



Somali Women's Unemployment

Accredited Community Research Course

Mariam Hersi



The student group

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Contents Page

Acknowledgements 1

Contents Page 2

Executive Summary..... 3

Chapter 1:..... 5

 (i) Central aim and research plan 5

 (ii) The purpose of this research..... 7

 (iii) Literature review 8

 (iv) Methodology 10

 (v) Ethical considerations 11

Chapter 2: Research findings..... 12

Chapter 3: Discussion 19

Chapter 4:..... 20

 (i) Conclusions..... 20

 (ii) Recommendations 20

 (iii) The strengths and limitations of research 22

Bibliography..... 25

Executive Summary

The first reason I have chosen this topic is to find out and explore in depth why unemployment is very high within the Somali Community particularly in Women Group. Secondly, I am unemployed too for long time although I am a holder of a BA (Hons) of health studies, a well experienced individual in the field of Health Advocate/Outreach/Admin, have worked so hard to get a paid job with a decent wage, unfortunately I am still unemployed. Therefore, I would like to share their experience, idea and opinions as I think they are expert of this topic. I felt that I can get useful information that will help us to reduce high unemployment which affected Somali Women hardly.

On **9th of December 2013**, I visited Kingly Hall at Bow, E3 to deliver Women Focus Group and one to one basis of interview Session to find out why unemployment is too high among Somali community particularly Somali women. We also discussed about the support they may need from the Department of Work and Pensions and the private sector. A total of 20 participants attended this session, age group from 18 - 59 years old. The challenge I faced during the session is only 13 participants had voluntarily signed the concern forms while 7 of participants has refused to sign the consent forms.

On **10th December 2013**, I also delivered a women-only focus group and individual interview sessions at Poplar Boys and Girls Club, Poplar, E14 that aimed to identify methods of increasing accessibility of employment market for Somali Women. A total of 10 participants had voluntarily signed the consent forms while 6 of them were not willing to sign the concern form.

On **17th December 2013**, I organised and facilitated a women-only focus group and interview sessions at Black Women's Health and Family Support office, E2. About 15 participants have attended the session only 8 had voluntarily signed concern forms; 7 participants did not sign the consent form.

Before I gave out the questionnaires, I explained the aim of the research (studying of unemployment within the Somali community particularly amongst females) and why I have chosen this particular topic.

The outcome of this research is based on the answers that I collected during the focus group and individuals interviews sessions. Most of the Somali women had a concern about their education level, experience and the cultural and religion issues which may prevent

them to access the employment market; competition with other communities is very high compared to their qualification attainment.

Although the Government has done some great work, a lot of work is still needed to be delivered in tackling unemployment issues within the Somali Community particularly females. They proposed that the Government create new jobs which are relevant to the needs of Somali women by considering their cultural and religion issues.

Chapter 1

(i) Central aim and research plan

On **24th October 2013**, I visited Wadajir Somali Community at 2 Follet Street, Poplar, Tower Hamlets, London, E14 6LX, to meet Sahra Abi Digaleh the Founder and Trustee of the organisation. She is the only Somali community leader who welcomed me with open arms. I explained to her about the Research for Action & Influence course. We discussed the topic I have chosen which is unemployment in Somali Community especially females. She agreed to support and help me with organising and facilitating face to face interviews and focus group sessions. She also provided me with a free venue to use during my research process. She invited about 35 participants from two of her venues to attend the focus group and individual sessions.

Then on **25 October 2013**, I contacted Joycelyn Hayford, Operations' Director, Black Women's Health and Family Support. I gave her the copies of my interview questions, consent forms and explanation letter for her information.

I also explained to her how I would like to conduct my focus group and face to face individual interviews.

Before I delivered my research study, I met all the people involved in my research at the three different community settings in Bow, Poplar and Bethnal Green area. During the event, I introduced myself to the participants then I had explained the introduction letter verbally in Somali Language as most of the participants preferred their first language in order them to understand the questions clearly. I also distributed consent forms and I told them about the aim and the purpose of this research.

My timescale was as follows: I had 6 months to complete my research- it started with the literature review, designing my tools, I then sought ethical approval, carried out the work and wrote my report project up and finalised and submitted it within the required time.

