



General People’s Perception About the Rohingya Influx

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Abstract

The primary objective of this research was to find out general people's opinions towards the Rohingya Influx in some areas of Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar. The secondary objective was for the researchers to gain experience in field-work and primary data collection and evaluation. The null hypothesis was that majority of the participants of the project would be in favor of the Rohingya refugees residing in Bangladesh, due to humanitarian reasons. However, it has been seen that the younger population are more inclined towards basing their opinions and judgements on emotional grounds whereas the adult group based their answers on more logical and argumentative grounds by weighing the positive and negative aspects. The data was collected through a questionnaire that contained closed-ended questions as well as questions that required elaborate answers.

Introduction

Rohingyas have been entering Bangladesh from Myanmar as refugees since the 1970s and residing in refugee camps in and near Cox's Bazaar in the Chittagong Division. Approximately 830,000 Rohingyas are currently residing in these refugee camps, making this the fastest growing refugee crisis in the world. The Rohingyas lack access to proper food, shelter, public health, education and employment in these camps, as is common in almost all refugee camps throughout the world. Because of this influx, there is also a competition created with the local people in terms of employment, accommodation and goods and services. There are also negative environmental and health effects of this influx. These issues are having impact on the citizens of Bangladesh and also on the nation as a whole. Countless studies have been done to show the various impacts of this influx in different sectors of this nation, and these data were usually provided by VIP personnel.

Literature Review

Rohingya refugees are one of the most abused and aggrieved displaced groups and are having lived in a domain of statelessness for more than six ages, and who are as yet doing as such. According to the authors of *Trapped in Statelessness : Rohingyas Refugees in Bangladesh*, "There has been a regular influx of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh over the past century, owing to violent repression by Myanmar's security forces, Buddhist extremism and discrimination against minority ethnic groups" (Milton et al 6). They also added that the living conditions of this vulnerable group of people is miserable. It also says the mental health condition of the people of the overcrowded camps is high. Moreover, appropriate cleanliness conditions are inadequate, lack of healthy sustenance is endemic, and physical/sexual abuse is high (Milton et al 1).

Another article written by Syeda talks about the problem Rohingya refugees are facing because of being a Muslim and their forced migration to Bangladesh. The author said, that the Rohingya problem is seen as composed of various clusters of past and present human rights violations in Myanmar which has caused their forced migration to neighboring countries like Bangladesh contributing to non-traditional security crisis in the bilateral relations between Myanmar and Bangladesh. (Parini, Syeda 1) The author also said that in order to understand the nature of the problem the international organizations are working on it (Parini, Syeda 1).

Defining terms

- Rohingya: The Rohingya people are a stateless Indo-Aryan ethnic group who reside in Rakhine State, Myanmar.
- Refugee: A refugee is a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.
- Refugee Influx: It is the inflow of a large number of refugees in a certain place.

Objective of the study

The primary objective of this research was to find out general people's opinions towards the Rohingya Influx in some areas of Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar. The secondary objective was for the researchers to gain experience in field-work and primary data collection and evaluation. This project was a comparative analysis between different age groups and between the people of the two locations.

There have also been many surveys conducted with the Rohingyas, but rarely have such surveys been conducted to find out the perception of Bangladeshi citizens in regards to this influx. These citizens are being directly and/or indirectly affected by this influx. Our group aimed to represent the views of the general people of Bangladesh in quantitative and qualitative form showing statistics and opinions. The survey was based in Chittagong (this population represented those indirectly affected) and Cox's Bazar (this population represented those directly affected).

Significance of the Study

Our research will provide the opportunity to have a different perspective about the Rohingya influx in Bangladesh. It will allow us to understand and analyze the positive and negatives effects of the Rohingya influx on the citizens of Bangladesh. This will represent the rights of the citizens in having their opinions portrayed. Moreover, through visiting various educational institutions, we will be promoting and representing Asian University for Women.

Methodology

Research Design and Site

Total number of participants: 200

Participants from Chittagong of age 18-25 years: 50

Participants from Chittagong of age 25+ years: 50

Participants from Cox's Bazaar of age 18-25 years: 50

Participants from Cox's Bazaar of age 25+ years: 50

A comparative research was conducted in some areas of Chittagong as well as some areas near the refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar. The comparison has been made between the two locations as well as between the two age groups: Younger people (age 18 to 25) and older people (age 25+). A questionnaire was made with the guidance of faculty advisor, which included a section for privacy and confidentiality and another section for specific questions about their opinion on the Rohingya crisis. For example, whether they are in favor of the Rohingyas living in Bangladesh, whether they would employ Rohingyas if they disintegrate in the future, etc. The education level, occupation, etc. of the participants was documented in the research.

Data Collection

Data was collected through interviewing people by going to public places such as markets and also places such as universities. The collected data has been categorized according to demographics and analyzed into a structure in order to find the ratio of the acceptance of Rohingyas in Bangladesh and the opinion of different age groups towards the situation. The participants' information has been kept confidential, and only the researchers and the supervisor were given access to the data.

Findings

From the participants in Chittagong, in the category of 18 to 25 years old, 60% are in favor of Bangladesh accepting the Rohingya refugees in the country, giving the reason of humanitarian aid. In the category of 25+ year old, only 40% are in favor of this. Our data showed that within this region, the adult population focused more on the economic, health and social impacts of the influx rather than the humanitarian aspect of it.

