

INEQUALITY IN LONDON: THE CASE OF THE SOMALI COMMUNITY

Name

Course

Professor

University

City

Date

Stateofwriting.com

Inequality in London: The Case of the Somali Community: A Literature Review

Inequality in the UK

The UK is currently experiencing increasing level of inequality that is evident in key areas despite the high economic growth and several attempts to resist economic recession (Engerman & Sokoloff, 2002, 14).

Some of the aspects that indicate high level of inequality in the UK include education, employment, health, and poverty (Hills & Stewart, 2005, 27). The UK has often encouraged in-migration in order to remain economically stable because the immigrants provide quality manpower that is a prerequisite to economic spur (Shandy, D.J., & Fennelly, K., 2006, 36). There has been a preference for in-migration especially for those with skills in the UK. The UK, and especially London, has been a city of contradictions: being the richest segment in the UK, it has at the same time high level of inequality between the rich and the poor (Engerman & Sokoloff, 2002, 24). The middle-class has shrunk considerably (Bhalla 2002, 12). The inequality in London is manifested in two broad ways: Through the gap between the rich and the poor and in terms of gender equity (Watson 2012, 583).

How Inequality Affects Immigrant Communities

Somali migration to the United Kingdom and the emergence of other communities into the country is not a new thing. Somalia has been among the top ten countries from which asylum-seekers find their entry into the United Kingdom. Recent figures indicate that the net migration to the UK rose by 36% in 2001 (Gundel 2004, 269). A number of attempts to classify Somali-British are difficult, taking into account distinctive position of African American population and Muslim population as the interface of two different cultures (Saber, K. & Jones, A., 2002, 26). Somalis have continued to face widespread inequality in London, and this has

been majorly seen in the way some of their problems are being overlooked (Besteman 1994, 502).

How Inequality Affects Somali Community

A number of researches conducted on the inequality of the Somali community, in particular London, have focused on Oxford House community centre in Tower Hamlets and Camden (Saber & Jones, 2002, 19). Somalis have been categorized as the most disadvantaged group in the United Kingdom (Saber & Jones, 2002, 21). Despite being among the earliest black settlers in the UK, the profile of this community largely remains quite low, and its access to power and political decisions-making process is relatively low (Phillips 2009, 17). Somali community is among the people with the highest unemployment rate, with more than 90% of them having no formal employment and approximately 41% of them having no academic qualifications (Saber & Jones, 2002, 25). Moreover, Somali children are known to have the lowest reading level in schools and also have one of the highest rates of exclusion and truancy (Saber & Jones, 2002, 42). In England, the government has ensured that there is free and compulsory education for children from the age of five to sixteen years, and they should attend full time education based on their appropriate age, knowledge ability, special education needs, and aptitude (Saber & Jones, 2002, 53). Many Somali children have found it a problem to adjust into the mainstream education system because some of them come to the UK as refugees much older and there are weak systems which help them join mainstream education system (Demirdjian 2010, 42).

Research Findings into how Inequality Affects Somali Community in Camden

Fangen's research study on inequality in parts of Europe such as Norway also confirmed similar findings with many of the Christians interviewed admitting that many Muslims, especially from

Somali origin, are usually fanatical (Fangen 2007, 412). In terms of job opportunities, the study by De Haas (2009, 9) found that approximately 76% of the Muslim men were less likely to have a job of any kind in comparison to whites of Christian faith with the same academic qualifications and the same age in regions such as Camden (De Haas 2009, 13). On the other hand, Muslim women were 65% less likely to have a job than Christian white women (McMichael & Manderson 2004, 92). The same findings also confirmed that Somali-Muslims are the most disadvantaged group in London and the entire England in terms of employability prospects out of the 14 ethno-religious groups in the UK (De Haas 2009, 17). While discrimination was majorly based on skin-color, in London, especially Camden, high rate of discrimination is based rather on religion than color (Nunnally 2012, 36). In light of this, the study is perceived to be based on the fact that Somalis have been placed at the lowest stratum in London compared to other nations within the ethno-cultural systems as a result of the increasing rate of 'islamophobia' in the world based on associated terrorism cases (Gundel 2002, 261).