I used a Gantt chart to guide me to understand the assignment's requirements which I started at the beginning of September then I did a literature review in the middle of September. I choose my topic unemployment within the Somali Women thorough my personal experience and knowledge; then I designed the methods I would use to attract my participants. I prepared my questionnaires, the focus groups and interviews. The next step I took was to obtain ethical approval from the panel in order to contact community leaders

before I met the participants. On December 2013 I finally facilitated three focus groups and six one to one interview sessions which ended successfully. I have collected much useful information which have then encouraged many Somali Women and lead them to invite and register with employment agencies for work and training purposes. Finally I have analysed my research's findings and evaluated it for the benefits of the Somali women's future. I found my research successful because it encouraged me to successfully gain temporary part time employment which made me very happy even if the lasts for short time. I feel the difference mentally, physically and emotional feeling, comparing when you are working and when you are workless.

About the researcher

NB. I would like to introduce myself to who might be interested to read my research. My name is Mariam Hersi; I came from Somalia and have been living in the United Kingdom since 1995 as an asylum seeker/refugee. I left my country due to the civil war. At the end of 2002 I was granted British Citizenship.

When I arrived in UK my education background was equivalent to secondary level. After participating in various courses and trainings, I passed my access course which led me to successfully complete higher education in advocacy and then I successfully obtained my degree in Health Studies at University of East London in November 2007. Afterwards, I have been attending different courses and short trainings to improve my knowledge and skills. Since 2000 up to the present, predominately, I have been working within the Somali community and multicultural organisations as sessional and volunteering in different field of provisions such as advocacy, interpreting, outreach, adviser, administrator and receptionist and also I have been supporting refugees and migrants from different countries with different backgrounds.

I have accumulated substantial work experience and while I was volunteering I hoped that one day it may lead me to the paid employment with a decent wage.

(ii) The purpose of this research

The main purpose of this research is to discover realistic reasons why unemployment is so high among Somali Community especially amongst females. Some of the unemployed females are qualified, have a degree like myself, have a postgraduate or master's degree and have enough experience to access a working system in the London area yet unfortunately are amongst the long term unemployed individuals who are searching for a decent work that covers their living.

I wonder how could unqualified or those who do not have a basic education could access the employment market system in London area thus? Therefore, I would like to find out or discover the background education of Somali women and their families. Are they stuck due to their cultural beliefs, which may prevent them to perform some jobs which they can do or are they flexible and accept those jobs but due to lack of information or advice or support they couldn't get a chance to get those opportunity ?

I also would like to find out if there are health issues among Somalis due to the effect of high unemployment. Are they happy to collect welfare benefit forever or would they prefer to work and earn money to cover their living expenses, live independently and pay the contribution of income tax at the same time save some money and be better off than on benefits?

Unfortunately during the focus group and individual interview sessions, there were none of the participants who mentioned about health issues; no one has volunteered to talk about their health issues and the impact about unemployment. In that case, I didn't insist to carry on because I worried that it may do up set them.

I hoped for my research to help me to conduct a study on why there is such a high worklessness and inactive Somali Women in London particularly in Bow, Tower Hamlets. This research has also allowed me to investigate some sort of Somali Women's education background, their financial difficult in the past and present. What are the most realistic barriers for not securing reasonable employment? How could they access London's employment market system? Are they likely to integrate with other communities and learn different cultures? Are they prepared to participate in training, courses, workshops and job fairs etc, or are they neglected and forgotten by the system? It is very difficult to find out the reason behind this issue.

During my research interviews and discussions, I found out that most of Somali women need support with their application forms, help in interview preparations, information and

advice of job search and support of finding suitable jobs that matches their education level.

I think there are also social and economical factors which should be addressed in order to find out why unemployment and poverty is so high in the Somali community, especially amongst females. Therefore further research is needed to be carried out in the future as it may need a lot of time and resource to solve worklessness issues which affects many Somali women.

(iii) Literature review

Sources from **Sky News dated 30/09/2013 at 11:58am**. Mr. Osborne's speech in the Conservative Annual Conference in Manchester, he said he was offering "serious plan for a grown up country", which would create jobs. The Chancellor said he was an optimist about Britain's future and declared: " The sun has started to rise above the hill and the future looks brighter than it did just a few dark years ago". He continued by saying he confirmed plans to require the long-term unemployed individuals to work for their benefits.

