

## MALAYSIAN'S CONCERN TOWARD ROHINGYA

Nur Hamizah Balqish Binti Muhamad, Wan Nurul Damia Binti Wan Abdul Hadi, 'Aisyah Maisarah Bt. Hamdan, Muhammad Firdaus Bin Muhammad Yatim, Abdul Rauf Bin Ridzuan

Faculty of Communication & Media Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara Melaka

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\*correspondent: mijahbalqish98@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

*This study is done in order to find the level of concern towards Rohingya in Malaysia. This study also used social capital theory as foundations theories for model development. The minimum sample size was determined through G\*Power analysis. The study involved 244 respondents, selected through a cluster sampling technique involving three main ethnics in Malaysia. A cross sectional survey and structured questionnaire were used for data collection. All variables were measured through scales previously used by other researchers. SPSS ver. 20 software was used in the analysis. Results of the SPSS indicated that the level of concern, for all four factors namely religion, helpless, and humanity show very high level.*

**Keyword:** *Rohingya, Concern*

### INTRODUCTION

According to Al Jazeera (2017), the Rohingya are often described as "the world's most persecuted minority". They are an ethnic group, majority of whom are Muslim, who have lived for centuries in the majority Buddhist Myanmar. Currently, there are about 1.1 million Rohingya who live in the Southeast Asian country. The Rohingya speak Rohingya or Ruaingga, a dialect that is distinct to others spoken in Rakhine State and throughout Myanmar. They are not considered one of the country's 135 official ethnic groups and have been denied citizenship in Myanmar since 1982, which has effectively rendered them stateless.

Nearly all of the Rohingya in Myanmar live in the western coastal state of Rakhine and are not allowed to leave without government permission. It is one the poorest states in the country with ghetto-like camps and a lack of basic services and opportunities.

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Due to ongoing violence and persecution, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have fled to neighbouring countries either by land or boat over the course of many decades.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Based on Ying (2017), United States President Donald Trump's refugee ban had crushed the resettlement dreams of countless Rohingya refugees in Malaysia as the US is the largest resettlement country. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are approximately 56,000 registered Rohingya card holders residing in Malaysia; other non-governmental organisations have estimated a total of 200,000 Rohingya refugees in the country "We were suffering there, now we are suffering here." said Saiful Islam, who arrived in Kuala Lumpur two years ago, was detained by immigration at depot in Terengganu for about a year. Although he is now registered as an asylum seeker with the UNHCR, he said he still gets stopped by the police. "Even though we have the papers, they still ask for money," he said. "If we don't pay, they said they will put us in jail." said Goh (2017).

The latest crisis about Rohingya refugees based on Welle (2017), New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) on Thursday accused Myanmar security forces of committing widespread rape against women and girls as part of a campaign of ethnic cleansing in the country's Rakhine state. "Rape has been a prominent and devastating feature of the Burmese military's campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya," said Skye Wheeler, women's rights emergencies researcher at Human Rights Watch and author of the report. "The Burmese military's barbaric acts of violence have left countless women and girls brutally harmed and traumatized."

Said Goh (2017), if Malaysia aims for tier-1 status in the US trafficking in persons report by year 2020, it needs to do more for refugees who are also victims of people smuggling, said Aegile Fernandez, executive director of Malaysian-based human rights organisation Tenaganita. "It doesn't matter whether Malaysia is a signatory to UN convention on refugees or not. If Malaysia wants to be tier 1, then we need a change in mindset, we need to protect Rohingyas and not arrest them. Don't forget they, too, are victims of human trafficking," said Ms Fernandez.

## **MALAYSIAN'S CONCERN TOWARD ROHINGYA**

According to Idid (2015), the junta decided that the Muslims in Rakhine state are "Bengalis", which implies they are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. The Buddhist inhabitants of Rakhine state had felt that they were losing jobs to the Rohingyas. And they mounted a hate

campaign. Added to this were the false stories fuelled by certain monks from Yangon. And by 2012, the uneasy relations not only crumpled but exploded. Thousands of Muslims, men, women, children and the aged were speared to death and burned. The police arrived in slow vehicles. They did not rush to rescue the helpless but looked on as if they were watching a cartoon movie. WorldViews reported in 2013 that more than "140,000 Rohingyas eke out squalid existence in ramshackle camps" with no water, no food, no clothes and no medical attention.

## **ELEMENTS OF MALAYSIAN'S CONCERN TOWARD ROHINGYA**

The evidence available shows that the term Rohingya was not widely used to describe a distinct ethnic group until the twentieth century. I would argue that the explanation for this is as simple as that there was no reason for the Rohingya to distinguish themselves in such a manner until the rise in Burma of the Bamar and other ethno-nationalisms against British colonialism.

