

Volume 13, Issue S1 (2024), pp. 253-282  
*Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education*  
ISSN: 2166-2681 Print 2690-0408 Online | <https://ojed.org/jise>

## **Exploring the Transformative Effects of the Rohingya Settlement on Secondary School Students in Bangladesh**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In this study, we aimed to investigate the impact of the displaced Rohingya settlement on secondary school students in Cox's Bazar, focusing on their perceptions and the challenges they encounter. All the secondary school students, teachers, parents, community leaders, and administrative persons of Cox's Bazar district were the population of this study. Utilizing interviews and focus group discussions, data were gathered from thirty students, five teachers, five parents, five community leaders, the UNO, and the USEO of Cox's Bazar. Thematic analysis revealed that the Rohingya settlement significantly affects students' learning environments both at school and home, with economic, communication, security, and health-related challenges identified. Positive and negative economic*

*impacts were noted, along with communication difficulties and security concerns. Additionally, students exhibited tendencies towards amoral behavior when interacting with Rohingya individuals, and health issues adversely affected their learning. Policy recommendations include the appointment of additional teachers by NGOs/INGOs to alleviate teacher shortages, the construction of sustainable cyclone shelters within Rohingya camps, and enhanced parental monitoring to safeguard students from insecurity and immoral activities.*

**Keywords:** Rohingya Settlement, Secondary Education, Socio-Economic Issues, Students' learning.

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## INTRODUCTION

**F**orced displacement, a global phenomenon, has left an impact on the lives of millions of individuals worldwide (UNHCR, 2022). Due to forced displacement, many people worldwide have lost their homes and sought refuge in other countries. These refugees, separated from their basic needs, struggle to lead a dignified life (Feldman, 2015). Moreover, hosting countries also face social, economic, and environmental challenges due to the refugee problem (Berti, 2015; Maystadt, 2019). Bangladesh has emerged as a significant player in providing refuge to displaced populations, ranking eighth globally in terms of hosting such individuals (World Population Review, 2022).

Among the displaced populations seeking sanctuary in Bangladesh, the Rohingya refugees stand out as a particularly noteworthy case. Their predicament has presented numerous challenges and complexities, deeply impacting the social, academic, and personal lives of secondary school students in Bangladesh. The Rohingya refugee crisis has its roots in Myanmar's contentious stance that this population does not belong to Myanmar but instead traces its origins back to Bangladesh (Faye, 2021). This dispute adds a layer of complexity to the already intricate issue of forced displacement. The Rohingya community has faced systematic persecution since Myanmar's independence from British colonial rule in 1947, leading to a sustained history of oppression (Amnesty International, 2020). Consequently, many Rohingya individuals have sought refuge in Bangladesh, resulting in a continuous struggle spanning over four decades (Banerjee, 2020). The Rohingya crisis has been characterized by recurring human rights violations, with the initial wave of displacement occurring during the "Nagaman" military operation carried out by Myanmar's armed forces in 1978 (Siddique, 2019). The operation was presented as a measure to protect Myanmar's citizens and address the presence of undocumented foreign residents. However, it disproportionately targeted the Rohingya civilian population, resulting in widespread casualties and acts of genocide.

Subsequent waves of displacement occurred in 1991-92, leading to approximately 250,000 displaced Rohingya seeking refuge in Bangladesh (Siddique, 2019). In response to this influx, the Bangladesh government established refugee camps in Cox's Bazar and Bandarban districts, aiming to provide rehabilitation for the refugees (Parnini et al., 2013). These camps were implemented in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Efforts to repatriate Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh were initiated by the UNHCR in 2005 but faced obstacles due to allegations of human rights violations within the refugee camps. In 2017, the Myanmar government, along with its armed forces and local populace, launched a violent campaign against the Rohingya community, resulting in extensive torture, oppression, and loss of life. This brutal persecution prompted a mass exodus of Rohingya, seeking refuge in Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh. Currently, an estimated 883,868 Rohingya have found sanctuary there (ICSG, 2018).

The influx of Rohingya refugees has had far-reaching impacts on Bangladeshi society, affecting various sectors including the economy, environment, legal structures, and law enforcement. This multidimensional impact has prompted numerous research studies exploring different themes and subjects related to the Rohingya refugee situation. Recently, the Rohingya crisis has aggravated the tensions in Bangladesh. As a result of the 2021 coup in Myanmar, the Rohingya people have been on high alert for threats to their safety, especially because the Myanmar military has refused to grant them citizenship (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Moreover, according to the United Nations Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya crisis, they have only received \$876 million donation, resulting in a 30% cut to food rations (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Consequently, refugees are facing the threat of starvation, sickness, and desperation. Bangladesh, the host nation, is experiencing considerable strain on its meagre resources as a result of the pressures arising from the Rohingya crisis. Moreover, the crisis's multifaceted consequences are causing disruptions within the local education system.

However, limited research has focused on the effects of Rohingya settlement specifically on secondary school students in Bangladesh. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the implications of the Rohingya refugee situation on the local student body, particularly in terms of education, social interactions, and personal experiences. Finally, the Rohingya refugee crisis has had significant repercussions on the academic, social, and personal lives of secondary school students in Bangladesh. Research studies examining this specific impact remain limited, underscoring the need to delve deeper into the consequences of Rohingya settlement on the local student population. By shedding light on these implications, we can better understand and address the challenges faced by students affected by forced displacement, leading to more effective interventions and support systems.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies have well recognized the diverse effects of refugee influx on host communities. Schneiderheinze and Lücke (2020) documented that economic, public goods (education, health, infrastructure) and socio-cultural related challenges may arise in host communities especially in developing countries due to refugee influx. Drawing from a several number of empirical and theoretical studies, they concluded that though the adverse effects of refugee influx on host communities may be allayed with the sufficient support from international communities, the overall impact of refugee influx may lead to gain and loses to different group of population in host communities (Schneiderheinze & Lücke, 2020).