Quoted from the Sky news dated **30/09/2013 at 11:58am, Mark Serwotka** said "The new help to work proposals are an admission that the Work Programme, which is helping just one in 25 disabled people into work is failing. Instead of offering positive support, such as a job guarantee to help people into proper paid work, the Chancellor has chosen to punish a small number of struggling long-term unemployed people."

I have been unemployed for long term and I have been trying so hard to get a decent paid employment to cover my living expenses and rent. I have attended a work programme which the Jobcentre Plus has designed for long term unemployed people (Work Programme). Unfortunately, it didn't work. I have been told by my adviser to search for my own job and apply for it without support. In February 2012, Job Centre Plus had referred me to the mandatory Work Programme which was supposed to help me in getting support to get decent work. Instead I attended the appointments to sign on again within a three or four weeks time that is it. No preparation support for interviews, CV, job search etc was given.

I have also quoted this from **Sky news, dated 30/09.2013**, Mark Serwotka also said "It will not only do nothing to help people find work, it is cruelly and deliberately designed to set neighbour against neighbour, at a time when George Osborne is preparing to spend millions of pounds of taxpayers' money fighting in the courts to protect bankers' bonuses".

I believe that it would be better if the Government creates the jobs which are relevant to the needs and the beneficiary of the whole communities in the United Kingdom.

This paragraph I quoted from **SKY News dated 30/09/2013. Article: Osborne's Help to Work Plan.** "Osborne said that he doesn't think people should get something for nothing, but appears to be happy to hand employers free Labour."

As I referred to Osborne's Help to Work Plan, I believe that will not work too because I have been volunteering for long term with different organisations, till now I am still unemployed. I think working for free will not help people who are unemployed over the long term to get a paid job. It would be better for the Government to create new jobs for unemployed people not to keep them on benefit and work free for employers to get free labour. If the employers get free labour, they will not employ any one because why they paid for their employee if they can get a free labour. No one will benefit from that idea.

Sources from **Sky News dated 30/09/2013.** Dave Prentis, general secretary of public sector union Unison, said: "Most of the long -term unemployed would prefer to have a job that pays a decent living wage". That is correct as a long term unemployed myself, I would like to have a job that pays a decent living wage which covers my living, travel expenses and rent that is all I need.

"The Chancellor would be better advised to concentrate on promoting growth and creating real jobs in the economy. But he seems to prefer trotting out the same old Tory tactics of divide and rule" sources from **Sky News dated 30/09/2013.**

Kate W. Strully, Harvard University researcher **Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (2012), London** has found that unemployed people over the course one and half years are twice as likely people who have never been unemployed to develop diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

In fact, being unemployed can affect your health, she continued by saying, that there is no doubt that we are currently in a time of economic crisis. It is important to remember that we always have had and always will have substantial proportional. Unemployment is a fact of life, you realise that you will be of little consolation to you if you are unemployed.

Surveyors of Department of Work and Pensions found out that long-term unemployment is damaging to individuals and communities, it affects mental and physical health and holds back economic growth. They said we want to help people into work and make sure that the work pays in return. People on out of work benefits need to take the opportunities

available to them to move off benefits and into work.

Out of work older people can find more difficult to get a job and they are more likely than young people to remain unemployed for longer. www.gov.uk

Unsurprisingly, they also found out that if you are unemployed, you are more likely to suffer a reduction in mental health illness, life satisfaction and objective physical well being and that equality to a greater risk of depression, anxiety disorder and suicide. www.gov.uk

According to sources from the Department of Work and Pensions report of 2012, they are making a number of welfare to work reforms which aim to fight poverty, support the most vulnerable and help people break the cycle of benefit dependency. www.gov.uk

According to the website of Department for Work and Pension, women have seen particularly sharp increases a 173% increase in long-term unemployment which includes a 289% increase in JSA long-term unemployment. www.socialwelfare.bl.uk

It continued that the Department for Work and Pension will take action with those providers who are not delivering the Work Programme to the standards we expect. www.gov.uk

