Assumed and invisible roles of families and kinship in long term care provision among Turkish migrants in the UK

Dr Shereen Hussein, King’s College London, United Kingdom
Dr Sema Oglak, Dokuz Eylül University, Turkey
Background

- Turks, Alevi/Kurds and Turkish Cypriots living in the UK are sometimes coined as ‘invisible minorities’
- Do not always have visible social markers
- As many other BME groups in the UK, they are growing older with associated care needs
- Kinship and community ties, both social and economical, are central
- Immigration trajectories, differentiated with some similarities
Different groups of Turkish migrants have different migratory history and circumstances with implications on language, culture and social preferences.

- Turkish Cypriot Migration began, after the WWII, mainly for economic reasons.
- Migration from mainland Turkey began during the 1970s, mainly from rural areas.
- Alevi/Kurdish mainly migrated as Refugees for political reason in late 1980s, 1990s.
Collaborative work between the Social Care Workforce Research Unit, KCL and Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir

Interviews and focus group discussions with:
- Older Turkish migrants
  - 66 participants (34 women, 32 men; mean age of 72.3 years; 13 Turkish, 24 Cypriot and 29 Alevi or Kurds)
- Turkish care workers and Turkish community care coordinators
  - 32 participants

Fieldwork from October 2011 to February 2012
Turkish migrants’ ageing journey

- Immigration and labour participation history
  - Socially constructed old age
- Ageing place and individual biographies
  - Adjustments and nostalgia
  - Choice and empowerment (or lack of it)
- Roles of families, communities and the state in the ageing process
  - Enclosed communities and ethnic economies
  - Older and younger migrants relationship structure (expectations and realities)
Immigration history

“My husband had a business in İstanbul. But he went bankrupt and we were stuck in a difficult situation. I had heard from my friend that the tailors earn good money in London. But I was illiterate; I had never gone to primary school, however, I learnt it by myself. Moreover I do not know English. My friend suggested to come here and to work here. And I took my little daughter and came to London (in the 60s). Next day I began to work in a garment workshop. I did not have to speak English because everyone here spoke Turkish, I did not need to learn English. My friend had arranged a room for us. I worked hard and in tough conditions but without any formalities and I work largely as piecework.” [Translated]

(Turkish, 72 old woman)
Labour 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” – Cypriot, woman 75

Formal and informal labour participation is an important element in shaping immigration histories and trajectories

enclosed, ethnic economies

Years of relative and absolute exclusion from wider society

End of labour participation signaled a new era of unknowns and sudden need to know the ‘language’ and ‘system’
Perception of Ageing

- Cumulative inequalities and exclusion manifest at old age
  - A strong sense of social isolation and perception of lack of suitable social activities
- Little awareness of the importance of active ageing
- Large gaps between actual health needs and perceived care needs
- Some sense of patriarchic social practice within own communities
  - ‘men go to the Cafe or Turkish Community but we [women] are not included in any Centre’ (woman, 62)
Families and Kinship: Assumed Responsibilities

- Expectations of the family system
  - Inline with other research on collectivistic societies
- Inter-changeable care responsibilities from and for older people
  - Role exchange, child and elder care
  - Social and psychological support
- Assumed but not necessarily met

*They [the Government] think that our elderly people stay with us, but this is not always possible, we use some social care services at home such as home help, meals on wheels, from Council or Government.*

(Turkish Care Co-ordinator)
Invisible and Recognised needs

- Significant language barriers at old age
  - Sudden need to know the language
- Belonging and contradictions between self and place identities
- Perceptions of self and others
- Some were dismissal of available ‘formal’ or outside the family circle activities and services

‘I feel more comfortable, safe and secure with Turkish people in general including care workers’

(73 years old, female, Alevi)
Conclusion

- Family is an important block in care provision - BUT this is not always available
- Generational relocation
- Language barriers and cumulative social isolation during younger age crucially impact participation, isolation and experience at old age
- The need to work with the younger and older Turkish communities to bridge care gaps
- Considerable cost implications with value for early intervention and preventative measures
Thank You

☞ Dr Shereen Hussein
☞ Senior Research Fellow, King’s college London
☞ Shereen.hussein@kcl.ac.uk

☞ Dr Sema Oglak
☞ Assistant Professor, Dokuz Eylül University
☞ sema.oglak@deu.edu.tr

☞ ROWM; Research on Workforce Mobility in social care and social work

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