According to the economic theory, refugee influx can create stress on the supply chain of the goods and labor market. The financial support from international communities to the refugee people tends to create a demand for local goods and products which in turn increases the labor demand (Grindheim, 2013). As a result, children from low-income families may be more likely to engage in informal income-generating activities and drop out from school at an early age. The insufficient infrastructures of host countries also have to take the strain of refugee influx. The sudden surge of refugees into developing countries necessitates the use of existing underdeveloped infrastructure (schools, hospitals etc.) to accommodate the additional population (Grindheim, 2013; Schneiderheinze & Lücke, 2020). It is evident that schools are used to accommodate refugee population in many host countries (Schneiderheinze & Lücke, 2020). Furthermore, refugee influx also causes disruption in existing health facilities and make the health situation more vulnerable by exacerbating the risk of spreading infectious diseases (Baez, 2011). On the other hand, the evidence of improved health care has also found in refugee camp areas due to the involvement and support of international communities (Maystadt & Verwimp, 2014). However, this disruption has had an impact on local education system as it is directly related to the wellbeing of local people and students.

The influx of displaced Rohingya nationals into Bangladesh has posed significant challenges to the education system and triggered profound socioeconomic changes within host communities (Rahman, 2018). The Bangladesh government grappled with accommodating the displaced population, leading to academic disruptions and infrastructure damage to educational institutions (Hasnat et al., 2018; Rahman, 2018). This resulted in a notable increase in student dropout rates, particularly in the Teknaf-Ukhiya region (APSC, 2022; COAST, 2018). Furthermore, the shortage of qualified teachers worsened as para-teachers and guest teachers shifted to Rohingya camps for employment, compounding existing concerns about teacher availability (Rogan et al., 2019). Cox's Bazar district struggled to ensure quality education, with poor learning

outcomes evident, especially in mathematics and English, signifying difficulties in complex problem-solving and reading tasks (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2015; Rogan et al., 2018; Save the Children, 2018).

The settlement of displaced Rohingya nationals also brought employment opportunities within NGOs/INGOs to the host community, primarily students from the Cox's Bazar area (Czarniawska et al., 2021; Siddique, 2019). Language proficiency in the Rohingya community's language gave these students an advantage, leading to a decline in school attendance as more students chose employment over education (Siddique, 2019). The impact on the local economy was significant, with economically self-sufficient individuals benefiting while day-laborer and the disadvantaged faced hardships due to fluctuating commodity prices driven by surplus relief products (Labib et al., 2018; UNDP, 2018). The convergence of displaced Rohingya fostered social tensions and security concerns in host communities, with an increase in criminal activities, involvement in extremist organizations, and tensions between local and Rohingya populations (Alam, 2018; Uddin, 2012; Wolf, 2014). This posed challenges to local identity, education, and national security. Traffic congestion and road safety issues emerged due to the movement of displaced Rohingya, NGO officials, and politicians, straining local infrastructure and raising concerns about safety (Rogan et al., 2018; UNDP, 2018).

Shifts in sociosexual dynamics were also observed, as prostitution practices expanded due to the arrival of displaced Rohingya (Czarniawska et al., 2021). This had implications for both displaced Rohingya and local women, challenging societal norms and attitudes. In conclusion, the influx of displaced Rohingya nationals has catalyzed interconnected challenges and socioeconomic shifts within host communities. These disruptions span academic interruptions, heightened dropout rates, teacher shortages, educational quality concerns, evolving job opportunities, economic changes, social tensions, security issues, traffic challenges, and shifting sociosexual dynamics. Addressing these multifaceted challenges necessitates comprehensive strategies that consider their cumulative impact on education and society.

## **THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK**

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory provides a robust framework for understanding the multifaceted impacts of the Rohingya settlement on secondary school students in Bangladesh. This theory posits that individuals are influenced by a variety of environmental systems, ranging from immediate settings to broader societal contexts. These systems interact dynamically, affecting students' educational experiences and overall development.

In this research, the microsystem includes direct environments like schools and homes where students have immediate interactions. The influx of Rohingya refugees can lead to overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, and resource

limitations, directly impacting students' learning experiences (Betts & Collier, 2017). For example, schools may struggle to maintain student-teacher ratios and provide adequate educational materials, which are critical for effective learning (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). At home, economic pressures resulting from the refugee settlement might affect family stability and parental support for education. Families facing economic strain may not be able to provide the necessary resources or attention to their children's schooling (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Additionally, peer interactions within schools may also be influenced, potentially leading to issues such as bullying, discrimination, or, conversely, increased cross-cultural empathy and understanding among students (Dryden-Peterson, 2011).

The mesosystem involves interactions between different microsystems, such as the relationships between home and school or between different schools within the community. Changes in family circumstances due to economic impacts might affect parents' engagement with schools. Parental involvement is crucial for student success, and disruptions here can have significant educational implications (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Research has shown that strong home-school connections are essential for fostering academic achievement and addressing student needs. Furthermore, schools within the community may need to coordinate to manage resource distribution and share strategies for integrating refugee students, affecting the overall educational quality and experience (Dryden-Peterson, 2011). Effective collaboration between schools can lead to better resource allocation and support for both host and refugee students.

The exosystem encompasses broader social systems that indirectly influence students, such as local government policies, community services, and media. Government policies regarding refugee settlement and education funding can significantly impact schools' ability to cope with increased demand (UNHCR, 2019). Policy decisions on resource allocation, teacher recruitment, and support services are critical in determining the quality of education provided to both host community and refugee students. Community services, such as counseling and after-school programs for refugees, can indirectly benefit host community students by relieving pressure on schools and providing additional support (Pastoor, 2015). The availability of such services helps mitigate the negative impacts of the refugee crisis on the educational system. Additionally, media portrayals of refugees can shape public opinion and influence the school community's attitudes towards refugee students. Positive or negative media coverage can affect how refugee students are perceived and treated, impacting their integration and well-being (Goodman & Sirriyeh, 2017).