(iv) Methodology

The below data was collected through Focus Group and one to one interviews from the different groups of Somali Women in Borough of Tower Hamlets during these dates, **09/12/2013, 10/12/2013 and 17/12/2013.**

One to one interviews are where an interviewer interviews an interviewee through a series of questions, one to one. I preferred this type of one to one interview because it allowed me to get a real detailed information which helped me to clearly get important solutions and the needs of Somali Women regarding the unemployment issues - during face to face interview session I delivered it in Somali Language due to the preference of the majority of the Somali Women who has the issues of language barrier and they were comfortable to speak their own language rather than English.

I chose a focus group because of the language and cultural issues - the Somali women prefer this type of conversation so that they can discuss and share their stories in depth

and every one of them can join and contribute their ideas and opinions (key definitions of the focus group), it also allows them to get a better opportunity to discuss their future needs.

After I completed my focus group and individual interview sessions, I have learned that those who have been living in London for long time has no basic education and still not settled well due to the family responsibility and lack of information, advice of educational and access to work supports. Due to their cultural issues they are isolated from the British society. But those who have been living in London for short time and came as family reunion has got better chance of getting education and part time work.

(v) Ethical considerations

At the beginning of the study I verbally explained clearly the topic of the study to the participants in the Somali language the methods I will use and the forms they need to sign. I also told them that they are free to leave the study at any time they need and that everything they say will be treated strictly confidential, no names will be identified instead initials or numbers will be used.

During the focus group and individual interview sessions, I have used a consultative approach because of language and literacy skills are known to vary within the Somali women and the use of face to face interviews ensured that those with low level of literacy to be included in the study.

The Somali female group I was researching were so vulnerable, many of the potential participants I requested to sign the consent form were not comfortable to sign it. In that case, I have to exempt the consent form for those who are not willing to sign it, in order to gain their confidence to join and participate the focus group and individual interview sessions (and accept verbal consent).

Due to language barrier and the lack of information and advice about this topic, I have decided to use Somali language which is the participants' first language, therefore, during the whole session the language spoken was a Somali language in order every participant to understand this topic of unemployment and to voluntarily answer all the questions prepared for them so that I may get as many answers as possible.

Chapter 2: Research findings

The most common barriers of accessing the London employment market for Somali women are, for example: lack of background education, language barriers, lack of integration with British Society, cultural and religion prohibition of accessing some of the business places such as supermarkets, shops, bars, nightclubs, casinos and gambling places, some hotels that sell alcohol, wine and spirits, the way they dressed which the employer considered as the first impression of appearance. Older aged unemployed Somali women are facing very difficult challenges to get employment as the younger women from other black and ethnic minority groups with well established background education and with high qualifications, make it impossible for Somali women to compete with them.

According to the Muslim Statistics website, 89% of Somali Women are workless. Somali females are highest London's welfare recipients, particularly when compared to Muslim migrants from other countries.

Most of the Somali women I have met at the focus group and individual interviews are lone parents or housewives with children younger than three years and also caring their elderly parents. They told me that they have no chance to join colleges because they do not have anyone else to take care of the younger children and elderly parents who are dependent on them. They also support their sisters, brothers and relatives who are back home who depend on their support. One participant said women should be at home, doing domestic work and taking care of their children. Another participant joined and she said, men should work and be the breadwinner and take care of their wives and children and be responsible for their living expenses. I appreciated the support I receive from the British Government. None of the participant wanted to say something about the new employment law. Somali women are not the type of people who volunteer to speak up for themselves; they do not want to talk about the politics. They believe that it was the politicians who destroyed Somalia.

Civil war in Somalia has divided the families and Somali people are scattered all over the world. Some of the participants told me that they are thinking about their relatives or families who are back home rather than themselves and their future prospective about education and employment. Some of the participants did not like to speak up about the British Government and the employment issues. They said we are happy about the support we are getting from the Government and British Society. We live in peace and we have a freedom of practicing our culture and religion. One of the participants said women belong in their homes but it is men's responsibility to work and provide bread to their families.

