach, after ethics approval,³ this study gathered data from semi-structured interviews and surveys. During the first phase of data collection, the study conducted semi-structured interviews with 60 participants (21 face to face, 37 by telephone, and 2 via Skype) from May 2017 to February 2018. In this study, people were eligible to participate in interviews and surveys if they met the following criteria:

- have lived for at least 12 years in Bangladesh before coming to Canada;
- are at least 18 years of age;
- reside in Southern Ontario;
- are proficient in either Bengali or English; and
- are either citizens or permanent residents of Canada (including business immigrants, skilled immigrants, family caregivers, and refugees).

Children of immigrants, including those who were born outside of Canada but moved to Canada with their family at an early age, were excluded.

The interview participants were mainly recruited through the author's family, friends, and extended Bangladeshi community networks in Canada. In order to spread the word about this study, the author also attended various social and religious gatherings organized by Bangladeshi ethnic community organizations and by Bangladeshi people in various cities of Ontario, including Guelph, London, and Toronto. A recruitment advertisement was also published in one of the renowned Bangladeshi newspapers *Bangla Mail*, published in Toronto.⁴ Although interviewees were given the option of participating in Bengali or English, the majority of the interviews were conducted in Bengali.

For the surveys, a questionnaire was developed based on the initial findings of the semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was piloted with some Bangladeshi immigrants living in various cities of Ontario in order to check whether the online survey platform would work, to identify ambiguities in the questions, or to uncover any other issues with the questionnaire. Changes were made after the pilot study that related to resolving the issues with the online system (such as adding multiple options for some questions). Although participants of this study could opt to participate in the surveys via email, online, or by telephone, most of the participants filled out the online survey via Qualtrics. Three surveys were conducted via telephone. For surveys, various recruitment strategies were used, including seeking assistance from Bangladeshi community organizations and contacting the author's extended Bangladeshi community network. A recruitment advertisement was published in the Bangladeshi online newspaper *CBN24*, published in Toronto.⁵ The survey was available in English; however, participants were asked to contact the author if they wanted to participate in Bengali or via face-to-face or telephone surveys.

The majority of the interview participants (63%) were skilled immigrants and principal applicants. Over half of the interview participants moved to Canada after 2011. In terms of age, most of them were between the ages of 30 and 49 years. Just over a third of the interviewees identified as female and two-thirds were male. Ninety percent of participants reported that they were married at the time of the interview. Nearly all of the participants (just over 95 percent) moved to Canada with university degrees. The majority of the survey participants (61%) were skilled immigrants. About 43% of respondents moved to Canada in 2011 onwards. In terms of participant age, about 71% of the respondents were in the age range of 30–49 years. Over 90% of the participants had university degrees; 61% of the survey participants were male; and 27% were female (three participants did not report their gender). Most were married (92%), with children (85%).

Interview data were coded using the tool NVivo12. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase "thematic analysis" guided the interview data coding and analysis. The author, a Bangladeshi native speaker, transcribed and reread the transcripts. The author generated the initial coding of the interviews with the help of NVivo12. During this stage, particular attention was given to address

the research questions of the larger study. After that, the author combined codes into potential themes and checked and rechecked potential themes with their relevancy to the coded extracts. In the following phase, the author created and revised potential themes and named and renamed the themes when needed. For example, the initial coding “pre-arrival information lacking” was renamed to “pre-arrival information lacking and post-arrival stress.” Finally, the codes were organized logically for analysis and presentation. The author translated all of transcript excerpts from Bengali to English. The translation was done in a way that made every effort not to lose the participants’ voices. For example, English words/sentences mentioned by the participants were used “as is” even though, in some cases, they were not grammatically correct. For surveys, descriptive statistics were mainly used to describe survey data along with some inferential statistics (mainly chi-squares). Survey data analysis was performed with SPSS software.

One limitation of this study was related to participant selection. The participants were recruited through non-probability sampling techniques (for example, convenience, snowball, and purposive techniques). Therefore, the findings are not generalizable. Another limitation was related to the modes of the surveys used. Due to time and resource constraints, more extensive face-to-face surveys with Bangladeshi immigrants with limited information and communication technology (ICT) and language proficiencies were unable to be conducted. Therefore, the results do not represent potentially vulnerable immigrant groups such as conservative women and family-sponsored parents. Despite these limitations, this study is one of few recent studies on immigrants’ use of the Internet and social media in North America. The findings of this study give some directions for future research on immigrants’ use of social media and could lead to policy changes in terms of settlement service delivery for highly skilled immigrants and their dependents in Canada.

