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Studying the Threat of Identity Crisis of Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh

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Abstract: *Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are the most vulnerable people in the world. Their lives are in threat because of living inhumanely in the camp. They depend on everything on the government of Bangladesh or foreign aid agencies. Their demand is more than the supplier, as they have come with or without something. Therefore, it becomes an issue to indulge in illegal activities. It is very easy to do illegal activities because there are no opportunities or possibilities. So, the opportunity or possibility does not exist because they hold an identity crisis. Identity is nothing but refugees. Being refugees, none of the countries treats them equally as fellow citizens. They are justified by a border, though they are not harmful or a threat to anyone. But the suspicion remains hidden as the identity is different from theirs. Identity matters for everything; therefore, threat prevails, and it molds life to think differently and creatively to bring awareness among people to build a happy and sound environment.*

Keywords: *Rohingya, Refugee, Threat, Identity, Crisis.*

Introduction: Every human being lives in this world with an identity. Identity is a fundamental requirement to be acquainted and presented to others. Identity gives dignity, honor, respect, love, affection, and courage. People in this world presently obtain identity in two ways. The first one is the inherent way, and the second one is by working hard. But those who hold their identity in inherent ways presently, mostly in the past, their ancestor did work very hard to pass on their identity to the next generation, and the others enjoy the fruits of their hard work. But there is opportunity and privilege for everyone to create their own identity or image. Those who are great people today have worked very hard to come to their present status. But the person has an identity, and being affected by a crisis is more dangerous and pathetic. When there is an identity crisis, people feel uncomfortable, insecure, neglected, unprioritized, and unloved. Thus, they imbibe a wrong path to create an identity to become dignified, honored, loved, and respected in society, and at large in the world.

In this millennium, the unlucky, brutally tortured, and massacred people in the world are the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. They had everything, but now they have nothing. Even the identity 'Rohingya' has been in crisis. Presently, the identity is associated with 'refugee', which sounds like a negative connotation. That means a group of people who take refuge with someone or somewhere who is destitute due to war, fighting, or famine. The Rohingya people of Myanmar in Bangladesh are living a humanitarian life in the refugee camps. The identity of Rohingya in Bangladesh is as refugees, but not as Rohingya themselves. So, the Rohingya refugees tend to create their identity by indulging themselves in several illegal activities, so that they can live in Bangladesh peacefully, not as Rohingya refugees but as Bangladeshi.



In this research article, the researcher highlights a short historical background, the causes of their exodus to Bangladesh, the situation in the refugee camps, their activities to obtain identity crisis, a few proposals to solve the problem, and finally a conclusion.

The objective of the Studies: The objective of the studies of this research article is as follows:
To study the suffering and pain the Rohingya go through because of an identity crisis.
To analyze how they obtain their identity.
To study the problems and challenges they face in establishing their identity.
To inquire about the sequences and outcomes they meet in their lives.

Source of research: The researcher has used Books, journals, research articles, newspapers, and browsed multiple web pages to gather information.

Research Limitations: There is minimal research that has been done on Rohingya refugees, and there are very few materials available for which the researcher faced challenges while doing this research.

Methodology of Study: The researcher has followed the qualitative research method for writing this research journal. He has gathered the information from various sources like books, journals, newspapers, articles, the internet, and other sources.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to conduct a critical study and analysis, specifically the identity crisis that the Rohingya refugees face in their day-to-day lives. The aim of the study is fulfilled by analyzing the following questions:

1. What makes the Rohingya feel an identity crisis in their lives?
2. What are the works or activities the Rohingya do to establish their identity?
3. Why do they work for identity establishment?
4. How does this identity bring fortune in life?
5. What are the consequences they face in building their identity?

Literature Review: “The Rohingya Refugees: a conceptual framework of their psychological adversities, cultural idioms of distress and social suffering” is a research article by Nivedita Sudheer and Debanjan Banerjee. It was published in December 2021. The summary of the article is about the totality of pain, suffering, agony, uncertainty, depression, and hardships with spiritual, mental, and psychological aspects.

“Understanding ‘refugee resettlement’ from below: Decoding the Rohingya refugee’s lived experience in Bangladesh,” written by Nasir Uddin. This article was published in September 2024. The summary of the article is about the importance of repatriation, then the resettlement. If they are resettled or relocated to some places, it is not the ultimate solution, but repatriation to their motherland is the best everlasting solution, which will make their life happier and joyful.