Somali women need to be empowered and encouraged to join employment in order to eradicate the high level of worklessness among Somali Women. I asked the participants to give me their opinions about the way this barrier could be overcome. They said they need help and support in writing applications, help in interview techniques, advice and guidance in searching jobs, support in finding suitable working benefits.

I would like the Government to create genuine jobs so that we, as the unemployed, have a job instead of welfare benefits and be self sufficient. I think no one likes to stay on welfare benefits if they will have a decent job with a decent wages. The employment agencies which the government is funding are useless and helpless. The Government should try other ways to create new accessible jobs for the whole communities. I am looking forward for the brighter future for all unemployed people not only for Somali Community. Hopefully the outcome of this research will be a very successful one which Somali community especially unemployed females will benefit it. I hope that the actual process of carrying out this research will be useful for the Somali community particularly unemployed female groups. I also hope this will be a useful tool in achieving this aim and creating a new face for the Somali women into the employment which they have been waiting for a long term.

Case Study Analysis (Qualitative Method)

| Q1. How long have you been living in UK? | <u>General Themes</u> |
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| Female 1. "I have been living in UK for twenty years." | Resident in UK 20yrs as a Family reunion |
| Female 2. "I have been in UK for less than a year just six months to join with my partner as family reunion." | For six Months |
| Female 3. "I have been living in UK for last 15 years." | Resident in UK 15 yrs |
| Female 4. "I also lived in UK for the last 12 years." | She lived in UK 12 yrs |
| Female 5 "I too have been living in UK for almost 13 years." | She has been In UK for 13yrs |
| Female 6 "We have been in UK for 11 years after joining my husband." | She & her family reside in UK for 11 |

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| <p>Female 7 “We reunited with my family to live in UK for last 23 years.”</p> | <p>yrs She lived in UK with her family for 23 yrs</p> |
| <p>Female 8 “I lived in UK with my family about 6 years.”</p> | <p>She & her family had lived in UK 6yrs</p> |
| <p>Female 9 “We lived in UK for about 19 years.”</p> | <p>They reside in UK 19yrs</p> |
| <p>Female 10 “We reunited with my partner about 20 years ago.”</p> | <p>She resided in UK with her Family for 20 yr</p> |
| <p>Female 11 “I lived in UK with my relatives for the last 7years.”</p> | <p>She reunited with relative in UK 7yrs</p> |
| <p>Q2. Why unemployment is too high within the Somali Female Group?</p> | <p><u>General Themes</u></p> |
| <p>Female 1 “I believe most of Somali females do not have a basic education background which may lead them to the employment market.”</p> | <p>Lack of education background.</p> |
| <p>Female 2 “I think there are no suitable jobs for Somali women which is relevant to their education and cultural issues. The qualifications & experiences gained from homeland are not recognised by UK government.”</p> | <p>Qualifications & experience gained from homeland are not recognised in UK.</p> |
| <p>Female 3 “I think because of language barrier, the way they dress and the cultural issues, Somali women have been indirectly discriminated to access employment.”</p> | <p>Due to indirect discrimination.</p> |
| <p>Female 4 “I think because their English language is very limited.”</p> | <p>Language barrier issue.</p> |
| <p>Female 5 “Most of Somali females do not have a basic education because they are needed by her mother to help her at</p> | <p>Lack of basic Education.</p> |

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| <p>home for domestic Choirs.”</p> <p>Female 6 “We found it very difficult to settle well due to the different culture and weather issues.”</p> <p>Female 7 “I think women's place is at home, they have to stay at home and take care of their children, husband & elderly parents. It is man's responsibility to work, earn and provide them with their living rations.”</p> <p>Female 8 “I think language is not necessary. It could be lack of integration with other communities and British Society. Most of Somali women does not have a work experience.”</p> <p>Female 9 “Think the Somali women put their all effort to look after their children as they are mostly single parents who need to provide everything to their children and elderly parents.”</p> <p>Female 10 “I believe that most of Somali women are illiterate without a basic education background and lack of work experience, they are housewives that is why they are under-represented in the employment market.”</p> | <p>Due to different cultural and weather issues.</p> <p>Women belongs to be at home and men to earn the living expenses.</p> <p>Lack of integration British Society and work experience.</p> <p>Due to Child care and elderly parents.</p> <p>Due to lack of basic education and work experience.</p> |
| <p>Q3. What is your highest education attainment?</p> <p>Female 1 “Primary education but not completed, because I got married and became a housewife, took care of my husband, children and my elderly parents, younger sisters and brothers.”</p> <p>Female 2 “I had studied up to the secondary school although I did not complete it because I got married and started to be a housewife by taking care of my children and the other younger members of my family and my husband's family who needs my help.”</p> <p>Female 3 “I had no education at all; I have never been to school, but when I came here it has been very difficult to start studying without a basic education.”</p> | <p><u>General Themes</u></p> <p>Uncompleted education due to family responsibility</p> <p>Left Secondary school to take care of her children and husband</p> <p>Lack of background education</p> |

