

An Explanatory Study into the Information-Seeking Behaviour of Egyptian Beggars

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Abstract : The key purpose of this study is to provide first-hand information about beggars in Egypt, especially from the perspective of their information seeking behaviour including their information needs. The researcher tries to investigate the information-seeking behaviour of Egyptian beggars with regard to their thoughts, perceptions, motivations, attitudes, habits, preferences as well as challenges that may impede their use of information. The research methods used were an adapted form of snowball sampling of a heterogeneous demographic group of participants in the beggary activity in Egypt. This sampling was used to select focus groups to explore a range of relevant issues. Data on the demographic characteristics of the Egyptian beggars showed that they tend to be men, mostly with no formal education, with an average age around 30s, labeled as low-income persons, mostly single and mostly Muslims. A large number of Egyptian beggars were seeking for information to meet their basic needs as well as their daily needs, although some of them were not able to identify their information needs clearly. The information-seeking behaviour profile of a very large number of Egyptian beggars indicated a preference for informal sources of information over formal ones to solve different problems and meet the challenges they face during their beggary activity depending on assistive devices, such as mobile phones. The high degree of illiteracy and the lack of awareness about the basic rights of information as well as information needs were the most important problems Egyptian beggars face during accessing information. The study recommended further research to be conducted about the role of the library in the education of beggars. It also recommended that beggars' awareness about their information rights should be promoted through educational programs that help them value the role of information in their life.

Keywords : user studies, information-seeking behaviour, information needs, information sources, beggars, Egypt

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