



How Social Media Affects Illegal Immigration in Albania?

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Received: 19 February 2024 / Accepted: 21 March 2024 / Published: 23 March 2024
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Doi: 10.56345/ijrdv11n130

Abstract

The main topic of conversation between Albania and Great Britain at the moment is illegal immigration. The impact that social media has had on the growth in the number of young Albanians traveling to the British island makes these changes even more intriguing. Apps like Tik Tok, Instagram, or Facebook—these previously underutilized mechanisms have transformed into enormous connecting and influencing tools between criminal organizations that readily recruit young people, allowing the growth of illegal commerce. Information is interactive and available in real time due to today's media. Geographically, connections to the targeted people are present everywhere. By showcasing the efforts of "organized groups" via movies, pictures, or letters, these programs build strong relationships based on trust. We are alluding to the TikTok films of Albanian refugees on boats at the Dover port's border with England, which the British press referred to as a "new form of communication". Social media in this situation helps to establish favorable conditions that encourage illegal immigration. Why this subject? Immigration-related concerns are of great importance right now in our nation and abroad. The "communicative" component now provides these innovations a new dimension. The research method is qualitative. Eri Murati, the editor-in-chief of "Gazeta Shqiptare," Bled Koka, the editor-in-chief of "Syri TV/Syri.net," and Zylyftar Bregu, a media researcher, are among the three media specialists who are interviewed. Additionally, 20 interviews with students and youth will be conducted in order to learn more about how to inform them. Quantitative and qualitative statistics will be provided for this article through the TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook accounts that were created specifically for the goal of monitoring the "blogosphere."

Keywords: diversity, new media, immigration, blogosphere, mobile journalism

1. Introduction

Immigration issues have been the focus of attention in recent months, influencing the media news agenda in both Albania and England. The controversial messages of the British party, with racist overtones, especially the attitudes of Minister of the Interior Suella Braverman, labeling Albanian immigrants as "criminals" (*The Guardian*; 6 nov 2022) ¹, has polarized the media and the politics of the two countries. The media has a social responsibility in reporting on immigrants, requiring journalists to adhere to professional and ethical standards that ensure accuracy, fairness and balance in their reports. This means avoiding stereotypes, sensationalism and provocative language that can stigmatise and marginalise immigrants, all of which are favored in the age of information digitization. The high level of access to social networks means that there is a great need for ethical and equitable communication of media immigration issues, respecting the diversity of immigrant experiences and emphasizing the contribution that immigrants make to society. Under these

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/nov/06/suella-braverman-was-warned-hate-speech-could-inspire-far-right>

favorable conditions, the young generation of our country accesses the tik tok platform as the main information channel on immigration issues. The social network TikTok has become very popular in Albania, as many users now see it as a way to earn money. This platform makes young people as the mass users, leaving behind FB and Instagram. In addition to profits through posts, followers, likes or comments, for months now this communication channel has become the main influencer for young generation, to make decisions and collect information from sponsored advertisements to leave Albania for the UK. (Leka, 2023). In 2022, 10,650 Albanians applied for asylum in EU countries, accounting for 1.8% of the total number of asylum seekers in the EU. (Opend Data Albania, Mars 2023)² Albanians make up the majority of asylum seekers in Britain for the period January-September 2022, compared to citizens of other nationalities, or 21% of the total number of asylum seekers in these two countries (13,247 Albanians out of 63,032 individuals of all nationalities). If we consider only asylum applicants from European countries, the Albanians of the Republic of Albania make up about 79.2% of the total number of European asylum seekers. (Opend Data Albania, Mars 2023). Social networks influence immigration in different ways, depending on how they are used. They can have a positive effect if you use social networks to provide detailed information on organized immigration. So there are foreign governments that use social networks to announce immigration procedures or jobs that are required in certain industries. (Koka 2023) Also, they provide opportunities for interactivity. If someone has questions or uncertainties about a particular immigration procedure, they can contact the pages of embassies or government agencies on these social networks to search for more information. (Murati, 2023)