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| <p>Female 4 "I had no basic education back home but when I settled here I started to educate myself join ESOL classes at the college."</p> | <p>Attained ESOL Class 1</p> |
| <p>Female 5 "I also had no education when I came here but I have joined ESOL class at the College."</p> | <p>Attained ESOL Class 2</p> |
| <p>Female 6 "Although I had no basic education when I came I established to educate myself, I attained ESOL Class 3 at the college and then I completed NVQ Level 2 in Business/Admin."</p> | <p>Attained ESOL class 3, NVQ Level 2 in Business Admin</p> |
| <p>Q4. Are Somali Women stuck to their cultural and religion beliefs which may be they cannot access some of the employment market?</p> | <p><u>General Themes</u></p> |
| <p>Female 1 "Somali women cannot work at the supermarkets like some other black & ethnic minorities because Muslims are prohibited to drink and sell alcohol and pork."</p> | <p>Indirect discrimination by the employer</p> |
| <p>Female 2 "The way they dress can prevent them not to be selected employer although they are the best qualified for the post."</p> | <p>A training which is relevant to her education level.</p> |
| <p>Female 3 "The other places that Somali women cannot work due to the indirect discrimination are hotels and some of the offices which consider the way the candidates dressed and when they see that you wear a scarf or Hijab, they don't employ you, they say I am sorry the post is already filled."</p> | <p>Training and work experience support.</p> |
| <p>Female 3 "The other places that Somali women cannot work due to the indirect discrimination are hotels and some of the offices which consider the way the candidates dressed and when they see that you wear a scarf or Hijab, they don't employ you, they say I am sorry the post is already filled."</p> | <p>Due to the cultural and religion beliefs indirect discrimination for the way they dressed</p> |
| <p>Q5. What other support would you like to get?</p> | <p><u>General Themes</u></p> |
| <p>Female 1 "I need a training which is equivalent to my educational level as I have had no basic education from my country of origin."</p> | <p>Not receiving support from Work Programme Adviser</p> |
| <p>Female 2 "I would like to get a further trainings and work</p> | <p>Needs further</p> |

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| <p>experience which is relevant to my needs in order to lead me to get a suitable job with decent wage.”</p> <p>Female 3 “I have children younger than five years that need extra care, therefore I would like the Government to provide childcare and support to the working single or couples.”</p> <p>Female 4 “I attended a work programme that has been referred by JCP, unfortunately, I am not getting the support which I am suppose to get such as help with my CV, application and interview.”</p> <p>Female 5 “At the moment, I am in temporary, part time work; I have been trying to search for a full time permanent work for long time. I need a support to improve my work search in order to get a permanent work in a future.”</p> | <p>education and work support</p> <p>Child care for working Single/couples.</p> <p>She requires a support to improve her job search technique.</p> <p>Government to more establish new jobs</p> |
| <p>Q6. How can it be resolved to reduce high unemployment within the Somali Women?</p> <p>Female 1 “Government to create new jobs which is suitable for Somali women.”</p> <p>Female 2 “To give resources to the community centres that provides a genuine training, work placement and support relevant to Somali women's needs.”</p> <p>Female 3 “To provide more specific training tailored to their level of education and work experiences.”</p> <p>Female 4 “To provide support with job search, CV preparation interview techniques for the jobs they apply for.”</p> <p>Female 5 “To provide information and advice related to the to the jobs that matches their qualification and experiences.”</p> | <p><u>General Themes</u></p> <p>Government to create new jobs</p> <p>Resources for Somali community for training and work placement.</p> <p>More training and work experiences</p> <p>Support with CV preparation of interviews.</p> <p>To provide information and guidelines.</p> |