The macrosystem includes the broader cultural, economic, and political contexts. Prevailing societal attitudes towards refugees can affect how they are received in schools and communities. Cultural inclusivity or xenophobia can significantly impact students' experiences, either facilitating integration or exacerbating challenges (Rutter, 2006). Understanding the cultural context in which schools operate is essential for addressing issues related to refugee

education. Economic conditions at the national and local levels also influence the availability of resources for education. The overall economic condition of the host country determines the funding and support that schools can provide. Economic strain due to large refugee populations can lead to competition for resources, affecting educational quality for all students (Betts & Collier, 2017).

The chronosystem encompasses changes over time, including life transitions and historical events. The impact of the Rohingya settlement may evolve over time, with initial disruptions giving way to longer-term adjustments and integration efforts (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). Longitudinal studies have shown how refugee impacts on education can change over time, with schools and communities developing more effective strategies for integration and support as they adapt to the new circumstances (Pastoor, 2015). The timing of refugee influxes can significantly affect students, especially during critical educational periods such as exam years or transitions between educational stages. Understanding the temporal dynamics of refugee impacts is crucial for developing responsive educational policies and practices.

By utilizing Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, this study comprehensively examines the complex, multi-level impacts of the Rohingya settlement on secondary education in Bangladesh. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how various environmental systems interact to influence students' educational experiences, providing valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities arising from the refugee crisis.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

Following the Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, we used a qualitative approach, utilizing interviews and focus group discussions to explore the phenomenon at hand. Qualitative research, as described by Creswell (2002), seeks to deeply understand a central phenomenon, with literature reviews serving to legitimize the research problem. This exploratory study aims to analyze social phenomena (Al-Amin et al., 2023; Gagliardi & Dobrow, 2011) by collecting face-to-face information from informants (Lee & Karas, 2015). Data was collected through convenient and purposive sampling. Convenient sampling, used due to geographical proximity, involves respondents with similar characteristics (Dornyei, 2007). Purposive sampling deliberately selected respondents such as Upazila Nibarbahi Officer (UNO), community leaders, Upazilla Secondary Education Officer (USEO), parents, and students with rich information (Creswell, 2002; Creswell & Clark, 2011; Patton, 2002).

The study collected data from thirty secondary school students, five teachers, five parents, five community leaders, UNO, and USEO in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilla, which were then analyzed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis, as suggested by Robertson et al. (2017), is flexible and accessible for novice researchers, involving transforming data into codes and then themes. Braun

and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as identifying, analyzing, and reporting recurring patterns within a dataset. This method helps in describing qualitative data, generating codes, and converting them into themes, all aligned with the research question (Terry et al., 2017). Thematic analysis is particularly suitable for new qualitative researchers (Robertson et al., 2017). Here is the demographic table:

No.	Categories	Statements	Coding Number
01	Students (30)	School 1	S1St1-S1St6
		School 2	S2St1-S2St6
		School 3	S3St1-S3St6
		School 4	S4St1-S4St6
		School 5	S5St1-S5St6
02	Teachers (05)		S1T-S5T
	Parents (05)		P1-P5
	Community leaders (05)		CL1-CL5
	UNO (01)		U
	USEO (01)		US

## RESULTS

### Frequent interruptions in learning in school

The schooling experience of students residing near the refugee camp has been marked by frequent disruptions in their learning environment. Many schools in Ukhiya and Teknafh Upazila were converted into makeshift shelters for displaced people, including law enforcement officers, following the arrival of Rohingya people in 2017. This led to extended closures and a suspension of regular class activities. One student recalled,

We had regular classes in schools. But for a few months, when we went to school, classes were not taken. I saw many people taking shelter in our classroom. Then our school was closed. Teacher did not tell us when the school would open. For a long time, we did not go to school (S2St1).



This pattern persists, as schools continue to be used as makeshift shelters during emergencies. A female teacher recounted,

The Rohingya camp was on fire a few days ago. About 300 houses were burnt down. At that time, Rohingya people were living in our school for about a week. For that one week, our school activities were completely closed. This disrupted our school activities as well as our entire learning in school and at home (S3T).

Furthermore, the regular use of school facilities by government agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) disrupts the regular school routine and the availability of classrooms. One student shared,

A few days ago, a government agency was working in our school to make ID cards for Rohingya people. Then they occupied the whole building of our school. They continued their work for about a month. At that time our class activities could not be conducted in that building. As a result, we had to take classes in the open space under the roof on the ground floor of the school (S3St5).

One student insisted that “due to fact our school being next to the camp, we are facing several type problems like Rohingya people’s screams are hampering our learning in school” (S1St4).

Conversely, schools located farther from the camp environment do not experience such interruptions. A teacher from a rural secondary school explained that “When displaced Rohingya people came here, our school did not have such an impact. They did not take shelter in our school. We managed our school activities as we did” (S4T). Another student confirmed this, stating that “Rohingya refugees are not here. Our school opens regularly. We are still conducting our school classroom activities in the same way as before the Rohingya people came” (S1St3). Students from Upazila Sadar School opined,

Our school is far away from the Rohingya camp. The arrival of Rohingya refugee did not have any such effect on our school. We are still conducting our school classroom activities in the same way as before the Rohingya people came. Law enforcers or Rohingya have never set up their accommodation in our schools. (S1SG1).

It can be concluded that several institutions in Ukhiya and Teknafh Upazila have seen the presence of displaced Rohingya and law enforcement on school grounds, resulting in many schools and madrasas experiencing infrastructural damage.