In Cox's Bazaar, 64% of 18 to 25 years old and 56% of the 25+ year old population, wrote that they were in favor of the influx. However, we deem these results to be inconclusive, since 100% of the participants who were interviewed in Cox's Bazaar verbally acknowledged that they are completely against the Rohingya refugees residing there. They stated that there had been several cases where ordinary people were abducted, harassed, assaulted and murdered by unknown individuals or even the refugees, after they publicly voiced their opinions against the influx. Hence, no guarantee of confidentiality or privacy clauses were enough to convince most of this population to disclose their true opinions in written form.

In the comparison between the sites of research, 60% of the population in Cox's Bazaar, showed support towards the influx while only 50% of the population in Chittagong did.

In the comparison between the age groups, 62% of the 18 to 25 years old population were in favor of allowing the Rohingyas reside in Bangladesh, whereas, only 48% of the 25+ year old population were in favor.

The more significant contrast in opinions was seen between the age groups. Younger people are more inclined to act upon humanitarian beliefs and morals whereas adults tend to base their opinions on other factors such as economic, social and health impacts.

Analysis

The costs and benefits of the Rohingya influx on Bangladesh and its citizens were listed and recorded as follows:

Costs

➤ **Public Health Issues:**

- Communicable Diseases such as HIV AIDs, Hepatitis B
- Return of once eradicated diseases such as polio
- Infectious diseases such as malaria, TB, dengue fever
- Spread of diarrheal diseases such cholera
- Inadequate health facilities for locals due to being occupied by the refugees
- Contamination of safe drinking water

➤ **Economic and Social Costs:**

- Increase in supply of drugs such as yaba, marijuana, etc.
- Conflict between the local people and Rohingyas as well as political conflicts
- Acts of violence such as murder, robbery, hijacking
- Shortage of food products such as rice, vegetable
- Acts of terrorism resulting in security issues for locals
- Deteriorating tourism in Cox's Bazaar due to security issues
- Communication trouble within the country
- Obstruction of laws and regulation
- Increase in crime rates, corruption, theft, smuggling of illegal products, etc. resulting in deterioration of living standards for locals
- High inflation due to rising prices of food products, rent, transport, etc.
- Lands being forcefully occupied and stolen by refugees
- Fall in quality of education for locals
- Shift in students' priorities from education to community services due to high starting salaries and low requirements for jobs with NGOs at the camps
- International liability
- Deteriorating infrastructures in the cities and areas near the camps

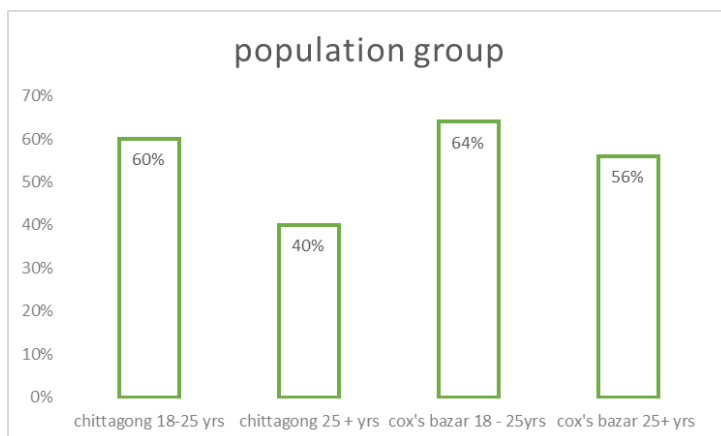
➤ Environmental Costs:

- Deforestation to clear land for more camp areas
- Accommodation problem
- Increase in population density
- Decline in availability of safe drinking water,
- Water contamination due to poor sanitation and hygiene in the refugee camps
- Increase in landslides due to deforestation

Benefits

- Job creation due to increasing number of NGOs establishing in the country due to the camps
- Increase in incomes for locals who are employed by the NGOs
- Increased labor force due to more people being in the country
- Better reputation for Bangladesh due to humanitarian aid in letting the Rohingyas reside in the country
- Foreign Aid being sent to Bangladesh for the refugees leads to more economic activities
- Developing international relations with foreign NGOs
- More opportunities to research new diseases brought by the refugees
- Utilization of isolated areas for cultivation by the refugees
- Higher overall economic growth

The overall findings of positive response towards the Rohingyas refugees residing in Bangladesh were displayed graphically as shown below:



Limitations

Since our research is based on a politically controversial issue, it was difficult to convince institutions and organizations to permit their students, faculty and/or staff to partake in this. Moreover, the researchers faced some level of personal risk due to being a group of young females traveling to far distances alone. It was also difficult to find sufficient scholarly articles on this topic.

Conclusion

In this particular issue of the Rohingya influx in Bangladesh, majority of the researchers, organizations and beneficiaries have been focusing on the sufferings and lifestyles of the Rohingya population in their displacement and on their current lives in the refugee camps. However, very few emphasize on the effects of this major refugee crisis on the host country and its population. This research project was conducted to focus solely on the personal opinions of the citizens of Bangladesh who have had direct and indirect exposure to the effects of this influx. Our paper concludes that, there is a growing need for attention towards this crisis not only towards the refugees, but also towards the host country citizens. International and local organizations, and the government of Bangladesh should take into account these effects and implement policies that protects citizens from the adversities of such an influx.

Work Cited

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