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| <p>Female 6 “Department for Work & Pension, statutory & non statutory sector, employment agencies to include Somali women in their systems by considering Islamic cultural & religious issues that prevent Somali women from accessing the employment market.”</p> | <p>Islamic Cultural Issues to be included in UK Employment Guidelines.</p> |
| <p>Female 7 “Department for Work & Pensions to change the way they are addressing the eradication of the unemployment crisis with in the Somali women.”</p> | <p>DWP to address positive way to eliminate unemployment crisis.</p> |

Chapter 3: Discussion

According to the findings of this research worklessness among Somali Women in the Bow area are exceed 74.2% who live in households and are on benefits. There were barriers to employment for Somali women which included the non recognition of pre-migration qualifications and insufficient contacts in the UK coupled with the loss of transferrable skills and education background caused by migration. Language barriers and lack of education background are the most key factors/ issues that cause a high level of worklessness among Somali women.

In the discussion section, the majority of the participants were preferred to work part time and in the care sectors due to their low educational attainment and skills. The research reveals that most of Somali women had the same experience and opinions about worklessness issues.

During the focus group and the individual interview sessions with about 51 women aged between 18 - 59 years old had participated in the three different areas in the borough of Tower Hamlets. One of them has shared her experience with us and she said she has three girls aged between 18 - 25 who had completed their higher education/ college and unemployed; they also cannot proceed to the university level due to the high tuition fees which they cannot afford to pay for them. She continues and said they are at home searching for jobs but unfortunately there is no luck. They are depending on her support as they had been rejected to get job seekers allowance.

Chapter 4

(i) Conclusions

Bow area has a one of the most diverse communities in the borough of the Tower Hamlets and historically been a setting ground for Somali community and even today we still see new Somali communities coming to Bow area and making it their home.

I had collected all my evidence from Somali women aged from 18 -59 living in the Bow area who participated three focus groups and six one to one interview sessions which were held in the three different Somali community centres within the Borough of Tower Hamlets.

During the focus group and individual sessions, many residents particularly Somali women group had answered the unemployment questionnaires and they also had a chance to express their ideas, opinions and recommendations and concerns on how to address / reduce the high unemployment amongst Somali women.

They suggested that the Government does more to encourage different employment agencies, Department for Work and Pension and private employment sectors to engage and work with each other in order to include Somali women to access the UK employment market; their cultural and religion issues should be considered which prevent them to access some other employment places. They also need accessible training, workshops and work experience to be provided. The Somali women also mentioned that the new jobs should be created which is relevant to their qualifications and experience.

Although my main finds was a challenge, hopefully, this research will open doors of the employment opportunities to the majority of Somali Women who desperately need a decent living wages to support themselves and be self sufficient without the support from the UK Government.

(ii) Recommendations

My recommendations focused on the findings I collected from the concerns of the Somali women in the borough of Tower Hamlets. The following recommendations were provided by the participants who wish to share the cultural context with employers, local

authorities, Department of Work and Pensions, members of Somali Communities particularly Women Groups through Seminars, Conferences and wide spread information to address how to resolve the high unemployment within the Somali Community.

- UK Government to address all the issues that preventing the Somali women in accessing the employment market.
- British Government to tackle the indirect discrimination which effect Somali women to be represented in the employment system.
- Department of Work and Pensions to encourage public sectors and private sectors to establish new jobs which encourages Somali women to participate by considering their cultural and religion issues which can prevent accessing some of the jobs.
- Further research is needed to be carried out in the future in order to reach the solutions of unemployment among Somali women.
- To improve support and resources for Somali community organisations and create new reliable jobs which matched the individual needs for Somali women.
- The Department for Work and Pensions and the private employment sectors to support Somali women in the Bow area to access new established jobs which is relevant to their job requirements by considering Somali women's culture and religion issues.
- Organisations - Department for Work and Pensions to boost the number of jobs and create a flexible labour market, the Government to modernise employment laws and protect employee rights. To increase the number of people in the employment market. The authorities need to support the people into work through the benefits system and to create new job search support.
- British Government to create new jobs that relevant to Somali women's education and experience, respecting their cultural and religion issues.