Regular educational routines are disrupted by this phenomenon as well as the use of school playgrounds for relief activities. Maintaining a consistent and supportive learning environment is being challenged when schools are constantly being repurposed for different purposes.

### **The sudden scarcity of teachers in school**

Since the settlement of displaced Rohingya, there has been a shortage of teachers in every school at Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazila. Earlier, each school had three to eight guest teachers according to their ability. Due to the employment opportunities of local educated people in the camps, every guest teacher has left the job and joined different NGOs in the camps. A teacher from Sadar School claimed,

There were about eight guest teachers in our school. All of them have now joined the NGO as they have the opportunity to work in different NGOs. Besides, we used to pay them a small salary. But they get three to four times more salary from different NGOs. So, they are very interested in working in NGOs (S1T).

There are several reasons for teachers to join NGOs. Local teachers are proficient in both the local language and the standard language. Their demand is much higher in different NGOs. The education officer explained, “Local school teachers are proficient in both the local language and the standard language. Due to this their importance as interpreters is greater in different NGOs. So, the teachers left their school jobs and joined national and international NGOs” (US). Another significant reason is that NGOs pay higher salaries. Teachers have joined different NGOs to earn more money by eliminating the low-paying teaching profession. A teacher from a government school asserted that “NGOs pay higher salaries to school teachers. As a result, the teachers got this tempting offer and left the school job and joined the NGO” (S5T).

The level of teacher crisis has increased since the arrival of displaced Rohingya and Para-teachers and guest teachers have quit their jobs and most of them have taken jobs in Rohingya refugee camps. Due to a lack of teachers, permanent educators work longer hours and are more likely to become sick, which in turn disrupts students’ learning when teachers are absent from the classroom. A teacher opined that “We cannot ignore classes. Our students come here to take part in classes. So, the teachers had to take more classes than their schedule. It is a tiresome job and sometimes we feel sick” (S5T).

Many schools used to conduct classroom activities on the basis of section-based division. Now by breaking those sections, they conduct classroom activities through one section. Many schools that used to have two or three sections have

now been converted into one section. As a result, the teacher-student ratio has risen sharply. A teacher from near to refugee camp asserted that

The sixth grade of our school used to have three sections. There were about 100 students in each section. At that time there were 300 students in 6th class. Now we are conducting our class activities with 300 students in the same class by making three sections into one section (S2T).

Due to the quit the job of guest teachers, there is a lot of work pressure on all the permanent teachers. Permanent teachers have to conduct the classes that guest teachers used to take. There is a precedent that every teacher in the school has to take 1 to 6 consecutive classes. As a result, many teachers became weak. They have no longer in a normal position to conduct classes later. Thus, many classes go without teachers. Teacher from near to refugee camp claimed that

We have a shortage of teachers in our schools. It is often seen that teachers become weak in taking continuous classes so they cannot take the next classes. All those classes pass without any kind of teacher and class activities (S3T).

A teacher from secondary school explained that

There is a lot of class pressure on our school teachers right now. Sometimes they become weak when they take continuous classes. As a result, they can no longer continue the next classes. Due to which students are being deprived of those classes (S2T).

It is not just a matter of teachers taking class pressure. The number of classes conducted by the teachers is required to evaluate the evaluation paper and also presents in examination hall. A teacher from rural level school mentioned,

In all, I get 12 to 15 subjects exam evaluation papers in each exam. All these evaluation papers have to be evaluated and submitted to the office within the stipulated time. It is difficult for me to do all this work within the allotted time. I have to do those things, leaving out everything in my personal life and family life (S4T).

Thus, it can be summarised that there is a shortage of teachers in every school of Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazila from the Rohingya settlement. The guest teachers from each school have all quit their jobs to get a lucrative job in NGO/INGOs which caused a disruption among students' learning. It is also found that the work pressure of the teachers of each school has continuously increased.

## **Increased dropouts from school after the Rohingya refugee influx**

The Rohingya influx has significantly increased the dropout rate among local students, as many of them have resorted to selling goods in the camps to support their livelihoods. Parents are preventing female students from going to school for safety reasons. As a result, the attendance of students in the school is decreasing day by day. Meanwhile, these affected schools are doing relatively poorly in public examinations. Students from near the refugee camp described that “Some friends from our school are running a shop near the camp. They are selling different kinds of products there. At present they have stopped going to school” (S2St4). Since the Rohingya influx, some job opportunities have been created in several local and international non-governmental organisations. Those NGOs and INGOs required lots of workers. A community leader claimed that,

Since the arrival of Rohingya refugee, our social, economic, political and cultural life has been severely affected. We have noticed that in our educational institutions as well. Many students in our schools have stopped going to school now. They are involved in divers’ economic activities centered on the refugee camp (CL3).

Given the linguistic distinction between the Rohingya language and the need for translation by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), individual’s proficient in both languages can be effectively engaged in translation tasks. The local population in Cox’s Bazar, sharing linguistic commonality with Rohingya nationals, particularly those with a formal education background, readily avail themselves of employment opportunities, thereby creating viable prospects for secondary school and college-level students to participate in income-generating activities. A student near from refugee camp recalled that “many of our classmates in our school are no longer participating in the school education program. They are no longer coming to school. They are working in divers NGOs now” (S1St6). Teachers from rural level schools claimed,

Our school has a lot of students who have dropped out of school and joined high-paying jobs in different NGOs. One of the reasons for getting jobs in these NGOs is that these students are proficient in the local language as well as the standard language. As a result, NGO officials offered them jobs as interpreters (S4T).

The school also has many students who have joined NGOs as part-time apprentices as well as learners. Later on, they were able to satisfy the NGO officials through their work, which resulted in their permanent employment. As a result, they dropped out of school and continued working in NGOs. Students from near to the refugee camp asserted,

Many of our classmates are working as volunteers in various NGOs in Rohingya camps. After working for a few months, if they can satisfy the officers, they get a salary of 10 to 20 thousand Taka. They regularly work in that NGOs. They do not want to come to school (S3St5).