Somali young men are likely to be criminalized in Camden due to the number of reasons. First and foremost, due to the hardship they face as asylums in Camden, Somali young men do not have positive role-models (Humpage 2009, 74). Since Muslims are perceived as disloyal and a nuisance to national and international peace, many employers in London as well as other regions perceive Somalis as a threat rather than a group that is highly disadvantaged (Humpage 2009, 76). Thus, this mental perception and climate discourages employers from hiring them even if they are overqualified (McGowns 1999, 24). They prefer higher groups that are perceived to be less-threatening (McGowns 1999, 29). There are, however, some elements of fear that the situation is likely to have greater implication on the long-term general cohesion of the UK's multi-ethnic group because there could be reluctant willingness to integrate into the wider

society (Osman&Souare 2007, 49).The government is implementing ways of reducing inequality in education, housing facilities, and even providing employment opportunities (Akasemi 2004, 337). The presence of youth clubs, women’s organizations, and other initiatives have played critical role in improving living conditions of the minority groups in Tower Hamlet and Camden borough (Landry & Wood, 2012, 27). However, these organizations admit operating in extremely challenging environment, and their future seems to be weighed in a balance because of the prevalent cuts in funding and sometimes competition for the resources which are always scarce. Lack of engagement and limited awareness of the real needs of the British-Somali nationals has been cited as the main barrier to accessing and helping Somali-British communities acquire services even though many well-wishers as well as the government are always willing to help them access basic services such as housing and healthcare (Dwyer 2010, 21).

Causes of Inequality among Somali Community in the UK

While causes of inequality in the United Kingdom are numerous, there are specific causes of inequality of Somali community living in the UK. Somali community has suffered from discrimination, lack of skills, unemployment rate, and language barriers, and even early life opportunities (Engerman & Sokoloff, 2002, 46). Based on early life-opportunities provided by parents, it is clear that children amplify the initial inequalities that children are born with (Engerman & Sokoloff, 2002, 63).

Inequality in Terms of Provisions for the Young Somali

The other inequality has been witnessed in the lack of provision for the Somali young people in London boroughs, including Camden, have left many of them vulnerable to drugs and other negative influences (Hek 2005, 16). Stewart (2000) argues that many of Somalis feel unwelcomed in the existing social mainstream centers, and this has called for the need of

professional counselors and social workers to help them cope with social challenges (Stewart 2000, 258).

In terms of religion, Somalis are part of Islam religious culture, and Muslims are the second largest faith group in London after Christians (Peach 2006, 637). Many of Muslims live in poor conditions in Waltham Forest in the northern border of London (Nakaya & Dorling, 2005).

Inequality in Employment Opportunities

Waltham Forest ranks among the poorest boroughs (Nakaya & Dorling 2005, 2263).

Moreover, the unemployment in Waltham Forest has been rated higher compared to the average level of unemployment in London (Nakaya & Dorling 2005, 2265). Jo's study concluded that the lack of employment opportunities in this region is attributed to low skills which results from low education achievement among the Somali, many of who are Muslims.

Due to a number of initiatives to revamp the situation, the national government is working toward improving adult-education (Jo 2003, 258). Perrons and Skyers (2003, 267) found out in their longitudinal study that in spite of London experiencing rapid economic growth in the past few decades, many of Somalis associated with Islam faith are not able to acquire stable jobs. Apart from the level of education, the barriers to employment among Somalis has been propelled by discrimination among the employers, limited opportunities for training, costs that pertain to housing, and travel (Shandy & Fennelly 2006).

The major issue that has placed the government in spotlight is the unemployment rate among the youth and their association with Islam faith (Demie, Lewis, & McLean 2007). Many of Somali Muslim youth in London have master's degrees; however, they do not have jobs to sustain them (McGown 1999, 29). Some employers prefer other religious groups, for example,

Christians, when hiring employees. Many of them resort to low-sustaining jobs to cater for their needs and provide for their families (Laura 2012, 1007).

Many employers prefer higher level of education which has been a great challenge to acquire (Perrons&Skyers 2003). Webersik (2004) has documented that widespread discrimination in the UK has heightened. Webersik's findings suggest that the emergence of Somalis in London as an ethnic group has portrayed them as a people who predate concerns about security (Webersik 2004, 516). Somalis have been viewed as a disadvantaged lot because they are treated with suspicion, and other citizens over-generalize them as terrorists since many of them are Muslims (Webersik2004, 518).

Wessendorf contends that there is high cultural diversity in London Borough of Hackney compared to other places and has a high multiplicity of ethnic minorities such as the Somali(Wessendorf 2013, 407). Increasingly, many Somali children are raised by lone-parents with the absence of the father or the mother (Demie,Lewis, & McLean 2007, 17).Somali-British women face thrice the burden of motherhood compared to the white single parents, especially in Tower Hamlets and Camden (Perrons&Skyers 2003, 259). Still with respect to employment rate, the net earnings by Somali males are half that of other ethnic groups (Keen 2012, 779). In the sphere of education, Muslims are widely disadvantaged. Home learning, language, and literacy level were reported to be lower than that of the whites, and many of Muslim students had home learning environment (Demie, Lewis, & McLean2007, 23). Based on the study by Palmer ("Caught between inequality and stigma" 2007, 189), Somalis' health conditions were worse than that of whites (Palmer, "Caught between inequality and stigma" 2007, 182). The findings of this study indicated that Somalis reported poor health conditions compared to other ethnic groups (Palmer, "Caught between inequality and stigma" 2007, 189). Moreover, the infant mortality rate

was found to be higher than that of the whites who are non-Muslims/BME (Aspinall&Jacobson2004, 38).Muslims, specifically Somalis, are less likely to have undergone angioplasty and bypass procedures compared to other groups and average population (Aspinall&Jacobson2004, 42) and this is an indication of how deprived they are.