**Helpless Refugees:** According to The New Straits Times (2017), nearly 90,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh since violence erupted in Myanmar last month, pressuring the scarce resources of aid agencies and communities already helping hundreds of thousands of refugees from previous violent episodes.

**Humanitarian:** According to Ismail (2017), Malaysia has sent the third humanitarian mission under the 'Negeraku prihatin (My caring nation)' campaign to provide basic daily necessities to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak led the send-off of the 56.6 tonne Malaysia Airlines Bhd (MAB) cargo consisting of biscuits, sanitary pads, towels, toothbrushes, disposable diapers, blankets and other necessities, at the MAB cargo village.

**Muslims and non-Muslims unite in helping the refugees:** According to Department of Statistic of Malaysia (2011) , Malaysia has a population of just over 27 million. As of the 2010 Population and Housing Census, 61.3 percent of the population practices Islam; 19.8 percent Buddhism; 9.2 percent Christianity, 6.3 percent Hinduism, and 1.3 percent traditional Chinese religions. The remainder is accounted for by other faiths, including Animism, Folk religion, Sikhism, Baha'i and other belief systems.

## **2.8 FACTORS OF WHY MALAYSIANS SHOULD HELP ROHINGYA**

### **a) Helpless**

Arriving exhausted, hungry, and dehydrated, these displaced find the safe space and resources they seek to be desperately scarce. The population of the two refugee camps in southeast Bangladesh has doubled in just a few weeks. But the reality is, they have nowhere

else to go. As stated by Paul (2017), left drenched and near destitute by a cyclone that hit Bangladesh a day earlier, thousands of Rohingya refugees hunkered down in the ruins of their camps on Wednesday, waiting for help after a night in the rain. At least seven people were killed and 50 injured by Cyclone Mora, according to Mohammad Ali Hussain, the chief administrator of Cox's Bazar district, a sliver of land in southeast Bangladesh bordering Myanmar.

The border area that bore the brunt of the storm is home to refugee camps for Muslim Rohingyas who have fled from their homes in northwest Myanmar to escape communal violence and Myanmar army crackdowns. "Initial reports suggest damage to shelter in camps sheltering Rohingya refugees, is severe," the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator for Bangladesh said. Authorities in Cox's Bazar and neighbouring Chittagong district evacuated 350,000 people from low-lying areas before the storm roared in from the Bay of Bengal.

Along with an estimated 625,000 Rohingya Muslim refugees who have fled Burma for camps in Bangladesh since late August, Begum is struggling to feed herself and her baby. While now safe from the threat of violence, refugees in Bangladesh now face malnutrition on an "alarming" scale, say aid agencies.

Health workers suspect tiny Mahmoud, who wears an oversized red sports shirt, has severe acute malnutrition - the most serious form of malnourishment. All he has had to eat in the camp, where his family has been for two months, is a few spoonfuls a day of rice mixed with sugar, his mother says. (Worley, 2017)

## **b) Religion**

Religion is an integral part of any society. It refers to the activities that is ownable. It means what one must adopt or do and what not, Every religion has a set of certain norms, values, rules of conduct. All these are concerned with character formation. Hence, religious faiths are aimed at controlling and regulating behaviours. Every religion has some fundamental principles that motivate or drive people of society to form positive attitudes towards humanity, said Mishra (2016).

In analysing the recent violence, much of the western media has focused on the role of the military and the figure of the de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Her status as a Nobel Peace prize laureate has been widely questioned since the latest evidence of atrocities emerged. She

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continues to avoid condemning the systematic violence against the Rohingya. At least the media gaze has finally shifted somewhat towards their plight. But there remain issues that are not being explored. It is also critical to look beyond religious and ethnic differences towards other root causes of persecution, vulnerability and displacement. We must consider vested political and economic interests as contributing factors to forced displacement in Myanmar, not just of the Rohingya people but of other minorities such as the Kachin, the Shan, the Karen, the Chin, and the Mon.

With no country willing to take responsibility for them, they are either forced or encouraged to continuously cross borders. The techniques used to encourage this movement have trapped the Rohingya in a vulnerable state. The tragedy of the Rohingya is part of a bigger picture which sees the oppression and displacement of minorities across Myanmar and into neighbouring countries. The relevance and complexity of religious and ethnic issues in Myanmar are undeniable. But we cannot ignore the political and economic context and the root causes of displacement that often go undetected, as discussed by an academic rigour.

Based on Zin (2017) on New Straits Times, Malaysia's relentless efforts in raising the plight of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Rakhine state have borne fruit when Myanmar gave its commitment to resolve the issue at the 31st Asean Summit and Related Summits, here. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, during the Summit's plenary session today, agreed that there must be a long-term solution, based on trust and harmony, to the issue - which has seen more than 600,000 Rohingyas displaced from their homes following the intensified crackdown on them since August.