Another student asserted,

Many of our friends who have poor economic status have stopped their studies to take responsibility of the family and joined different jobs. Also, some of our classmates who have good economic status have left their studies and joined divers NGOs (S3St1).

It can be concluded that many secondary school students are leaving school to do full time jobs in NGO/INGOs. As a result, many students are constantly dropping out from school due to the creation of job opportunities like this.

### **The insecure living of student**

Since the Rohingya settlement, there has been a lack of security for the local population. Reports indicate that Rohingya nationals have been involved in kidnapping local people and they demand a ransom for that, which has left parents and students feeling uneasy and afraid. Students from government schools mentioned,

Some days ago, Rohingya people kidnapped one of my neighbours and demanded ransom. They beat him and my family became frightened after this incident. They did not want me to go to school alone. I stayed home for a few days (S5St2).

The Rohingya people are reported to engage in frequent quarrels and disputes, both among themselves and with local Bangladeshi residents. These conflicts not only disrupt the local community but also impact the education of students. A student from a school near the refugee camp explained,

A few days ago, there was a quarrel between the Rohingya people and my family members. My family members were seriously injured. I had to stay in the hospital with them for a long time. At that time, I could not go to school. Yet i live in afraid. I can't predict when the danger will come again (S3St3).

The available empirical data suggests that there has been a notable increase in insecurity in the Upazila following the establishment of the Rohingya settlement.

Crimes such as kidnapping, killing, extortion, and support for extremist groups have all been connected to a group of internally displaced Rohingya people and local criminal organisations. There are concerns regarding the rise of militant groups among the Rohingya community because there have been reports of radicalization and involvement in extremist activities. A community leader near the refugee camp explained, “Members of the militant group are active in the Rohingya camps. They live in camps disguised as ordinary Rohingya people and secretly recruit workers for their organization” (CL3). An administrative person mentioned that

We observe such criminal activities of Rohingyas on TV and newspapers every day. Many displaced Rohingya are involved in several militant activities. Al-Qaeda, a radical Islamist organization, has issued an online appeal urging Bangladeshi Muslims to help Rohingya by engaging in violent operations against Myanmar. Many of us suffered for their crime. It worries our students and parents as much as it worries us. As a result, students are afraid to go to school (U).

A teacher claimed,

The ARSA militant group has already demonstrated its capability and taken its troops out of the Rohingya camps and is using them in different criminal activities on the border and in different militant crime and smuggling. Harkatul Jihad and Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami have been active in providing financial assistance to the Rohingyas in criminal activities in the country and in persuading them to commit crimes in the border areas (S5T).

The study concludes that insecurity has risen in the area following the Rohingya settlement, with instances of criminal and militant activities. This situation has created a sense of danger and anxiety among the local students, parents, and community.

### **Health issues disrupting student’s learning**

Displaced Rohingya people are illiterate and are not aware of health and cleanliness issues. They throw rubbish, phlegm and spit everywhere. As a result, air and water pollution in the area is getting serious. Waterborne and airborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid, dysentery, diarrhoea and malaria are spreading everywhere of that area. Students who are affected by these diseases cannot continue their studies at that time. A school student from near to refugee camp stated that

Displaced Rohingya people are not aware of health and cleanliness. They throw rubbish and spit everywhere and that causes different types of water and air borne germs. This affects us in many ways. These germs infect us with diseases like cholera, typhoid, diarrhea and malaria. After being infected, it becomes difficult for us to continue our studies (S2St2).

One community leader shared,

Since the arrival of refugees, the population density of our region has increased manifold. They throw garbage everywhere. You can't walk on the streets because of the stench. It has become a challenge for us to manage the waste of such a large population (CL2).

A student recalled,

To go to school, I have to pass the path through the camp. There are piles of garbage on the side of the road. It is difficult to walk because of the stench of the dirt on the side of the road (S3St2).

Upazila Administrative officer described,

There are about 2 Lakh Bengali and 8 lakh Rohingya people living in this region. The entire forest area is being destroyed here. The pressure of such a large population must have fallen on us. It has become impossible for the administration to manage the various garbage of such a large number of people, but still we are trying (U).

A student asserted that “the polluted environment created by the refugees is poisoning our lives. We are facing health risks because of them. We want to get rid of these health risks permanently” (S2St5).

It is found that due to the Rohingya settlement, students from all the areas around the camp are suffering from waterborne and airborne diseases.

### **Student harassment in different places**

The displaced Rohingya settlement has led to various forms of humiliation for students within society. To move between places, students and local citizens are required to carry their national identity card (NID) or birth registration card to prove their citizenship. Checkpoints established by law enforcement agencies necessitate the display of these documents, causing embarrassment for students. A community leader from Upazila Sadar conveyed,

Law enforcement agencies have set up check posts at many important places. Students or any citizen travelling on this route must show their NID or birth registration cards. Many times, students have to go through an embarrassing situation when they may not have it (CL5).

The Rohingya community has reportedly acquired local citizenship through various local intermediaries, enabling some Rohingya children to study in local schools using falsified documents. Some Rohingya students have gained admission to local schools with the support of influential individuals who help them obtain birth registration certificates. However, this practice is not pervasive across all schools in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazila. A government school teacher asserted,

No Rohingya children study in our school. In some of the schools in the vicinity of the camp, they illegally manage the birth registration certificates and take advantage of the enrolment in those schools. We thoroughly check the required documents of the students for admission and then admit them (S5T).

A teacher from near refugee camp claimed,

We have some Rohingya children in our school but their detailed documents proved that they are citizens of Bangladesh. Many of us know that they are Rohingya and still have nothing to do with them. Because they have arranged their birth registration certificate in the shelter of a local powerful person and with its help they have been admitted to the school (S3St3).