Inequality Based on Standard Healthcare

The inequality has not been witnessed in opportunities and academic achievements alone but has also been experienced in access to health services (Palmer, “Caught between inequality and stigma”2007, 178). Somalis in London have little access to health-facilities and many of them are not covered by health-policies (Barros et al. 2012, 1225).This problem has been largely contributed by language barrier as most of them are not able to communicate in fluent English despite living in the United Kingdom for years.

Research by Palmer (“Imperfect prescription” 2006, 51) contends that British-Somali communities residing in London have had a great problem in accessing standard healthcare (Palmer, “Imperfect prescription” 2006, 51). The pressures that has been placed on the NHS, length of appointment time that is allocated to Somali patients, compounded by evident language barrier for many Somalis have complicated systems of acquiring health(Gerrish, Naisby, & Mubarak 2013, 2293). The worst problem deepening the inequality of this group is that the majority of the doctors in London do not have experience with Somali community (Aspinall&Jacobson 2004, 49).Therefore; there is lack of awareness and cultural sensitivity, especially on the part of the medical staff. Many of Somalis experience problems of miscommunication because some of the Somalis find themselves in London as asylums and, therefore, this leads to other problems, for example, to misdiagnosis (Aspinall&Jacobson 2004, 63).

Insecurity

Somalis are not only more likely to be perceived as criminals (Keen, 2012, 767), but are 10 times more likely to be associated with crime because they are Muslims compared to other religious groups and ethnic communities (Keen 2012, 768). The rate of police-stops and searches is higher among the ethnic minority than it is with the white majority groups (Keen 2012, 790). There is a general consensus among many Somali-Muslim Londoners that the police and the judiciary are treating them as less important compared to whites (Keen 2012, 771). As far as cultural status is concerned, the UK government has given little cultural and national recognition of Somali Muslims than it has given to Christians (Savage 2004, 29). The UK government provides all holidays to the Christians as well as to the British government without setting aside any major holiday to Muslims (Foner & Alba 2008, 379). There is controversy over the Islamic dressing style. Although Islamic dress such as *burqa* is accepted in social gatherings such as schools and workplaces, it is associated with a lot of controversy (Foner & Alba 2008, 384).

Somali Muslims have openly complained over the high rate of bullying at schools and at workplaces (Samad 2010, 19). In a survey conducted in Britain using a random sample of the Somali, it was revealed that 35% of Somali Muslims felt at least victims of discrimination (Bloom 2009, 234). Nearly half of the study population confessed that the media sometimes portrayed them negatively and it (the mainstream media) was to blame for some of their inequality problems (Bloom 2009, 236).

References

- Akasemi, N., 2004. *Mobilizing against Inequality: Unions, Immigrant Workers*. John Wiley and Sons Publishers.
- Aspinall, P.J., & Jacobson, B., 2004. *Ethnic disparities in health and health care: a focused review of the evidence and selected examples of good practice: Executive summary*. London Health Observatory, London, 22 pp.
- Barros, A.J.D. et al., 2012. *Equity in maternal, newborn, and child health interventions in Countdown to 2015: a retrospective review of survey data from 54 countries*. The Lancet publishers.
- Besteman, C., 1994. *Individualisation and the assault on customary tenure in Africa: title registration programmes and the case of Somalia*. *Africa* vol. 64; issue no, 4, page 484-515.
- Bhalla, S.S., 2002. *Imagine there's no country: Poverty, inequality, and growth in the era of globalization*. Peterson Institute.
- Bloom, T., 2009. *Just open borders? Examining Joseph Carens' open borders argument in the light of a case study of recent Somali migrants to the UK*. *Journal of Global Ethics* 5.3 231-243. ResearchGate Publishers.
- De Haas, H., 2009. *Mobility and human development*. Retrieved from http://www.heindehaas.com/Publications/HDRP_2009_de_haas.pdf
- Demie, F., Lewis, K., & McLean, C., 2007. *Raising the Achievement of Somali Pupils*. London: Lambeth Research and Statistics Unit.
- Demirdjian, L., 2010. *Education, refugees and asylum seekers*. Bloomsbury Publishers.