Neegar Sultana has written an article titled “The Challenges and coping of Rohingya refugees: a comparative study of registered and nonregistered Rohingya in Bangladesh.” The article was published on 29 May 2023. The article talks about the changes of Rohingya refugees in the refugee camps in Bangladesh. There are two groups of Rohingya in Bangladesh: registered and non-registered. Both of them have some similarities and dissimilarities in their way of living, which affect their image as Rohingya.

Mowsume Bhattacharjee has written a research article titled “Statelessness of an ethnic minority: the case of Rohingya. The paper was published on 28 June 2024. The paper deals with the Rohingya people those who are out of their country, who are now stateless. They do not have their property, land, home, and other possessions things but they have to depend on others for survival.



“Bargaining (in)visibility: Rohingya refugees and the politics of visibility in India,” written by Rohini Mitra and Zeynep Sahin Mencutek. It was published on 27 July 2024. The article summarizes that Rohingya refugee are very small in number, but over time, they undergo problems like public opinion, political narratives, negative visibility, and media representation beyond their control.

“Considering the shrinking physical, social, and psychological spaces of Rohingya refugees in Southeast Asia.” This article was authored by three people, and they are: Kendra L. Duran, Robin Al-Haddad, and Saleh Ahmed. It was published on 30 May 2023. The summary of the article is the overall information about the Rohingya refugees who, after the migration from Myanmar, are completely broken down in every possible way. They face challenges in their daily lives. They are insecure and live in fear. They are totally in trauma, both mentally and psychologically, and even physically, socially, and religiously.

Presently, the Rohingya issue is a well-known and most discussed topic in the world. Researchers, educationalists, and writers have critically analyzed and come out with authentic information in the form of research articles and books. The researcher has gone through the research articles and books to bring out the research gap in this research, so that this research can become an authentic master piece. The researcher will explore his argument in the following.

Exodus of Rohingya and their settlement: Bangladesh is a small country (Shaheen, Amirun, Naina, and Mahmud, 2009). It is one of the most populous countries in the world. It is considered the 7th largest populous country in the world (Mahifuz, 2009). Most of the people are below the poverty line. But there are a lot of opportunities and possibilities in the country. Natural beauty, natural resources, manpower, and other sources are the hope and fortune for the country. The country has always been generous, affectionate, kind, and stood for the needs and marginalized people and raised its voice against war, fighting, discrimination, oppression, torture, and killing human beings around the world. For example, the Rohingya Crisis and Humanitarian advocacy (Reuters, 2025), Israel and Palestine war (Tribute Desk, 2025), war between Ukraine and Russia (News Desk, 2022). The best highlight is giving refuge to the Rohingya in the country.

The first Rohingya refugee to migrate to Bangladesh was in 1978 when the military targeted Rohingyas in Rakhain state, bringing an allegation, accusing the Rohingya to illegal immigrants from Myanmar. In this operation, the military tortured, persecuted, and killed Rohingyas, thus saving the lives of 200,000 Rohingya who migrated to Bangladesh (Firoz and Faisal, 2023). The second phase of the Rohingya migration occurred in 1991-1992. The cause behind this migration was forced labor, violence, and human rights abuses by the military government, and the number of the migrated Rohingyas was 250,000 (Azeem, 2016). The third exodus of Rohingya migration to Bangladesh was in August 2017. The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked Myanmar’s military camp, which was a brutal attack and a massacre of the Rohingyas, leading to almost 740,000 Rohingyas leaving their country (Nasir, 2022).

The third exodus of Rohingyas to Bangladesh was pathetic and inhuman. In a certain sense, their migration to Bangladesh was unexpected and inexpressible. It drew the attention and eyes of the people of the world. People felt sympathy and expressed their solidarity towards the Rohingyas. Being a small country, Bangladesh accommodated and provided shelter for them with emergency aid from various organizations, NGOs, and kind-hearted individuals. They are being sheltered primarily in five places in the Cox’s Bazar district, specifically at Kutupolong and Balukhali Refugee Camp in Ukhiya Upazila, which are nearby (Farhana, 2024). Another



two refugee camps are the Nayapara Refugee Camp and the Leda Refugee Camp in Teknaf Upazila. Since the number of Rohingya refugees is increasing in some places, both in Teknaf and Ukhiya, temporary shelters are being made for the refugees (Neegar, Shahana, Rahul, and Monirul, 2023). Bangladesh, along with the other countries, had the primary concern was to meeting the basic needs of the Rohingyas.