2. Literature Review

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Scherer and Cho's study (2017) explores the role of social media in the migration process. The study uses a theoretical framework to examine the ways in which social media are used by migrants to address the migration process, including communication methods, social spaces and vulnerabilities. The study highlights the ways in which social media can serve as a powerful tool for migrants, providing access to information and resources, connecting migrants to other members of their communities and allowing migrants to maintain connections with loved ones left behind. Social media also provides a space where migrants can share their experiences and document their travels, potentially influencing broader narratives about migration. However, the study also highlights the weaknesses and challenges associated with the social media use in the migration process. For example, migrants may be targeted by scammers or traffickers through social media platforms and may be subjected to harassment or online surveillance. Moreover, social media can perpetuate stereotypes and prejudices about migration, which can have negative consequences for migrants and their communities. Overall, Scherer and Cho's study highlights the importance of examining the complex and multifaceted ways in which social media influence the migration process. The study highlights the potential benefits and drawbacks of using social media for migrants and stresses the need for greater attention to online security and privacy issues in the context of migration.

Whereas, the study by Schapendonk and Steel (2018) investigates the role of social media in the mobility aspirations of young migrants. The study is based on qualitative interviews with young migrants living in the Netherlands, exploring how social media shape their migration aspirations and decision-making. The study finds that social media plays an important role in shaping the mobility aspirations of young migrants, providing access to information about other countries and fostering a sense of connectedness to global networks. Social media also enables migrants to keep in touch with friends and family in their home countries, providing a sense of continuity and support during the migration process. However, the study also reveals the potential disadvantages of using social media in the context of migration. For example, young migrants might be disappointed by their migratory experiences if they feel that their representations on social media are not consistent with their real experiences. Additionally, the use of social media can lead to feelings of nostalgia and disconnection from one's national culture. Overall, Schapendonk and Steel's study sheds light on the complex ways in which social media influences the aspirations and migratory experiences of young migrants. The study highlights the need for policy makers and practitioners to recognise the importance of social media in the context of

²<https://ndiqparate.al/?p=19085#:~:text=N%C3%AB%20viti%202022%20kan%C3%AB%20k%C3%ABruar,totalit%20t%C3%AB%20azil%C3%ABrkuesve%20n%C3%AB%20BE>.

migration and to take measures to mitigate potential negative impacts.

Papoutsaki and Tsaliki (2017) explore ethical considerations related to the social media use in the context of migration. The study uses a qualitative approach, drawing on interviews with migrants and other stakeholders, to examine the ethical issues that arise when migrants use social media to document their travel journeys, connect with loved ones and access information and resources. They identify several ethical challenges related to the use of social media in the context of migration, including privacy concerns, the potential harm to vulnerable migrants, and the potential for social media to perpetuate stereotypes or harmful prejudices. The study also highlights ways in which social media can be used to empower migrants and promote positive narratives about migration, highlighting the need for a nuanced and context-specific approach to ethical decision-making in this area. As a result, Papoutsaki and Tsaliki highlight the need for greater attention to ethical considerations in the use of social media in the context of migration. The study underlines the importance of considering the potential impact of social media on vulnerable migrants and recognizing the potential of social media in perpetuating harmful narratives and promoting positive social change. The study provides a useful framework for policy makers, practitioners and researchers looking to navigate the complex ethical issues surrounding the use of social media in the context of migration. Koser and Kuschminder (2015) analyze the role of social networks in the migration decisions of asylum seekers. The study is based on qualitative interviews with asylum seekers in Italy and Malta, exploring how social networks influence decision making and influence the choice of the destination country. Their work has revealed that social networks play an important role in shaping decisions on the migration of asylum seekers. Social networks provide access to information and resources, including information about migration routes, potential destinations and other migrants' experiences. Social networks also provide emotional and practical support, helping asylum seekers to cope with the complex and often difficult migration process. However, the study also identifies potential disadvantages in the use of social networks in the context of migration. For example, social networks can perpetuate misinformation or lead to unrealistic expectations about life in the destination country. Social networks can also help create feelings of isolation or vulnerability if an individual's social network is limited or fragmented. Koser and Kuschminder thus shed light on the complex ways in which social networks influence asylum seekers' migration decisions. The study emphasizes the need for policy makers and practitioners to recognise the importance of social networks in the context of migration and to take measures to facilitate and support positive social network interactions among migrants.