(iii) The strengths and limitations of research

I consulted with the community leaders prior to conducting the focus group and individual interview sessions to identify key issues of my research. Wadajir Somali Community leader Sahra Abi Digaleh is the only community I could say, that had welcomed me and discussed with me about the key factors of high unemployment within the Somali community including lack of basic education (literacy and numeracy), language barriers, cultural and lifestyle issues (e.g. religion), lack of integration with other communities, responsibility of caring children or elderly parents, lack of awareness information and advice about employment system, lack of support in the training system due to the needs, discrimination or ethnicity original

I found it very challenging with some Somali Community leaders as I have to explain myself and my background; the other challenge I faced was to gain the trust from some of the participants who asked me if I was working with the Job Centre.

The consultation was conducted in the following three different venues:

1. Kingsley hall, Bow, London, E3
2. Poplar Boy and Girls youth Club, Poplar, London, E14
3. Black Women's Health and Family Support, Bethnal Green, London, E2

The Somali community in London and elsewhere in Britain is extremely complex with different clans and social backgrounds. There is no overarching central organisation which enables Somalis to voice their opinions. There is an issue of lack of cohesion among the Somali Community in Tower Hamlets. I acknowledged as a barrier to raising the overall attainment of Somali people in British society. This fragmented form of social organisations impedes their capacity to form a common voice, the division of Somalia and Somaliland creates problem instead of peace.

Thus Somali community organisations are unable to express their concern to stakeholders and policy makers; also the Somali community is under represented in the local government posts. This is in contrast to other communities which are more concentrated to be together and have one voice. From <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/communitycohesion>.

Due to above mentioned issues I think that is why unemployment is so high in the Somali community particularly amongst females who are isolated and no one has concerns about them in the local government and policy makers.

How well did it work out? I managed this well; no one dominated during the focus group sessions, I asked them the questions, they answered it, then I asked them to wait for the last person to finish answering the question. I was there for two hours. I explained everything ahead before I started asking them questions the challenges were listed above.

The interviews sessions were the same- first I did the focus group sessions and then I do one to one interview session. I asked participants if they were comfortable - some volunteered and came up with very useful information which makes my research a very interesting one.

Although our community is a fragmented, I approached them through the community leader, who helped me and enabled me to access the women's group. She supported me by organising and facilitating a women's group to participate the focus group and interview sessions, which worked out well.

The location was a suitable community centre with a high Somali population nearby. I have had enough participants to attend both the focus group sessions and one to one interview sessions.

Regarding the timescale, the timing was OK for me. I had to ensure my ethical submission was approved early (November), then I started to call community leaders before December with a plan to submit the completed report in February 2014. During that period, it was a challenge as I was doing voluntary work at the Manor Gardens Health Advocacy Project and I was actively looking for work and I was also doing my job search as well.

The outcomes of my current research have attracted many Somali Women who had no information, advice and guidance on how and where to go to find a work or training. After I did the focus group sessions and one to one interview sessions, one of the community leaders has invited employment agencies and many Somali women attended voluntarily and registered with skills-match Tower Hamlets, recruitment agency. It seems my current research findings have opened doors for many Somali women to access employment and training system.

If I were to do this again, I would first do some fundraising because it would have been better if I had funds for the large population to attend the sessions in order to get more useful information and guidance that allows me more participants and also I could widen it beyond the borough. I wasn't able to travel as there was no budget. It would have been ideal to cover the travel expenses for participants and to offer them refreshments to attract more participants to attend the session. I would also prefer more time - a year or so - to allow a larger study to plan and prepare the whole process of the programme.

Throughout this research I got a part-time (temporary) job. Before this research some of the Somali females had never tried to look for work and were unable to access any training but as a result of this research, which has given Somali females more strength and enthusiasm than before. Many women went on to register with different recruitment agencies who were invited by the community leader. I would need more people to help me with paper work, preparation and to serve participants with refreshment, someone to do the transcription and registration while I am delivering the interview or focus group session.

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