Identity crisis and its challenges: Most of the refugees in the world who migrate from one country to another face, first and foremost, an identity crisis in their lives. It is because they are in a foreign land that is not their own. They need to depend on others completely. The identity they had in their motherland; in the foreign land, it is just a formality; it is just for name's sake. They have no land, no property, no house, but the tents and very limited things. In the foreign land, they own a new identity, like 'Refugee' or 'migrant' or 'Destitute', or some other names. This identity does not give satisfaction to people. It does not give them happiness; instead, it gives them pain. Rohingya refugees undergo the same experience in their day-to-day life. They live in limited areas. They cannot move anywhere freely. They cannot work like others for their survival, but depend on the government and aid agencies for their livelihood.

The Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh in three exoduses are nearly 1.15 million to about 1.39 million (Md Reza and Arnab, 2023). From this total number of migrated Rohingyas, half of the population of Rohingya refugees is female. They have no proper education on family planning. Therefore, every day, around 60 Rohingya babies are born in the refugee camps in Bangladesh (Reuters, 2018), and after the post-birth, the mother, child, and family are struggling massively due to a lack of hygiene and malnutrition because there is no proper food and medical facilities. It has become a threat to the survival of lives. The same incident was recorded in the history of the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971. When the war broke out across the country, about 10 million Bangladeshi refugees (1 crore) Bangladeshi refugees fled to India to avoid conflict and atrocities in West Bengal, Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya, and Bihar. The government of India and the aid agencies tried to meet the needs of the refugees, but it was tough for them because the population of the refugees' camps was comparatively bigger than the availability of goods. The same picture is revealed in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

In the Rohingya refugee camps, every day, around 60 babies are born, but they are not registered, and it has become an identity crisis for the newborn babies in the camp. Even those babies cannot hold Bangladeshi citizenship because they do not come under any norms of the country to hold citizenship. And this matter has become a severe issue in the present scenario. In the future, when Rohingya refugees go back to their motherland, Myanmar, whether the government of Myanmar accept the newborn babies and give them recognition of citizenship of the country? As for now, the military government claims that the Rohingyas are not the people of Myanmar; therefore, it will cause a problem and an identity crisis for the Rohingyas. Day by day, a good number of Rohingya refugees are being engaged in illegal work. Since they are living in the camps, they cannot move freely, cannot integrate into work, and cannot meet their civil needs. Over all they face an identity crisis. So, they make a network with the local brokers. To make a legal identity illegally. On 17 September 2027, there was a news report titled "Syndicate helps Rohingyas get NID, Passports". The report says that Rohingya refugees, with the help of brokers, can obtain birth certificates, National Identity cards, and passports. For that, they pay a huge amount of money and provide duplicate documents, fake names, and addresses. Three Rohingya men with Bangladeshi Passports were caught by the police in Chittagong (The Daily Star, 2019).

ACAPS did a recent study titled 'Marriage between Rohingya women and Bangladeshi men is also increasing,' which was published on 24 June 2024. The report brought out several points



for why the Rohingya women marry Bangladeshi men. The reasons behind marriage revolve around 'some Rohingya women seek to settle in Bangladesh by marrying a Bangladeshi man. Meanwhile, the host community men can derive economic benefits and access to humanitarian aid from an intercommunity marriage (Roton, 2022). This act of marriage is a means of getting identification and dignity in Bangladesh, so that they can settle in Bangladesh. In the liberation war of 1971, many Bangladeshi people married Indian men to settle and survive in India.