- Dwyer, P., 2010. Understanding Social Citizenship. Themes and Perspectives for Policy and Practice. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Fangen, K., 2007. Breaking Up the Different Constituting Parts of Ethnicity, The Case of Young Somalis in Norway. *Acta Sociologica*.
- Foner, N., & Alba, R., 2008. Immigrant religion in the US and Western Europe: Bridge or barrier to inclusion? *International Migration Review*.
- Gerrish, K., Naisby, A., & Mubarak, I., 2013. Experiences of the diagnosis and management of tuberculosis: a focused ethnography of Somali patients and healthcare professionals in the UK. *Journal of advanced nursing*.
- Gundel, J., 2002. The migration–development nexus: Somalia case study. *International Migration*.
- Hek, R., 2005. The experiences and needs of refugee and asylum seeking children in the UK: A literature review. Published by Great Britain. Department for Education and Skills.
- Humpage, L., 2009. A ‘culturally unsafe’ space? The Somali experience of Christchurch secondary schools. New Zealand Geographer Publishers.
- Jo, A., 2003. Baro Afkaaga Hooyo, A Case Study of Somali Literacy Teaching in Liverpool." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*.
- Keen, D., 2012. Greed and grievance in civil war. *International Affairs*.
- Laura, H., 2012, Somali transnationalism activism and integration in the UK: Mutually supporting strategies”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39(6)
- McGown, B., 1999. Muslims in the Diaspora: the Somali communities of London and Toronto. University of Toronto Press.

- McMichael, C., & Manderson, L. 2004. Somali women and well-being: Social networks and social capital among immigrant women in Australia. *Human organization* 63.1: 88-99.
- Nakaya, T., & Dolling, D., 2005. Geographical inequalities of mortality by income in two developed island countries: a cross-national comparison of Britain and Japan. *Social science & medicine* 60 (12) 2265-2275.
- Nunnally, S.C., 2012. *Trust in Black America: race, discrimination, and politics*. NYU Press.
- Osman, A., & Issaka, K., 2007. *Somalia at the crossroads: challenges and perspectives in reconstituting a failed state*. No. 2. Adonis & Abbey Pub Limited.
- Palmer, D., 2007. Caught between inequality and stigma: the impact of psychosocial factors and stigma on the mental health of Somali forced migrants in the London Borough of Camden. *Diversity in Health and Social Care* 4.3, 177-191.
- Palmer, D., 2006. Imperfect prescription: Mental health perceptions, experiences and challenges faced by the Somali community in the London Borough of Camden and service responses to them. *Primary Care Mental Health* 4.1, 45-56.
- Peach, C., 2006. Muslims in the 2001 Census of England and Wales: Gender and economic disadvantage. *Ethnic and racial studies* 29.4, 629-655.
- Perrons, D., & Skyers, S., 2003. Empowerment through participation? Conceptual explorations and a case study. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27.2, 265-285.
- Phillips, A., 2009. *Multiculturalism without culture*. Princeton University Press.
- Samad, A. Y., 2010. *Muslims and Community Cohesion in Bradford: Factors contributing to community cohesion, as it affects recently arrived migrants and established Muslim communities*.

- Savage, T.M., 2004. Europe and Islam: Crescent waxing, cultures clashing. Washington Quarterly 27 (3), 25-50.
- Shandy, D.J., & Fennelly, K., 2006. A comparison of the integration experiences of two African immigrant populations in a rural community. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 25.1 (2006): 23-45.
- Stewart, F., 2000. Crisis prevention: tackling horizontal inequalities. *Oxford Development Studies* 28 (3) 245-262.
- Watson, P., 2012. Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett: The Spirit Level: Why Equality Is Better for Everyone. *Czech Sociological Review* 48.3, p.583-585.
- Webersik, C., 2004. Differences that matter: The struggle of the marginalised in Somalia. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 74 (4) 516-533.
- Wessendorf, S., 2013. Commonplace diversity and the 'ethos of mixing': perceptions of difference in a London neighborhood. *Identities* 20 (4) 407-422.
- Engerman, S. L., & Sokoloff, K. L., 2002. *Factor endowments, inequality, and paths of development among new world economics* (No. w9259). National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Hills, J., & Stewart, K., 2005. *A more equal society? New Labour, poverty, inequality and exclusion*. The Policy Press.
- Landry, C., & Wood, P., 2012. *The intercultural city: Planning for diversity advantage*. Earthscan Publishers.
- Saber, K. & Jones, A., 2002. Somalis in Camden: challenges faced by an emerging community. Ethnic Focus Research report.

Akua-Sakyiwah, B., 2012. Somali Refugee Women's Perception of Access to Services in the UK, University of New York Publishers.

Place your order now

Stateofwriting.com