Findings

Internet use in Bangladesh/last place of residence

Many interview participants reported having access to the Internet in Bangladesh or their last place of residence. Some interview participants who moved to Canada before 2000 or in the early 2000s reported not having access to the Internet or having very limited access to the Internet. The survey participants were also asked to report their Internet use before arrival in Canada. As is evident in [Table 1](#), the majority of the participants used the Internet before arrival in Canada. Of the 202 respondents, 15 respondents reported that they did not use the Internet before moving to Canada.

Internet use in Canada

Almost all of the interview participants reported using the Internet in Canada at the time of the interview, including those who had moved in the early 1980s. Some participants even stated that the Internet had become an essential part of their everyday life in Canada. For example, Hasi (Toronto, 2013; in English), a

Table 1. Internet use in Bangladesh/last place of residence*

| | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--|-----------|----------------|
| Every day | 151 | 74.8 |
| At least once a week | 25 | 12.4 |
| At least once of month | 4 | 2.0 |
| A few times a year | 7 | 3.5 |
| I did not use the Internet in Bangladesh/last place of residence | 15 | 7.4 |
| Total | 202 | 100.0 |

Note: * About 82% of survey participants moved to Canada directly from Bangladesh. The rest of the participants were living in other countries before moving to Canada, including Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, and countries in the Middle East.

marketing professional from Bangladesh, claimed that the Internet had become an inseparable part of her life in Canada:

*Yes, it's like without the Internet I cannot live. When I wake up at that time, I have to call my parents. I am using Viber, Skype the whole day. If I am home, I am watching TVs and my prayer time, my movie time, my news time everything is from the Internet.*⁶

Noman (Milton, 2010), a computer professional in Canada, also thought that the Internet had become a necessity in Canada: “*Here, the Internet has become a necessity. From paying bills to checking mails (emails), to working from home, to contact someone, and to shopping, many things can be done on the Internet.*” Kushum (Toronto, 2010), a management graduate from Bangladesh, who reported rarely using the Internet when she was in Bangladesh, uses the Internet in Canada for everything:

NAFIZ: *Do you use the Internet in Canada?*
KUSHUM: *A lot. A lot. If I cannot cook something, I go to YouTube [to check how to cook the item]. If I do not find any information, if I cannot spell a word [I use the Internet]. Everything is the Internet.*

Survey participants echoed the interview findings. When asked about Internet use in Canada, all of the survey participants, with one exception, reported using the Internet in Canada every day.

The Internet and its resources as a settlement information source

The interview participants responded to their needs for information by using a variety of pre- and post-arrival information sources such as friends, professional colleagues, and family members in Canada, online sources including co-ethnic community Facebook forums (especially among recent newcomers), and settlement and employment agencies. Participants who moved in the early 2000s reported having no access or limited access to the Internet and its resources in pre-arrival contexts. However, those who moved after 2010 reported using the Internet for gathering settlement information. Some participants who did not have any pre-established contact in Canada before their arrival mainly used the Internet to gather settlement information. Hasi (Toronto, 2013; in English) had

no one in Toronto before her arrival. She described how she relied on the Internet for gathering pre-arrival information:

I did not have any source to get information about Toronto. So, I was using the Internet and, like here, lots of sources, like there is a blog that is Canada visa, I signed up there. And, before coming, twelve months from when I plan to come here, before that, I was communicating with those blogs, and there are a lot of websites, immigration settlement organizations, YMCA. I communicated with them. I did everything by myself via the Internet, like, 95% the Internet.

Recent newcomers were able to differentiate among the variety of Internet sources that gave them information to help them with their pre-arrival. Shomrat (Toronto, 2017) outlined many of the online pre-arrival sources available to recent newcomers:

There are some [online] Bangladeshi forums established recently. For example, BCCB [Bangladeshi Canadian-Canadian Bangladesh] is doing some work [for pre-arrival information support]. Then there is one website, forum, group calledimmigrationandsettlement.org; they are there. They developed resources in Bengali. They also have YouTube videos. They are doing a lot of work [to help Bangladeshi newcomers].

On the other hand, Istiaq (Ajax, 2000) came to Canada 19 years ago and claimed it was hard for him to gather pre-arrival information due to the lack of easy access to the Internet during his time of arrival. However, more recent newcomers get the benefit of the Internet and mobile accessibility: “*When I arrived [in Canada] it was not easy [to gather pre-arrival information]. Right? Now the Internet and [cell]phones are available. You can take the information with you, you can share it.*” Similar to Istiaq, Ayana (Toronto, 2013) also said that recent newcomers have more access to various pre-arrival online information sources: “*Nowadays making information connections have become very easy. For example, because of Facebook, LinkedIn, the Internet, people have more access to [pre-arrival information sources]. I can ask [information] of many. Then I can search online.*” Survey participants also used a variety of sources to gather pre- and post-arrival information related to their settlement in Canada. For pre-arrival information, Bangladeshi immigrants reported that Citizenship and Immigration Canada (now IRCC) websites, web searches, and friends and professional colleagues in Canada were among the top three pre-arrival information sources (see Table 2). About one-fourth of the participants also mentioned consulting online forums and groups in pre-arrival contexts.