The similarity between the regional language of Cox's Bazar locals and the common language of the Rohingya community can result in misidentification. When students travel to districts outside Cox's Bazar, they are often referred to as "Rohingya" or "Barmis" by people in those areas, causing social and emotional distress. A student shared her experience, stating, "When we go to another district outside Cox's Bazar, people in those areas call us "Rohingya" or "Burmis". This is very embarrassing, annoying, and disrespectful to us" (S4St3).

The requirement to carry identification documents and the possibility of misidentification at checkpoints and in other districts create challenges and social discomfort for local students. These circumstances highlight some of the complex issues arising from the displaced Rohingya settlement.



## Positive and negative economic impact on student's learning

The settlement of displaced Rohingya nationals has had both positive and negative effects on students' learning experiences, primarily tied to the economic changes within the community. Some families have seen improvements in their financial situations due to increased employment opportunities created by the presence of NGOs. This has allowed them to provide better support for their children's education. A community leader from a location near the refugee camp explained,

Since the displaced Rohingya settlement, various employment opportunities have been created for the local people. As a result, people can earn huge amounts of money by working in divers NGOs. They can spend the money needed to educate their children (CL3).

The settlement has led to varying economic outcomes, benefiting economically stable families while adversely affecting those who are impoverished or rely on daily labour for income. Families with members employed by NGOs or with other stable income sources have been able to support their children's education more effectively. A student from a government school highlighted this,

Currently, three members of my family including my father are working in an NGO. From there they are getting a handsome salary. They are paying for my tuition as well as my family. My family has been able to pay my school fees, private fees, and the overall cost of my education (S5St6).

Families that do not have jobs in NGOs but are financially self-sufficient are also earning money in various ways. Among the local people who have cars, Houses and land they are earning a huge amount of money by renting them out. A student from near to refugee camp described that

There was an abandoned land near to our house. My father has built a house on that land and now he has rented it. Large sums of rent are being collected from all these houses. Now my father is able to spend money comfortably for my studies (S3St3).

Families that own assets such as cars or houses have also found ways to generate income by renting out their resources, enabling them to contribute to their children's education. However, for those who were already financially vulnerable, the settlement has often exacerbated their challenges. These families have struggled to find employment opportunities and have faced reduced daily wages due to competition with Rohingya nationals for labour work. A student shared,

My father is a day labourer. According to the labour laws of the country, my father is not paid as much as the daily wage provision due to refugee involvement in day labour. Our family does not survive on this earned income. Therefore, there is no question of bearing the cost of my studies (S2St5).

The people of those families who are illiterate, poor and day laborers have suffered a lot economically. At present Rohingya nationals are participating in labour activities. Now the local people do not get a fair price for all those works. A community leader described that

Displaced Rohingya people are much stronger than the people of Bangladesh and they can work for 10 to 12 hours a day where the local population of Bangladesh is unable to work for 8 hours a day. In addition, the Rohingya agreed to work for 100 BDT to 200 BDT, even though the locals worked for 500 BDT a day. The Rohingya people are comparatively more skilled in building construction, road construction and agriculture, and fish farming (CL5).

In Ukhiya Upazila, the prices of daily commodities including rice, pulses and vegetables have gone up sharply. Besides, house rent has also increased manifold. A female teacher claimed,

Before the displaced Rohingya settlement, i lived for free in a house near to the school. Later the landlord is demanded rent of this house about 12 thousand Taka from me. I couldn't bear it. Now I live in a fenced house away from school. Even in those rural areas, I have to pay huge rent (S3T).

The rising costs of essential commodities, including educational materials, coupled with increased prices of goods and housing in the area, have further strained families' finances. Some students are finding it difficult to afford educational resources. Additionally, the changing economic landscape has led to some families being able to support their children's education more effectively, while others are facing increased economic challenges.

### **Learners' tendency to amoral deeds**

Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazila have garnered a longstanding reputation for being hubs of drug trafficking, with a contingent of local individuals partaking in these illicit activities. With the influx of displaced Rohingya, the prevalence of these unethical undertakings has intensified. Rohingyas are being exploited to transport drugs, thus exacerbating the prevalence of these vices. Consequently, a growing number

of local residents are succumbing to drug addiction and becoming entwined in the web of drug trade.

Numerous local youths have succumbed to addiction, subsequently becoming embroiled in drug trafficking. This has led to a regrettable consequence: their abandonment of formal education. The implications of this trend have sparked apprehension among local students and guardians alike. Young students from rural schools recounted an unsettling scenario, stating, “One of our acquaintances was apprehended by the authorities for trafficking Yaba. He remains incarcerated on drug-related charges, casting doubt on his prospects of resuming his education” (S4St4).

Several factors contribute to the involvement of students in drug smuggling operations. Local drug traffickers enlist economically disadvantaged students in their syndicates for smuggling purposes. Given the leniency of law enforcement towards these younger individuals, they go largely unnoticed as potential drug dealers. Consequently, they can transport drugs with relative ease, earning a substantial monetary reward for their actions. Among the contraband they transport is Yaba. The unfortunate outcome of student involvement in drug trade is a departure from formal education. A government school student shared a disheartening account,

One of our peers became implicated in drug smuggling through ties with a powerful local figure. He facilitated the transportation of Yaba from one location to another, amassing considerable wealth in the process. Regrettably, he no longer accompanies us to school (S5St1).

Local youth aren't solely ensnared in drug smuggling; they are also ensnared in the clutches of addiction. The adverse effects of drug use are conspicuous, leading to aberrant behaviour among them. Not only do they consume drugs themselves, but they also exert influence over their peers, enticing them into drug usage. In essence, they are not only jeopardising their own well-being but also misleading others within society. Since the Rohingya settlement, the accessibility of drugs has soared, leading to the ruination of numerous students' lives. A teacher residing in proximity to a refugee camp lamented, “One of our students fell into the grip of drug addiction. Despite our efforts to guide him away from this destructive path, our endeavours proved futile. He eventually withdrew from school” (S2T).