Massey et al. (1998) present a fundamental study that seeks to understand international migration in the late 20th century. The study is based on extensive quantitative data and qualitative interviews to explore the complex factors driving migration, including economic, social, political and cultural factors. They provide a comprehensive and multidisciplinary analysis of migration, stressing the need for policy makers and researchers to take a nuanced and context-specific approach to understanding this complex phenomenon. Previously Dekker and Engbersen (2014) explored ways social media is transforming migrant networks and facilitating migration. They conducted a study based on qualitative interviews with migrants and social media experts to examine how social media is changing the way migrants connect with each other and access information and resources related to migration. The results of the paper highlighted the potential of social media to empower migrants and facilitate positive migration experiences, but they also raise concerns about the possibility of social media perpetuating stereotypes or harmful prejudices and contributing to the exploitation of vulnerable migrants. Therefore, these two studies provide important insights into the complex and multifaceted nature of international migration. The study by Massey et al. stresses the need for a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to understanding migration, while Dekker and Engbersen's study highlights the importance of recognizing the potential impacts of social media on migrants' networks and experiences. Together, these studies provide important contributions to the ongoing dialogue about migration and highlight the need for continued research and policy efforts to support positive migration outcomes or all stakeholders.

3. The Results of the Youth Generation Survey in Albania

The year 2022 was designated as an atypical year due to the influx of young Albanian emigration towards Britain, with over 12 thousand illegal young people knocking on the borders of the English state. Communication experts list it as one of the reasons linked to the high access to social networks, especially in Tik Tok, as a new form of communication that young people use to get informed. (Gjerazi, 2023) Often social networks can also adversely affect, as they sometimes create a wrong perception of a particular job or lifestyle in foreign countries. Many expats share their personal experiences on social networks. Sometimes, this information is truncated, superficial or simply false. In this case, this is accompanied by a false perception of what a person seeking to emigrate can find in a country outside Albania.

Sometimes, social networks serve as a fishing ground for traffickers, who are looking for new customers to smuggle into foreign countries. (Koka, 2023) Social networks influence or affect immigration, as well as affect any other aspects of our lives: in some cases positively and in others negatively. However, my opinion, although not very popular is that social networks are simply a means of communication. They (social networks) facilitate interaction between people. In any case they cannot be stigmatized as something negative in themselves. Like any other communication means, such as telephone, radio, e-mail or television, the social network must be subject to the law and the court of conscience of anyone who uses it. (Murati, 2023) Social media can be a tool for organized criminal groups to recruit the first item, clandestine, to keep the illegal traffic alive. Secondly, social networks can serve as a model to encourage young people to follow the emigration path through the theory of imitation. Thirdly, social networks can be used to enable connections between people who are at a great physical distance and who avoid the idea of answering the phone. (Bregu, 2023)

But what is the evaluation of this site by young Albanians? 20 interviews with communication students of the University of Durres "Aleksander Moisiu" give these answers:

Table no. 1

	Girls	Boys
How many of them have family members in emigration?	81%	77%
How many of them will emigrate after their studies?	44%	67%
Reasons for emigration	Employment 55% Education %	Employment 73% Education 46%

Table no. 2: Channels that inform about immigration

Media	Boys	Girls
Tv	11%	14%
Online	69%	65%
Direct communication	5%	2%
Coffee/ bookstore	10%	10%
School	5%	9%

4. Conclusions

Social media can be a tool for organized criminal groups to recruit the first item, clandestine, to keep the illegal traffic alive. Secondly, social networks can serve as a model to encourage, through the theory of imitation, young generation to follow the emigration path. Thirdly, social networks can be used to enable connections between people who are at a great physical distance and who avoid the idea of answering the phone. (Bregu, 2023). Kitinger and Skidmore (2013) conducted a study on media coverage of asylum seekers in UK. They found that media reports tended to be biased towards negative stories and that there was a lack of diversity in sources and perspectives represented in the media. Also, they found that media reports tend to reinforce negative stereotypes and contribute to a climate of fear and hostility towards asylum seekers. Overall, these studies suggest that media reports on migration often fail to meet ethical and social responsibility standards and can contribute to negative attitudes and stereotypes towards migrants. The literature review evidenced that social and digital media is used as a channel for a variety of intentions including: gaining information about destinations by enabling migrants to give personal testimonies about the life conditions in the host country; helping migrants gain information about specific routes and the dangers.

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