For post-arrival information sources, Internet resources remained among the top three post-arrival settlement sources for Bangladeshi immigrants in Canada (see Table 3). The top three post-arrival information sources as reported by the participants include friends and professional colleagues in Canada (52.2%), the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website (50.2%), and web searches (41.5%). Sources mentioned by participants in the “other” category include schoolteachers, university, and the BCCB Facebook forum.

Table 2. Pre-arrival information sources

| Name of the pre-arrival information source* | Frequency n = 205 | Percentage (%) ** |
|--|----------------------|-------------------|
| Citizenship and Immigration Canada (now IRCC) website | 125 | 61.0 |
| Web search (for example, Google search) | 89 | 43.4 |
| Friends and professional colleagues in Canada | 78 | 38.0 |
| Family members in Canada | 74 | 36.1 |
| Family and friends in Bangladesh/last place of residence | 53 | 25.9 |
| Online forums, groups (for example, Canada immigration forum at Canadavisa.com , BCCB) | 48 | 23.4 |
| News sources (including print and online newspapers and television channels) | 30 | 14.6 |
| Immigration counsellor and lawyer in Bangladesh/last place of residence | 26 | 12.7 |
| Other | 7 | 3.4 |

Notes: * Multiple responses allowed; ** In order of highest to lowest percentage.

Table 3. Post-arrival information sources

| Name of the post-arrival information sources* | Frequency | Percentage (%) ** |
|--|-----------|-------------------|
| Friends and professional colleagues in Canada | 107 | 52.2 |
| Citizenship and Immigration Canada (now IRCC) website | 103 | 50.2 |
| Web search | 85 | 41.5 |
| Family members in Canada | 81 | 39.5 |
| Online forums, groups (for example, Canada immigration forum at Canadavisa.com , BCCB) | 57 | 27.8 |
| Settlement agencies in Canada (for instance, Access Alliance, South Asian Womens' Rights Organization [SAWRO]) | 56 | 27.3 |
| News sources (including print and online newspapers and television channels) | 51 | 24.9 |
| Public libraries in Canada (for example, Toronto Public Library) | 48 | 23.4 |
| Family and friends in Bangladesh/last place of residence | 45 | 22.0 |
| Immigration counsellor and lawyer in Bangladesh/last place of residence | 16 | 7.8 |
| Other | 8 | 3.9 |

Notes: * Multiple responses allowed; ** In order of highest to lowest percentage.

Settlement information sources and year of arrival (cross-tabulations)

Many interview participants reported the importance of newer kinds of pre-arrival information sources, such as online ethnic community forums, and claimed that recent newcomers are privileged to have access to these kinds of Internet-based resources. Some participants even claimed that recent newcomers are better prepared with their settlement because of these online forums. The author conducted some cross-tabulations on the use of settlement information sources with the year of arrival to identify whether there are any differences in the use of pre-arrival information sources among survey participants. In particular, were these kinds of pre-arrival information sources more popular among recent Bangladeshi immigrants?

For the cross-tabulations, the participants were divided into two cohorts based on their time of arrival—those who came in 2010 or before and those who arrived in 2011 onwards. It is worth mentioning here that after the current government of Bangladesh, the Awami League, assumed power in 2009, it pledged to make Bangladesh “Digital Bangladesh” by 2021. It has launched many initiatives to improve ICT access and services at both local and national scales. Also, in the Canadian context, many ethnic Facebook community forums aiming to help newcomers with their settlement were established after 2010.

Pre-arrival information sources and year of arrival (cross-tabulations)

The cross-tabulation results clearly show significant associations in the use of online forums/groups, friends, and professional colleagues in Canada as well as web searching as pre-arrival information sources among the survey participants who moved to Canada after 2011 (see [Table 4](#)). The proportion of the use of online forums/groups (p value = 0.000), friends and professional colleagues in Canada (p value = 0.003), and web searching (p value = 0.024) are significantly higher among the later cohort of Bangladeshi immigrants.