### **c) Humanity**

Based on Solomon (2017), U.N. agencies convene Monday in Geneva to request a sum of \$434 million to fund a massive emergency response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in eastern Bangladesh, where nearly 600,000 people have crossed the border after fleeing recent violence in Myanmar. The crisis began in the days after an Aug. 25 attack on state security forces by Rohingya insurgents, which triggered a brutal military crackdown on civilians that has sent more than half of the total Rohingya population fleeing in what may be the fastest cross-border exodus in modern history.

It's rare to see the United Nation's top diplomat take the uncomfortable step of telling the Security Council, the world's most powerful political body, what to do. But, that's exactly

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what UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres did this week, by asking the council to step up its response to the violence sweeping Burma, also known as Myanmar.

The numbers underlying the crisis are staggering. Hungry and weak, about 146,000 ethnic Rohingya refugees have fled to Bangladesh in the span of 11 days. Human Rights Watch analyzed satellite imagery showing the widespread burning of 21 distinct parts of Burma's Rakhine State, including one Rohingya village where 99 percent of all structures were razed. Guterres warned the Security Council that he is "deeply concerned" about the risks of the situation "degenerating into a humanitarian catastrophe" that expands far beyond Burma's borders.

For years, the Security Council has tiptoed around the precarious situation in Rakhine State. Burma's national security advisor has even bragged that he can count on powerful permanent Security Council members China and Russia to prevent an open discussion of the crisis. In the past two weeks, the Security Council has met just once to discuss the situation in a short meeting held behind closed doors.

The ball is now in the Security Council's court. Council members should call for a public briefing by the secretary-general on the situation in Burma, demand authorities allow humanitarian aid to flow freely to the population at risk, and warn that a failure to cooperate with the UN-backed fact-finding mission will result in international sanctions. Most importantly, the Security Council needs to call on the Burmese government to immediately end atrocities against the Rohingya people. Even powerful allies should not be shielding Burma from the world's scrutiny, as stated by Kumar (2017).

Based on The Sun Daily, "With limited resources in a country already strained with an existing refugee population of 200,000, prices of essential goods and medications had begun to rise as demand exceeds supply," Dr Ahmad Faizal said.

The most critical need at the moment was health services, which MERCY Malaysia had been providing at two of their Primary Health Clinics (PHCs) at the Thangkhali and Balukhali camps since the end of September. "Our medical officers at Thangkhali PHC see more than 100 patients daily, while the Balukhali camp, which is bigger, receives about 300 patients daily.

"To date, we had seen close to 7,000 patients, with the most common complaints being diarrhea, headache, fever or infection, skin problems and gastritis," Dr Ahmad Faizal also mentioned that MERCY Malaysia was in the process of creating child-friendly spaces for Rohingya refugees below the age of 17, as there was rising concern about the long-term effect of their sudden and treacherous exodus from Myanmar. He said MERCY Malaysia would focus on developing a comprehensive health centre at the Kutupalong Expansion Block D site that would provide a wider range of medical services.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

For this research, researcher use explanatory research. According to Kowalczyk (2013), explanatory research is defined as an attempt to connect ideas to understand cause and effect, meaning researchers want to explain what is going on. Explanatory research looks at how things come together and interact. This study employed the quantitative study approach (explanatory study) to identify the pattern and magnitude of relations and interactions existing between the predetermined Malaysians' concern toward Rohingya refugees.

Specifically, the design enable this study to examine the Malaysians' concern toward Rohingya refugees. According to Gay and Airasia (2003) and Ary et al., (2002), a research design represents the basic structure of the study and serves as guide to the researcher to conduct the study. Kerlinger (1986), further noted that a research design is impotant in order to achieve research objectives as validly, accurately and economically as possible.

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research. This approach enabled researcher to gather data at the same point of time from a large sample of people relatively quickly and inexpensively Ary et al. (2002). The larger sample could mitigate the problem of change differences. Data were gathered using self-administrated questionnaire as Cavana et al. (2002) suggested that this method exhibits objectivity, and it is independent of researcher's bias and value. Further, data were analyzed using multivariate statistical analysis in order to describe and to explain the phenomenon of Malaysians' concern toward Rohingya refugees.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### a) Profile of respondents

The profile of the sample is discussed in terms of four characteristics: age, ethnic, status and occupation.

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents**

Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-21	168	68.9
22-25	6	2.5
26-28	9	3.7
29-31	4	1.6
32 and above	57	23.4
Ethnic		
Malay	231	95.5
Chinese	2	0.8
Indian	6	2.5
Other	3	1.2
Status		
Single	175	71.7
Married	64	26.2
Complicated	5	2
Religion		
Islam	237	97.1
Buddha	2	0.8
Hindu	5	2
Occupation		
Student	166	68.9
Working at public sector	32	13.3
Working at private sector	30	12.4
Unemployed	13	5.4

Table 1 above shows the profile of respondents. Based from the findings, most of the respondents who answered the questionnaires are aged between 18-21 (69%), Malay ethnic (96%), single (72%), Islam religion (97%) and students (69%).

