



**Information Behavior of Advisers  
at Citizens Advice Bureaux in Israel**

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**Abstract:**

Information and Referral Services are an organization dedicated to serving the needs of citizens for easy access to information about citizenship rights and obligations in daily matters such as: dismissal from work, national insurance rights, disputes between neighbors etc. The excessive amount of information in our era hampers problem solution since it faces the citizens with numerous inaccessible sources and channels of information. The current study deals with Information and Referral Services in Israel often referred to as Counseling Services for the Citizen (*SHIL* in Hebrew).

The literature review presents historical, organizational, and professional aspects relating to organizations providing information and referral services around the world and in *SHIL*. These organizations usually belong to the third sector and base their services on volunteers who function as advisors in the organization. These organizations could be more effective by empowering their volunteers, thus encouraging them to complete their mission in helping citizens achieve their rights. Empowering the volunteers is the way to improve the satisfaction of the advisors with their work in the organization and thus allowing them to fulfill their personal, social, and professional aspirations.

Many people turn to the offices of *SHIL* either for help or as advisors which emphasizes the need for developing an efficient system of information in the organization. The study examines processes of information searching by analyzing the information behavior of *SHIL* volunteers supplying information services to citizens. The theoretical foundations of the study are based on two existing models of information searching related to everyday life problems, the berry-picking approach (Bates, 1989) and Savolainen's steps model (Savolainen, 2008). Analysis of the interaction between the volunteer and the information world, which has been growing and developing constantly mainly due to technological progress, has not been investigated so far and since volunteering carries great importance in a democracy, there are two main questions that need to be discussed. The first question relates to investigating the various aspects relating to the flow of information employed by advisors (mainly volunteers) in *SHIL* to solve problems of applicants. The second question relates to the volunteering activity of the advisors in *SHIL*, their satisfaction with their work as advisors, and the motives that led them to their work. This research employs a qualitative method. Thirty five advisors in different *SHIL* branches were interviewed. Analysis of the interviews was conducted according to the different categories that emerged during the interviews when discussing the research questions. Findings show that volunteering advisors in *SHIL* search information in a way that integrates the two models mentioned above, the berry-picking model and the steps model. In addition, findings point to difficulties the advisors face in solving problems of the applicants. These difficulties are connected



with the different aspects relating to the flow of information both within and outside the organization and with organizational and administrative aspects in *SHIL*.

Findings also point to a great satisfaction of the advisors with their work in *SHIL* which provides them with an enriching and rewarding experience and an answer to their personal, social, and professional needs, although some reservations were recorded regarding specific cases.

In summary, the current study attempted to examine the different aspects of the searching information behavior employed by advisors in *SHIL*: the volunteer, the information, and the interaction between them. The research sheds light on information management and policy design in searching information in voluntary organizations.

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