Post-arrival information sources and the year of arrival (cross-tabulations)

This study also investigated whether there was any significant association in the use of post-arrival information sources among the participants who moved to Canada before 2010 and the participants who moved from 2011 onwards. The cross-tabulation results clearly show significant associations in the use of post-arrival information sources online forums and settlement agencies in Canada among the survey participants who moved to Canada before 2010 and those who arrived in 2011 onwards (see [Table 5](#)). The proportion of the use of online forums/groups (p value = 0.015) and the use of settlement agencies in Canada

Table 4. Pre-arrival information sources and year of arrival (cross-tabulations)

| Type of pre-arrival information sources | Until 2010 (%) | 2011 onwards (%) | p value* |
|--|----------------|------------------|------------|
| Online forums, groups | 14.3 | 37.2 | 0.000** |
| Friends and professional colleagues in Canada | 28.6 | 50.0 | 0.003** |
| Web search (for example, Google search) | 37.1 | 53.8 | 0.024** |
| News sources (including print and online newspapers and television channels) | 10.5 | 17.9 | 0.146 |
| Immigration counsellor and lawyer in Bangladesh/last place of residence | 16.2 | 10.3 | 0.248 |
| Family members in Canada | 33.3 | 38.5 | 0.473 |
| Citizenship and Immigration Canada (now IRCC) website | 58.1 | 61.5 | 0.639 |
| Family and friends in Bangladesh/last place of residence | 25.7 | 24.4 | 0.834 |

Notes: * In order of significance of the p value; **Significant at the 0.05 significance level

Table 5. Post-arrival information sources and the year of arrival (cross-tabulations)

| Name of the post-arrival information source | Until 2010 (%) | 2011 onwards (%) | <i>p</i> value* |
|--|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Settlement agencies in Canada (for instance, Access Alliance, SAWRO) | 19.0 | 38.5 | 0.004** |
| Online forums, groups (for example, Canada immigration forum at Canadavisa.com , BCCB) | 21.0 | 37.2 | 0.015** |
| Family members in Canada | 34.3 | 47.4 | 0.072 |
| Web search | 38.1 | 47.4 | 0.206 |
| Public libraries in Canada (for example, Toronto Public Library) | 26.7 | 20.5 | 0.335 |
| Friends and professional colleagues in Canada | 49.5 | 56.4 | 0.356 |
| Immigration counsellor and lawyer in Bangladesh/last place of residence | 8.6 | 6.4 | 0.586 |
| Citizenship and Immigration Canada (now IRCC) website | 48.6 | 52.6 | 0.593 |
| News sources (including print and online newspapers and television channels) | 27.6 | 24.4 | 0.62 |
| Family and friends in Bangladesh/last place of residence | 21.9 | 23.1 | 0.851 |

Notes: * In order of significance of the *p* value; ** Significant at the 0.05 significance level.

(*p* value = 0.004) are significantly higher among the Bangladeshi immigrants who moved to Canada in 2011 onwards.

Social media use and settlement in Canada

Many interview participants reported using various social media tools such as Facebook, Viber, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and Skype, YouTube, co-ethnic community forums, and various immigration-related blogs in their settlement, especially for contacting their friends and family back home. The use of social media in the contexts of Bangladeshi immigrants' settlement is divided into four categories: (1) online ethnic community forums; (2) online blogs and forums; (3) the social networking tool LinkedIn and employment in Canada; and, finally, (4) social media use: survey findings.

Online ethnic community forums

Many participants used online forums and groups for gathering settlement-related information. In the interview data, Bangladeshi ethnic community forums were mentioned in both pre- and post-arrival contexts. Most of these forums were established after 2010 to help support various newcomer groups, including international students. For example, BCCB aims to help newcomers to Canada by providing information about various aspects of Bangladeshi immigrants' settlement, including accommodation and employment. Another prominent Bangladeshi Facebook forum called Prospective Bangladeshi Students in Canadian Universities, which was established in January 2012, targets international students from Bangladesh with information on admissions to Canadian universities and general help with their settlement in graduate schools in Canada.

Interview participants also used Bangladeshi forums on Facebook and YouTube channels for immigration and settlement in Canada. For example, Noman (Milton, 2008) described the benefits newcomers get from Bangladeshi community Facebook forums:

NOMAN: *I do not know if you are aware or not. But there is a Bangladeshi community Facebook group.*

NAFIZ: *Bangladeshi Canadian-Canadian Bangladeshi?*

NOMAN: *Yes. This group is helping many people a lot. Many times, I see someone commenting "I am a new immigrant, I got my PR (permanent residency), I am moving to Canada in three months, so what I need or I want to move to this area." Or, ask "which area would be supportive?" Then everyone [on that Group] may say initially "Bangladeshi moving to Ontario usually move to Danforth [Toronto, also known as 'Little Bangladesh']. Victoria Park and Danforth. That is a Bangladeshi community". . . . They [people in that forum] even help new immigrants with employment information a lot.*

Noman further added how networking on this forum can help newcomers get jobs:

Networking on BCCB matters a lot. Many times, someone comments about vacancies at their companies and ask interested people to inbox [their information]. That is pure networking. This happened that someone unknown to the recruiter contacted and expressed interest in the job posted saying "I am very interested." I just inbox [messaged] you [my information]. [The person] Completely unknown to the recruiter, understood? This way you are building your network.