The allure of Rohingya girls' beauty has led to intermarriage with local residents in Bangladesh. Similarly, Rohingya girls seek advantages from such unions, even within the local community. Marriages often occur without the consent of existing spouses, disregarding prior marital commitments and family

responsibilities. These unions lack legal validation and are frequently followed by rapid divorces and subsequent remarriages. Unfortunately, these disruptions affect children's access to education. A student residing near a refugee camp shared their perspective, "A friend's father married a Rohingya woman, compelling him to abandon school to support the new family" (S3St6).

The alluring charm of displaced Rohingya girls has led to unions with Bengali boys, including those affiliated with NGOs, forming romantic connections. These relationships often evolve into unethical interactions, entangling local youths residing near the camp who become infatuated with Rohingya women. Among these youths, many are students, and their engagement in such relationships causes them to abandon their formal education. A student from a government school highlighted an example, stating, "One of our classmates, who studied with us until the ninth grade, entered into a romantic relationship with a Rohingya girl and married her. As a result, his focus shifted from schooling to family responsibilities" (S5St4).

Cox's Bazar district serves as a tourist city, attracting both local and international travellers. However, its status as a tourist destination has unfortunately given rise to the practice of prostitution over an extended period. The presence of the Rohingya settlement has further exacerbated this issue, leading to its wider prevalence. Many local youths have succumbed to these immoral activities, engaging in illicit physical relationships with Rohingya girls. Consequently, there has been a significant rise in moral degradation within the community. A community leader expressed concern, stating, "Some students in our area are involved in such immoral activities, which not only leads them toward moral decay but also distracts them from their studies" (CL3).

The NGO actively organises a range of incentives and training programs for the students of the school, resulting in frequent visits by NGO officials. Over time, the interactions between the school girls and NGO officials became more informal, leading to the development of secretive relationships. Unfortunately, these secret relationships eventually led to love affairs and immoral acts. A teacher from the girls' school claimed,

Numerous NGO officials would visit the school on behalf of the NGO authority to conduct life-oriented training programs for the students. Consequently, a relationship developed between the students and the NGO officials, which later transformed into love affairs. The consequences of these relationships were not positive, as they involved engaging in immoral activities and even skipping school. The broader implications of this issue extend beyond the school, as it appears that students from neighbouring schools are also easily drawn

into immoral deeds. Specifically, they become involved in relationships with Rohingya girls and sometimes even marry them (SIT).

The study findings further suggest that the settlement of Rohingya refugees has increased opportunities for students to engage in immoral activities. Consequently, many local students are prematurely abandoning their formal education due to their involvement with Rohingya girls and early marriages.

## DISCUSSION

There is growing international concern about the refugee crisis due to the fact that, in addition to affecting many basic human rights, refugees place a heavy burden on host nations in terms of social, economic, environmental, and security-related concerns (Codjoe et al., 2013; Kudrat-E-Khuda, 2020; Maystadt, 2019). This research aimed to find out how the Rohingya refugee problem has impacted the education system of the host country, Bangladesh. It is argued that the refugee crisis creates pressure on both government and non- government services in the host country, especially in those countries where there are already limitations in ensuring government and non- government services (Barman, 2020). In such countries, the refugee problem is adding new pressure. It has been observed in various studies that to ensure accommodation for additional refugees, local schools are being used as camps (Schneiderheinze & Lücke, 2020). Consequently, students' educational activities are disrupted.

Our research indicates that many educational institutions near Cox's Bazar have been utilized as temporary camps for providing services to Rohingya refugees, resulting in students being deterred from attending educational institutions. Displaced Rohingya refugees were took refuge in schools and conducting relief activities from school playgrounds, and members of the law enforcement agencies were living in educational institution (Rahman, 2018; Rashid et al., 2021).

The study found the sudden scarcity of teacher and students' dropout in each school at Ukhiya and Teknah Upazila. The guest teachers left their teaching profession and students' dropout for lucrative salary in national and international NGOs. UNDP (2018) showed in some schools and colleges, up to 70 percent of teachers have left their jobs for more lucrative NGO/ INGO positions. USAID (2018) asserted teacher crisis has increased since the arrival of refugees and Para-teachers and guest teachers have quit their jobs and most of them have taken jobs in refugee camps. The drop-out-student is selling goods and commodities in the camps in search of livelihood. The school dropout rate is around 60 percent in the Teknaf-Ukhiya region (COAST, 2018).

Another reason for student absenteeism and dropouts in schools is their involvement in diverse dubious economic activities around the camp. There is

evidence that different economic opportunities may arise around refugee camps (Alix-Garcia et al., 2018). It is mentioned as the reason for the increase in local consumption and the increase in the sale of goods and services due to international and government assistance to refugee camps (Alix-Garcia et al., 2018; Verme, 2023). Moreover, economic shifts in the aftermath of the Rohingya settlement have brought forth a mixed impact on students' lives. Families achieving financial stability have become better-equipped to support student learning, with opportunities in NGOs and INGOs providing avenues for educated individuals. This echoes Hammar's (2014) insights into the economic infusion due to charity work. Conversely, financial struggles among families, particularly day labourers, have intensified. Moyeen et al., (2022) portrayal of vulnerable populations around refugee camps corresponds, highlighting the complexities of changing economic dynamics.