Possession is one of the fundamental requirements to show one's identity, that he has something to prove himself, that he has a status in society. If there is no possession, a man cannot prove his identity. Therefore, since the Rohingyas have been refugees in Bangladesh and have no possessions like land, home, property, or goods, they undergo an identity crisis wherever they go or dwell. To establish their identity and to be one among the Bangladeshi, slowly they indulged in unexpected work or were involved in illegal work. Over time, Rohingya refugees have moved from the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar and settled in nearby hilly areas like Lama in Bandarban's Chattogram Hill tracts, namely the Sarai Lulaing (Sarai Bazar) area. Local claims over 30 Reuters families from Ukhiya and Kutupalong refugee camp have relocated there, allegedly with the aid of influential brokers. Accusations include land occupation, verbal threats, physical intimidation, and engagement in illicit activities such as drug and arms trafficking (Leena, 2023).

Possible ways to solve the Rohingya refugee crisis: Every problem is part of our lives. Where there is a problem, there is a solution. The Rohingya crisis is one of the major problems in the 21st century. It is not that this problem cannot be solved. This issue can surely be resolved, and the nation can overcome this crisis. So far, the government of Myanmar has not shown its interest in taking back the Rohingya in Myanmar.

The government of Bangladesh has always spoken about the Rohingya crisis and their repatriation to their motherland, Rakhine State, Myanmar, on various platforms. In October 2017, Bangladesh and Myanmar agreed to work together, along with UNHCR, to plan for repatriation, and this was solidified in November 2017 with an MoU aiming to commence return within two months (Ruma, 2017). Again in 2018, a minister-level hotline was established to streamline discussion on repatriation (Wion Web Desk, 2018). The latest talk and agreement made by the Foreign Minister Hasan Mahamud met with Myanmar's counterpart in New Delhi, where Myanmar positively responded and reaffirmed its intention to begin repatriation soon (SM Najmus Sakin, 2024). Bangladesh has urged the OIC to support the rights, justice, and repatriation of Rohingya (Desk report, 2025). Bangladesh also used the BISMSTEC forum to raise a voice on the Rohingya issue. Myanmar confirmed that 180,000 Rohingya from the previously submitted list are eligible for return. Additional verification is underway for another 70,000, with 550,000 more pending review (Ruma, 2025).

"Only 82 Rohingya in late May 2025 voluntarily went back to their motherland, Rakhain State, Myanmar, on their own, hoping that they would rebuild their lives and access their farmland" (UNHCR). After the exodus in 1917, only a few people went back to their homes. Rohingya refugees are not returning to their motherland because they still think their land is not safe for them. They demand citizenship, rights, safety, and international guarantees, but none of which have been assured (Ruma, 2024). For which they feel unsafe and insecure. They feel that the security concern is not guaranteed. There is ongoing warfare between Myanmar's military and ethnic armed groups (like the Arakan Army), making border regions unstable and unfit for safe return. The battle of Maungdaw in late 2024 solidified conflict control in key border areas" (Shaikh, 2025).



Bangladesh and Myanmar are members of various organizations and associations. Bangladesh is a member of the UN, Commonwealth of Nations, OIC, D-8, BIMSTEC, UNO, SAARC, WTO, IMF, ILO, WHO, IAEA, ITU, WIPO, ICAO, IMO, NAM, (Harun-ur-Rashid, 2015), and some others, likewise Myanmar too. In the summits or meetings of the organizations and associations, Bangladesh can bring to the notice of the leaders of the world to influence Myanmar in different ways, so that Myanmar can take an early step to return the Rohingya refugees soon to their country.

Conclusion: The research concludes with significant remarks stemming from the discussion that everyone needs to create his/her identity in society. It is like a mirror that reflects one's prestige in society to draw respect, honor, and care from others. Without a proper identity, no one bothers; people become miser to respect, and avoid giving importance. It applies to everyone. Therefore, people in this world are prone to status, establishment, wealth, and many other objective areas to achieve and establish in their lives in some way or other. The same scenario is seen in the lives of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. At the present scenario, when people talk about the Rohingya issue, surely, an image is created in the mind of the people that they are in an identity crisis, and for their identity crisis, people pity on them, talk about them, and show concern for them. But for this situation, it is not their mistake. It is the system in society. Whatever they do, good or bad things, they do all the things to obtain their own identity just to be happy and live smoothly. It is a natural flow that comes out after having suffered massively being torture, massacres, and being brutally killed. The Ultimate aim is to pursue happiness and live life with contentment.

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