Even though Maruf (Toronto, 2011) was not able to use BCCB himself, he recounts the benefits such forums offer to immigrants:

BCCB is an excellent platform. Nowadays, almost 98 percent of the problems are solved there. I did not get those [help when I moved]. But 98 percent problems solved, I meant people from almost all fields [professions] are there. From unemployed people to experienced people, successful businessman, banker, realtor, IT personnel, all types of people are there. . . . So, that's a very good platform [for Bangladeshi newcomers].

Alam (Ajax, 2014) extensively utilized many online tools and resources (such as the Canadavisa.com forum) for gathering settlement information and also mentioned the benefits of an ethnic community forum for newcomers:

BCCB, this community group is a new one. They expanded a lot recently and they try to help a lot of newcomers. If anyone faces any issue here, then they try to help overcome that issue. Those who are moving recently, they [BCCB] try to help newcomers how to ease their struggle in Canada.

Although Salma (Toronto, 2016) did not use this forum for her own settlement, she notices newcomers who use it can obtain useful information: *"Although I did not use it, many people use the forum for renting a house. They [BCCB] also help with some job postings regarding whether anyone need help with interview preparation. I see these sometimes."* Iqbal (Brampton, 2017), a very recent immigrant

who was able to settle in a professional job shortly after arrival to Canada, also mentioned the benefits he received from Bangladeshi ethnic community forums. Iqbal even created a separate Facebook account to ensure that he does not miss any updates:

NAFIZ: *You mentioned that you did research before arrival and used many online forums.*

Would it be possible to give some examples of the online forums you used?

IQBAL: *Yes. For example, there are some Bangladeshi groups on immigration and settlement for Canada for the Bangladeshi and Canadian migration from Bangladesh. Some of those are closed groups, some are open groups. Another group is BCCB (Canadian Bangladeshi-Bangladeshi Canadian). So, I sent friend requests to those groups and they accepted it. . . . So, I asked information [pre-arrival] about lifestyles, transportation systems, whatever came to my mind on those groups. I felt their responses were very good.*

Another recent immigrant, Shomrat (Toronto, 2017), also mentioned an ethnic immigration support website and forum that provide information in Bengali that is mainly in the pre-arrival context:

There are many Bangladeshi [immigration] forums were established recently. For example, BCCB is doing some work. Then there is immigrationandsettlement.org website and forum. The immigrationandsettlement.org [website] is in Bengali. They are developing resources in Bengali. They do have YouTube videos [on immigration-related topics]. They are doing a lot of work.

Another participant, Hasi (2013, Toronto; in English), claimed that recent newcomers get various informational benefits from the ethnic community forum, which was not available when she moved to Canada. In her words, she explains

It's so important [Bangladeshi ethnic community forums]. Because now I came to . . . like one month . . . six months before there is a Facebook page, it's called Bangladeshi Canadian-Canadian Bangladeshi. When I was coming here there was no page like that. One of my friends is coming and he knows everything from there. That he is posting . . . asking everything where I can get the job, where I can get the accommodation, where I can get the driving license, everything is there. And, at that time I hadn't that. And for the newcomer, it's very important to get the [information] about the accommodation and then the job.

General online immigrations blogs/forums

In addition to Bangladeshi ethnic community forums and websites, many interview participants also consulted immigration forums online, especially those who moved before the proliferation of ethnic community Facebook forums and those who were not aware of the existence of ethnic community forums. Online forums that are dedicated to immigration to Canada were mentioned by several interview participants. Canadavisa.com was one of the most frequently mentioned sites. This is a responsive online forum for immigrants to Canada that is managed by Campbell Cohen, a Canadian law firm. The forum contains various information threads on aspects of immigration to Canada, including express entry, Canadian experience class, and provincial nomination programs. Anyone can join the forum, and members can pose questions related to immigration to

Canada even after they have submitted their immigration applications. Typically, senior members or those who have gone through similar situations, answer the questions. A recent immigrant, Shomrat (Toronto, 2017), applied for immigration by himself without the help of an immigration firm in Bangladesh. He describes how useful Canadavisa.com was for him in preparing for his move to Canada: “There is a forum called Canadavisa.com. This Canadavisa.com is a very rich forum. I received a lot of help from this forum. I got some friends [who live in Canada] from this forum.” Similar to Shomrat, Shumi (Toronto, 2017), expressed how important this forum was for helping her to make connections:

I was active on CanadaVisa... Everyone on Bangladeshi thread [Canadavisa] was very helpful. Everyone was very helpful if I asked for any information. And, on that forum, I had been introduced with different people who are also in Canada now. Whom I communicated [on that forum], I still have a relationship [connection] with them.