The insecure of students living found in this study. Rohingya influx has been generating a number of social difficulties, such as their involvement in arms and drug trafficking, human trafficking, criminal activities, and prostitution in Cox's Bazar region (Alam, 2018; Uddin, 2012). The ARSA militant group has already demonstrated its capability and taken its troops out of the Rohingya camps and is using them in criminal activities on the border and in different militant activities and smuggling (Haque, 2016; ISCG, 2018). Haque (2018) asserted displaced Rohingya people have long been deprived of the right to education and they do not have contemporary knowledge. They only consider the knowledge of Quran and Hadith as education. Lacking contemporary knowledge, they can get involved in militant organizations at any time. As a result of such crime caused by displaced Rohingya, teachers, students and parents are living through anxiety, worry and afraid.

Another finding indicates that the security checkpoint in this area disrupts student movement. While checkpoints are essential for identity verification, they have unwittingly become sites of harassment, especially for students. This aligns with Khuda's (2020) observations on the unintended consequences of identity verification measures, which inadvertently expose students to bullying and psychological distress. This aspect underscores the necessity of safeguarding students' psychological well-being while maintaining necessary security measures. Health and hygiene challenges within the refugee camps have not only affected Rohingya refugees but have led to disease transmission among local students. Our study has found that many students failed to attend school due to infectious diseases like diarrhea. It has also been observed in various studies that the spread of various infectious diseases has occurred in refugee camps due to unhealthy environments, and these infectious diseases had spread within the host community as well (Altare et al., 2019; Eiset, 2017). The broader ecological impact due to poor living conditions, as indicated by Imtiaz (2018), emphasizes the urgency of

addressing these health concerns for the holistic development of the student population.

The disconcerting observations of students engaging in immoral activities, such as relationships with Rohingya girls and drug smuggling, present a pressing societal concern. This finding aligns with Onley et al.'s (2019) findings on the complexities of relationships within this context. The disturbing rise in drug trafficking, notably Yaba smuggling, resonates with Bhattacharya & Biswas (2021) and Jacobsen (2002), spotlighting the gravity of this issue. These disquieting trends underline the need for comprehensive interventions to restore ethical values and secure the future of local students.

In synthesis, this study's holistic exploration of the educational landscape within the Rohingya refugee crisis offers a nuanced perspective on the region's challenges and opportunities. While the crisis has introduced disruptions, the resonance with existing literature underscores the imperative for united efforts to mitigate its impact. The interconnectedness of challenges necessitates tailored interventions to address disparities, linguistic barriers, health risks, and ethical concerns. This discussion underscores the urgency of collective action to preserve the educational prospects and overall well-being of Cox's Bazar students in the wake of this multifaceted crisis.

## IMPLICATIONS

The examination of the Rohingya settlement's repercussions reveals an unsettling trend among local students involving them in objectionable activities. Several students have succumbed to drug addiction and the illicit trafficking of narcotics. Additionally, certain students have entered into relationships with Rohingya girls, often resulting in marriages that defy legal norms. A subset of female students, purportedly on their way to school, gravitates toward interactions with NGO workers, leading to disengagement from education. This alarming scenario underscores the paramount importance for parents and educators to exercise vigilant oversight over students' activities. Regular parental supervision and timely dissemination of student-related information by school authorities emerge as essential safeguards.

To overcome the shortage of school teacher, the policy makers will coordinate with all the leading NGOs/INGOs and instruct them to appoint one teacher for the local school. The local administration will distribute those teachers in schools according to school need. Strict policies need to be formulated and properly implemented for recruitment of manpower in NGOs to reduce student drop out from school. Policies need to be formulated so that no student can join in NGO till he/she has completed his/her secondary education.

Sustainable cyclone centers will have to be built in important points in the camp to overcome taking shelter in school by refugee. So that displaced Rohingya can go there and take shelter in case of any incident. Above all, policy makers

should arrange for the Rohingya refugees to be sent to Myanmar as soon as possible through diplomatic dialogue with the international community. Finally, the findings extracted from this qualitative study have highlighted specific aspects, such as escalating dropout rates and teacher shortages that merit a quantitative investigation for precise quantification. Employing a mixed-method approach in subsequent research endeavors is recommended, as it will enable a more comprehensive understanding and analysis of the intricate dimensions of the identified issues.

## CONCLUSION

The Rohingya refugee predicament, with its global ramifications, has persisted within the borders of Bangladesh for an extended duration. Driven by humanitarian considerations, the Bangladeshi government has provided asylum to the oppressed Rohingya population. However, this benevolent gesture has spurred a mixed impact, with localized economic gains counterbalanced by social, political, environmental, and infrastructural drawbacks. Regrettably, these challenges have inevitably reverberated through the educational sphere, impacting students in multifarious ways. A nuanced examination of the implications of the Rohingya settlement underscores the prevalence of adverse influences outweighing positive effects on students' lives. Within the spectrum of these ramifications, there are instances of constructive intervention. Students are benefiting from vocational training initiatives, health awareness campaigns, and adolescent empowerment programs facilitated by NGOs. These endeavors are poised to play a pivotal role in shaping students' future careers. However, a confluence of factors has engendered adversity. Transport-related hindrances, including traffic congestion, accidents, and escalated fares, impede students' punctual attendance. Furthermore, the scarcity of educators, driven by teachers transitioning to more lucrative NGO roles, has adversely affected the teacher-student ratio, disrupting the academic equilibrium.

An environment of learning both within schools and homes has been compromised. The Rohingya settlement's auditory disturbances, characterized by noise pollution and quarrels, have hindered students' concentration in proximity to refugee camps. The compounding issue of criminal activities perpetrated by Rohingya residents has induced collective anxiety among students, educators, parents, and the local populace. These adverse conditions accentuate the urgency of shielding students from the deleterious surroundings they encounter. Timely intervention is imperative to establish a conducive educational milieu, wherein students can realize their full potential.



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*Manuscript submitted: **March 3, 2024***

*Manuscript revised: **August 19, 2024***

*Accepted for publication: **August 24, 2024***

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