OLDER TURKISH MIGRANTS’ IN THE UK:

Role of distinct culture, immigration histories and unmet care needs

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Older people from Turkish background are in the increase in the UK

Three major Turkish migrants live and grow older in the UK

- Mainland Turkish
- Cypriot Turkish
- Kurds and Alevi (mainly refugees)

Different cultural and historical backgrounds form different communities

Each with distinct culture and social norms that interacts and influence,

perception of ageing, care needs and preferences
ABOUT THE RESEARCH

1. Collaborative research between the Social Care Workforce Research Unit, King’s College London and Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir

2. Builds on previous work in the two institutions
AIMS

Investigating;

BETWEEN AGEING, MIGRATION, CULTURE AND UNMEET NEEDS

Two main themes are discussed

1) Ageing and belonging;

2) Social exclusion and identity in old age.
METHODS

1. Qualitative research
   • Interviews and focus group discussions
2. From October 2011 to February 2012 (in London)
3. Initial sampling through community centers in London areas with large Turkish speaking communities
   • Then snowballing
4. Interviews mainly in Turkish and English language
5. Data collected from Turkish older people, and other stakeholders involved with Turkish communities
   • Focus on data from older people
6. Collecting information on;
   • actual health conditions,
   • perceived health and care needs,
   • well being and active ageing,
   • perceived responsibility of care among others
1. A total of 66 participants; 55 years or older
   - Interviews with 30, non-care users
   - Interviews with 18, care users
   - 3 Focus groups with a total of 5 older people using community care services and 14 non-users

2. 34 women; 32 men

3. Mean age 72.3 years

4. 13 Turkish, 24 Cypriot; 29 Alevi or Kurds Turks
CULTURAL CONTEXT

1. Different groups of Turkish migrants have different migratory history and circumstances with implications on language, culture and social preferences.

2. Turkish Cypriot Migration began, after the WWII, mainly for economic reasons.

3. Migration from mainland Turkey began during the 1970s, mainly from rural areas.

4. Alevi/Kurdish mainly migrated as Refugees for political reason in late 1980s, 1990s.
FINDINGS

1. Language barrier
2. Social inclusion
3. Lack of awareness of suitable activities and supports
4. Little awareness of the importance of active ageing
5. Rely on heavily on their family for care (filial obligation)
6. Preference Turkish care worker company (if needed)
The majority of earlier Turkish migrants were MOSTLY recruited, within Turkish speaking communities, working as tailors or in shops.

community participation to almost NO PARTICIPATION.

“We lived here for a long time but we had worked entirely with Turkish people as tailors. We do not know much about the English community”

(75 years old, female, Cypriot)
SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND LANGUAGE PROBLEM

These resulted in high degree of feelings of social exclusion at later age

“I can see many things around me and I wish I was a part of them but it is too bad not to know that language; we got used to live in like this; what shall we do?”

(72, years old, Female, Alevi)
ISOLATION, POOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE and ACCESS CARE NEEDS

‘I didn’t take a bath for 2 months, my bathroom not convenient and safety. I don’t know English and I can not explain my problem.’

(63, female, non-user)

‘We don’t know what are our benefits or rights due to language barriers. If there are some rights for us we don’t know completely, language reasons. We lived here for a long time but we had worked entirely with Turkish people as tailors.’

(75, female, non-user)
Participants indicated a strong sense of social isolation, and perception of lack of suitable social activities;

Older women in particular felt double jeopardy because of language and gender

‘Men go the Turkish Cafe or Turkish Community Centre but we [women] are not included in any Centre’
(62 years old, female, Cypriot)
CONCLUSION

1. High degree of social isolation, especially among women
2. Lack of awareness of suitable activities, opportunities for engagements and facilities for active ageing
3. Language barriers are significant, despite long periods of residency in the UK, with considerable implications
4. Cumulative social isolation effects, particularly poor English language
5. Great reliance on family members and close community

The research indicates a need for more culturally appropriate services as well as raising awareness of existing support to avoid social exclusion and facilitate access and socially participation inclusive among older Turkish speaking communities.
Thank you for your attention...

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