Another recent immigrant, Alam (Ajax, 2014), also found that Canadavisa.com provided helpful information about immigration and described it as being more diverse, with connections to all kinds of immigrants from across the world, not just for a specific community. He also described how useful it was to hear from senior members of the forum who had faced various issues related to their applications and who shared their experiences and offered advice on the forum to newcomers.

Social media tool LinkedIn and employment-related settlement

Among the social media tools, LinkedIn appeared to have played an important role in Bangladeshi immigrants' employment-related settlement, especially regarding professional networks, getting advice on employment-related prospects, and other aspects of their employment-related settlement. For example, Farid (Toronto, 2015) claimed that he contacted his Bangladeshi professional networks in Canada after arrival through LinkedIn:

After arrival, I contacted my network through LinkedIn. I mean all my ex-colleagues, friends, whoever were in Toronto. Then I met them in person to gather information about how to search for a job, whether there is anything [job] in my area [of expertise] and whether they know anyone.

Alam (Ajax, 2014), a human resource professional from Bangladesh, was able to achieve a similar position in Canada in less than a year. He credited his LinkedIn profile:

LinkedIn profile was very powerful for my job [in Canada]. I know how LinkedIn works as I worked in technology. LinkedIn is the only site where you do a conditional search. For example, I am looking for [candidates] with MBA plus 10 years' experience plus finance experience, or, finance background or someone with Six Sigma. You can do this only on LinkedIn. So, conducting searches on LinkedIn [by employers] because of the technology-related search, my name used to come as the top that's why I used to get a lot of interviews [calls].

Another participant, Ayana (Toronto, 2013), contacted potential employers through LinkedIn and gathered information about potential employers about

job opportunities and any future position openings. A recent immigrant, Iqbal, a supply chain professional in Canada described building a professional network through LinkedIn. He made contact with a potential recruiter via LinkedIn while he was still in Bangladesh preparing to move to Canada. He had three information interviews scheduled for when he arrived in Canada. He applied to three companies for supply chain positions and contacted the employers in those companies to look at his LinkedIn profile and requested a referral to the recruiting managers. He quickly received a response from one of the companies, and the person who he had contacted told him that his profile was a good match. The person confirmed that he would contact his boss for an interview. In a week, Iqbal was interviewed and was offered the job. Although he did not accept that job offer as he got a better offer from another company, Iqbal described the benefits of using LinkedIn in terms of building professional networks, getting advice on employment in Canada, and contacting potential employers.

Another recent immigrant, Shumi (Toronto, 2017), describes her employment-related strategies, including applying on [Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com). She dropped her resume at various organizations and talked with the recruiters. Then she added the recruiters on LinkedIn and met with some of them for exploring opportunities. She reported that she got her first job through LinkedIn and that the job she was doing at the time of the interview was through Indeed. Noman (Milton, 2010) touted the benefits of having a LinkedIn profile for building a professional network for newcomers and described how he had received his job through LinkedIn:

If you are a professional, you are looking for a job then I think the most important thing is networking. And, not only within your community. I think even if you have a strong profile on LinkedIn, networking can happen from there. For example, I got my current job from LinkedIn. I saw the job post on LinkedIn, applied there and talked to the company CEO, and got this job within a month. So, previously we did not think about LinkedIn. We used to apply on old fashion job sites [names of the jobsites]. I think LinkedIn is very important for this networking opportunity.

Social media use: Survey findings

The survey participants were also asked to report their use of social media in Canada. In total, 98.5% of participants reported that they use social media in Canada. In response to the question about what social media tools they use in Canada, the top-ranked social media tools are Facebook, YouTube, Viber, Skype, and LinkedIn (see [Figure 1](#)).

Discussion

The Internet and social media are playing a significant role in immigrants' settlement, in terms of gathering information in pre- and post-arrival contexts, creating networks, and learning about employment opportunities. This study has highlighted the changing nature of immigrants' information-seeking patterns in pre- and post-arrival contexts and has revealed that recent immigrants rely