### b) Helpless

From the table shows below, we can conclude that the highest mean for the factor is for the statement “Rohingya refugees do not have enough food to live” which shows the mean of  $M=3.41$ . This is because food is the most important human needs to stay alive. Human can survive without home but not without food. While the lowest mean stated above is  $M=2.93$  where it mentioned that “Rohingya refugees cannot protect their dignity”. So based on the finding above, it proves that Rohingya refugees need more food to stay alive by the overall mean of  $M= 3.19$

**Table 2: Level of Helpless**

Helpless	Mean
Rohingya refugees do not have enough food to live	<b>3.41</b>
Rohingya refugees humanitarian rights are indefensible	3.31
Rohingya refugees cannot protect themselves	3.16
Rohingya refugees do not have home to stay	3.14
Rohingya refugees cannot protect their dignity	2.93
Overall	3.19

**c) Religion**

Based on our research findings, we can identify that one of the solid reasons on Malaysian's concerns towards Rohingya refugees is every religion encourages helping each other. That is the highest mean that most respondents agreed with that statement (M=3.59) . While the lowest mean shows M=2.98, where it relies on the statement of Malaysians help Rohingya because they are Muslims. Hence, this also can conclude that religion is one of the factor Malaysians help Rohingya refugees

**Table 3: Religion**

Religion	Mean
Every religion encourages helping each other	<b>3.59</b>
Every religion cares about the aspect of humanity	3.51
Non-Muslims in Malaysia also helps the Rohingya refugees	3.25
Rohingya refugees flee away to Malaysia because Malaysia is a Muslim country	3.09

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Malaysians help Rohingya because they are Muslims	2.98
Overall	3.28

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**d) Level of humanity**

The table below shows that the statement “As a Malaysian, it is eligible to help the Rohingya refugees” has the highest mean, M=3.34 . The respondents believe by helping the Rohingya refugees, it will definitely decrease their difficulties. As a result, Malaysians agreed that Humanity is one of the factors that Malaysians are concerned towards the Rohingya refugees with overall mean M=2.99.

**Table 4: Humanity**

Humanity	Mean
As a Malaysian, it is eligible to help the Rohingya refugees	<b>3.34</b>
There are many Rohingya fund raising in Malaysia	3.17
Malaysia gives financial support towards Rohingya	3.08
I ever donated to any Rohingya fund raising	2.86
I ever participated to any humanitarian mission towards helping Rohingya refugees	2.48
Overall	2.99

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**e) Level of concern**

Based on the table above, the highest mean for this level of concern is the statement of many Malaysian government also looking for solutions to solve the crisis in Myanmar which is the mean, M=3.22. Besides, we can conclude that all the factors mentioned humanity, helpless and religion, more or less, determine the level of concern towards Rohingya Refugees, which shows the overall mean of M=3.06.

**Table 5: Concern**

Concern	Mean
Malaysian government also looking for solutions to solve the crisis in Myanmar.	3.22
Many Malaysians donated funds for the Rohingya ethnic.	3.16
Malaysians care about the distress of Rohingya refugees	3.15
Malaysians give a good service and be nice towards Rohingya refugees who is living in Malaysia	3.05
Malaysians agree and allow the ethnic Rohingya to stay in Malaysia	2.73
Overall	3.06

## CONCLUSION

Based on Table 6, it shows that the factor that has the highest mean is the component of religion. Throughout the research that we have done 97.2% number of respondents agreed with the statement every religion encourages helping each other whereas only least of them have a disagreement on the statement. Thus, it drives the religion factor to be the highest mean among the three (3) factors which is  $M=3.28$ .

The second highest mean of this research is helpless factor. Based on the statement where Rohingya refugees do not have enough food to live, the research findings shows that a mean of  $M=3.19$ . Meanwhile, as observed in the table below, the overall mean for the factors of why Malaysians help the Rohingya refugees regardless of the age groups, educational background, ethnicity, religion and status of the respondents, stated the value of  $M=3.15$ , where practically only research that reached research findings above the mean of 2.50 is considered successful.

In this research paper, data analysis methods, study results and discussion of the findings have been presented. Findings from this study have been proved to be successful ( $M=3.15$ ). In addition, the impact of the various demographic data on level of concern Malaysians' towards Rohingya refugees has been explored. Data findings were describe as correlations to the study variable and presented as tabulations and pie charts.

**Table 6: Descriptive statistics of Malaysian's Concern Towards Rohingya**

Component	N	Mean
Religion	244	<b>3.28</b>
Helpless	244	3.19
Humanity	244	2.99
Overall		3.15

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