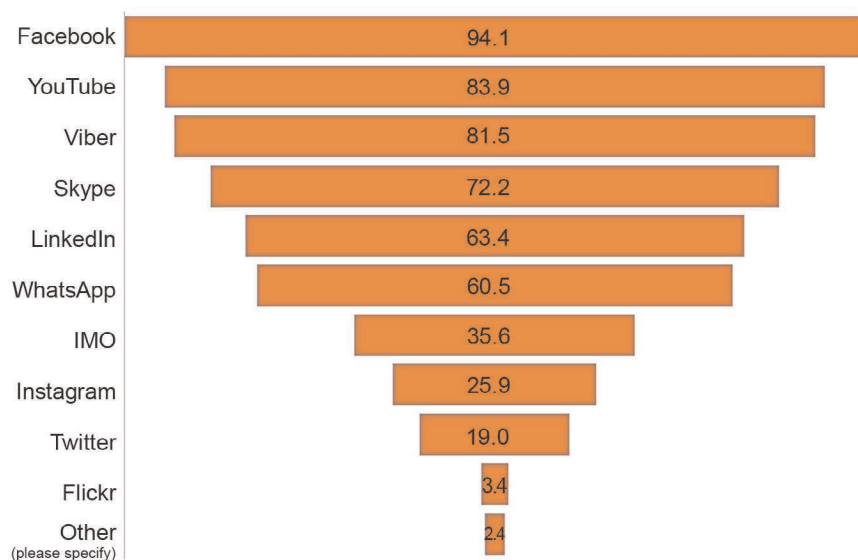


Figure 1. Social media use in Canada (by percentage).

heavily on the Internet and social media resources for their settlement in Canada. These findings support earlier studies such as [Esses et al. \("Albert Settlement," 2013\)](#), [Komito and Bates 2011](#), and [Lingel \(2011\)](#). Similar to [Khoir \(2016\)](#), this study's participants were also comfortable looking for information on the Internet.

One of the interesting findings of this study is the use of co-ethnic community social media forums among Bangladeshi immigrants in settlement and everyday life contexts. Many interview participants described receiving various benefits from these forums. This is an important finding for migration studies as it suggests a fruitful area for research into the changing roles that ethnic community social media forums play in immigration and settlement. This finding has implications for policy development for settlement service awareness and delivery contexts too, especially related to spreading the availability of existing settlement services to various newcomer groups. For example, the federal government of Canada, provincial governments, and many municipal councils make large financial investments in various settlement services designed to help newcomers from diverse backgrounds settle into Canadian society. However, studies by [Esses et al. \("Alberta Settlement," 2013\)](#), [Esses et al. \("Western Settlement," 2013\)](#), [Islam \(2014\)](#), and [Shuva \(2020a\)](#) show that a significant number of immigrants do not use settlement services in post-arrival contexts. The use of pre-arrival settlement services is even more perplexing. A recent report by the [IRCC \(2018b\)](#), confirms that the pre-arrival service intake among eligible newcomers is significantly low. One of the reasons for this is the lack of information about

its availability among newcomers (Esses et al., “Western Settlement,” 2013). The IRCC and other agencies working with immigrants should identify the reasons behind immigrants’ non-use of pre- and post-arrival services and design appropriate mechanisms to connect newcomers with these potentially useful services. One of the ways in which the IRCC can increase the awareness of the settlement services among newcomers would be to partner with online ethnic community forums that focus on immigration and settlements for newcomers, including international students. The ethnic immigration and settlement support social media forums may even be able to translate the IRCC messages and documents in the immigrants’ mother tongue and may advocate for government-sanctioned settlement services for newcomers. The IRCC can even take initiatives to connect newcomers with ethnic community professional networks (such as the Association of Bangladeshi Engineers of Ontario) to help them receive professional advice from those ethnic professionals who are already established in their sectors.⁷

Although the participants of this study reported receiving various benefits from Bangladeshi ethnic community social media forums, very little is known about the information sharing practices in the ethnic community forums, including the trustworthiness of the information shared. Shuva (2020b) reports that Bangladeshi immigrants have received discouraging and potentially demotivating information from people in their community, which is generally perceived as hurting newcomers’ settlement into Canadian society. Further studies are needed to explore the information experience of immigrants consulting various online forums and the effect of these information interactions on their settlement, including employment-related settlement.

The findings of this study related to the significant dependency on the Internet and social media resources call for future studies with immigrants about their encounter with information online and how immigrants identify and tackle misinformation, disinformation, and various online fraud in local contexts. The findings related to the benefits of using the social media site LinkedIn also require further study to understand the role of social media in newcomers’ employment-related settlement. Although various settlement agencies in Canada offer workshops and training on opening LinkedIn profiles (such as Access Employment),⁸ and encourage newcomers to network through LinkedIn, there is a need for some specialized training for newcomers understanding the employment-related fraud that can happen through various social media platforms. For example, a recent article by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reports the existence of job scams in Canada via various social media websites such as LinkedIn (Buckner 2020). It also noted the millions of dollars that are lost by the victims of job fraud each year in Canada. Skilled immigrants and their dependents often move to Canada with university degrees and carry expectations of being able to land a professional job after their arrival in Canada (Shuva 2020a). Skilled immigrants and their dependents facing employment-related challenges due to various reasons, including the lack of recognition of foreign credentials (for example, Guo 2009; George et al. 2012), employment discrimination (for

example, [Esses, Dietz, and Bhardwaj 2006](#); [Creese and Wiebe 2012](#); [Dietz et al. 2015](#)), and language barriers ([Esses and Medianu 2012](#)), and may be vulnerable to employment fraud.

The increasing use of online information sources among recent immigrants compared to previous cohorts also has implications for service developments for newcomers, especially in settlement contexts. The heavy dependence on the Internet and social media are evident among studies on other newcomer groups including refugees ([Lingel 2011](#); [Sin 2015](#); [Lloyd, Pilerot, and Hultgren 2017](#); [Gough and Gough 2019](#)). This finding suggests the necessity of developing need-based, up-to-date online information services by settlement agencies and organizations such as public libraries. Traditionally, settlement services, including those offered by public library settlement services in Canada have centred on in-person services. After the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, many services and events for newcomers to Canada were cancelled and are no longer being offered online. As is evident in this study, skilled immigrants and their dependents are ICT proficient and are using various social media tools in their settlement and everyday life contexts. These findings call for introducing responsive online settlement services for skilled immigrants and their dependents. Settlement agencies and organizations, including public libraries working with various immigrant groups, should consider designing and implementing online and remote services to ensure that immigrants who are unable to attend various services in person or who prefer to access the information online can get the support they need.

Conclusion

This study, which is one of the very few studies on immigrants' use of the Internet and social media, highlights Internet and social media use by Bangladeshi immigrants in Canada in pre- and post-arrival contexts. The emergence of co-ethnic community online forums warrants further study on the role that they play in newcomers' settlement, the information sharing practices in those forums, as well as the trust that people have for the information shared on those forums. The existence of community online forums also creates some opportunities for partnerships with settlement agencies that offer services to newcomers.

The Internet has brought many opportunities for countries around the world to invite and welcome immigrants and their families to their borders. The findings of this study have shown the significant use of the Internet and social media among recent Bangladeshi skilled immigrants and dependents in Canada and have described the benefits that immigrants receive due to their access to the Internet and various social media. Further studies would require understanding the challenges immigrants face in filtering information, their information literacy skills in finding relevant settlement information, their encounter with misinformation, disinformation, and fake news spread through the Internet and social media channels, and how these issues affect their settlement and everyday life in a new country. The significant use of the Internet and social media by Bangladeshi immigrants, on the one hand, would allow settlement agencies and other

stakeholders to design and implement various online services for newcomers to help them settle into Canadian society smoothly. On the other hand, it would also require service providers to design and implement services aiming to help newcomers identify authentic, reliable settlement information on the Internet.

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Notes

- 1 In Canadian contexts, skilled immigrants (also known as skilled workers) are invited for permanent residency based on their education, work experience, English and/or French language proficiency, and other factors such as settlement funds. Skilled immigrants generally possess university degrees and have work experience in professional sectors such as engineering and the health professions and move to Canada for better employment opportunities. Dependents of skilled immigrants usually include spouses or common-law partners and dependent children. In this study context, most of the survey and interview participants were skilled immigrants and their spousal dependents. Most of the participants possessed university degrees, and many worked in various professions before moving to Canada. As the immigration process allows only one person from a family to be a principal applicant and the others automatically become dependent. In this study, most dependents had the similar education and work experience as the principal applicants. Thus, they were not less qualified than their principal applicants.
- 2 According to [Statistics Canada \(2017b\)](#), 58,735 Bangladeshi reside in Canada, but the [Bangladeshi High Commission \(2019\)](#) in Ottawa reports a higher population at around 100,000. The author could not find any statistics that report the number of Bangladeshi skilled immigrants and their dependents in Canada.
- 3 This study was approved by the Non-Medical Human Research Ethics Board of the University of Western Ontario. The semi-structured interviews were approved on May 24, 2017, and the surveys were approved on December 13, 2017.
- 4 *Bangla Mail*, <http://thebanglamail.com/> (accessed December 14, 2020).
- 5 CBN24, <https://www.cbn24.ca/> (accessed December 14, 2020).
- 6 In this study, pseudonyms are used along with participants' actual place of residence at the time of interview and year of arrival to Canada. The word "English" was used in the bracket next to the participant's name if the interview was conducted in English.
- 7 Association of Bangladeshi Engineers of Ontario, <http://abeocanada.ca/> (accessed December 14, 2020).
- 8 Access Employment, <https://accessemployment.ca/online-event-series> (accessed December 14, 2020).

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