Community Psychology and the Acceptance of Rohingya Refugees in Aceh: Local Identity, Humanitarian Needs, and Islamic Law

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Abstract
This research delves into the psychology of the Aceh community in receiving Rohingya refugees, with a particular emphasis on the influence of local identity. It critically analyzes mass media to identify reporting patterns and perspectives on Rohingya refugees. Data were gathered through news analysis and in-depth interviews to gain insights into the community's perceptions, attitudes, and local identity. The findings reveal that the Acehnese community's perceptions, attitudes, and emotional responses towards Rohingya refugees are shaped by a strong local identity, historical conflict experiences, and concerns about resource competition and religious identity. Acehnese cultural and religious identity promotes internal solidarity but also fosters exclusivity towards 'foreign' groups. Previous ethnic conflicts exacerbate tensions and distrust towards refugees. The use of religious symbols by refugees further heightens social and psychological tensions. However, the humanitarian principles in Islamic law, which emphasize fair treatment and assistance to those in need, play a pivotal role. This study adopts a multidimensional approach, integrating psychology, sociology, and education to address identity conflicts, foster harmonious interactions between the Acehnese community and Rohingya refugees, and strengthen intergroup relations by considering aspects of identity and humanity.

Keywords: Community Psychology, Rohingya Refugees, Local Identity, Humanitarian Needs
Introduction

With its long history of internal conflict and natural disasters, Aceh has a profound understanding of the needs and difficulties faced by refugees (Iswanto et al., 2022). In 2017, a large wave of Rohingya refugees arrived in Aceh, Indonesia, after fleeing violence perpetrated by the Myanmar military. The arrival of Rohingya refugees presented various psychological challenges related to identity, social integration, and humanitarian needs among the Acehnese community (Shadiqin & Srimulyani, 2022).

Identity psychology is a primary focus in analyzing the Acehnese community's reactions to Rohingya refugees. The interaction between local identity and refugee identity creates complex dynamics in accepting groups with different cultures, languages, and religious backgrounds (N. Islam, 2020; Rohayana, 2022). These differences can evoke feelings of uncertainty, fear, or insecurity among the local population, while refugees also undergo significant identity changes due to traumatic experiences, displacement, and loss.

The psychological aspects of meeting humanitarian needs are crucial. Limited resources and infrastructure can exacerbate existing psychological tensions within the community (O’Brien & Hoffstaedter, 2020). Uncertainty about the future, basic needs such as shelter, food, healthcare, and education for refugees, and how the local community responds to these needs all play a role in fulfilling humanitarian requirements.

In this context, community psychology becomes essential as it involves efforts to understand the psychological dynamics of different groups, how social interactions are formed, and the role of social institutions, government, and non-governmental organizations in facilitating integration and providing psychosocial support for both parties (Genocide & Bakali, 2020).

The role of community psychology in Aceh in accepting Rohingya refugees involves efforts to create understanding, dialogue, and cooperation that promote social inclusion, reduce stigma, and support the psychological recovery of both refugees and the local community (Saw et al., 2022). This includes the development of holistic psychosocial programs, culturally sensitive approaches, and strengthening social support networks that span both groups to foster positive perceptions and harmonious interactions between them (Luyckx et al., 2009).

The purpose of this study is to fill the existing knowledge gap in the context of accepting Rohingya refugees in Aceh. First, it focuses on deeply understanding community psychology related to perceptions, attitudes, and emotional responses to Rohingya refugees. Through comprehensive analysis, it is hoped that we can identify and understand the psychological factors that influence the acceptance or rejection of Rohingya refugees in Aceh. With this deeper understanding, more appropriate and effective measures or policies can be formulated to address the interaction between the
Acehnese community and Rohingya refugees, thereby creating a more inclusive and supportive environment.

Secondly, another aim is to explore the role of local identity among the Acehnese in accepting and interacting with Rohingya refugees. This includes a deep understanding of how local identity, including values, culture, and history, influences the way the Acehnese community views and responds to the presence of Rohingya refugees. By analyzing the gap between local identity and refugee integration, we can formulate better strategies to facilitate local community engagement and participation in efforts to accept and integrate Rohingya refugees. Thus, it is hoped that a more harmonious and supportive environment between the local community and Rohingya refugees in Aceh can be achieved.

Thirdly, the study aims to investigate the influence of Islamic law on the Acehnese community's acceptance and treatment of Rohingya refugees. Given that Aceh practices Sharia law, it is essential to understand how Islamic humanitarian principles, such as fair treatment and assistance to those in need, shape the community's response to refugees. By examining the role of religious values and legal frameworks, we can develop strategies that align with Islamic teachings to enhance social cohesion and support for refugees. This approach aims to foster a more inclusive and compassionate environment that upholds both local traditions and universal humanitarian principles.

Method
This research methodology employed a critical analysis of news reports by monitoring and analyzing mass media coverage related to Rohingya refugees in Aceh. It identified reporting patterns, approaches, and perspectives presented in the media. Data collection techniques involved gathering news reports to explore perceptions, attitudes, and emotional responses toward Rohingya refugees. Additionally, the methodology aimed to gain in-depth insights into local identity, integration, and the challenges faced by both the Acehnese community and the refugees. Data analysis was conducted to understand the relationship between the local identity of the Acehnese population and the integration of Rohingya refugees, to identify gaps and seek better strategies to facilitate the integration of both groups.

Result
In describing the psychology of the Acehnese community towards the acceptance of Rohingya refugees, several quotations reflect the roles of identity and humanitarian needs in this context.

"Masyarakat Aceh di sekitar pantai pun ramai-ramai menolak kehadiran warga etnis Rohingya dan meminta agar para warga etnis Rohingya itu kembali ke tempat asalnya di Myanmar [The Acehnese community around the coast collectively rejected the presence of Rohingya ethnic people and demanded that they return to their place of origin in Myanmar]." (Harian Kompas)

This quote illustrates the response of the Acehnese community in rejecting the presence of Rohingya refugees and suggesting they return to Myanmar. Behind this rejection, several psychological aspects may influence this strong reaction. Firstly, identity is a significant aspect in this context. The local Acehnese identity, with its cultural, historical, and national characteristics, may reinforce internal solidarity and an
exclusive perception of outsiders. The Rohingya refugees are viewed as 'foreigners' with different identities and cultural backgrounds, raising fears of change or threats to their local identity.

This rejection may be driven by the Acehnese community’s perception of their ability to meet humanitarian needs. When people feel their resources are limited or when they face difficulties, there is a tendency to reject others who come seeking help (S. Islam & Mozumder, 2021). This may reflect anxiety over competition for resources and attention, leading to defensive reactions to prioritize local interests.

The Acehnese community’s response highlights the psychological impact of ongoing ethnic conflict. Previous conflicts between the local community and Rohingya refugees or previous negative experiences with certain ethnic groups can increase inter-ethnic tensions and create distrust toward refugees (Rahman & Dutta, 2023). This can reinforce skeptical or even hostile attitudes towards ethnic groups seen as 'causes' or 'threats' to conflicts in the area.

"Warga etnis Rohingya menggunakan simbol-simbol Islam agar mendapat simpati dari masyarakat Aceh dan Indonesia pada umumnya. [The Rohingya ethnic people use Islamic symbols to gain sympathy from the Acehnese and Indonesians in general]." (Harian Kompas)

This quote reveals a strategy used by the Rohingya ethnic people in interacting with the Acehnese and Indonesians in general. Using Islamic symbols can be seen as an effort to gain emotional support and solidarity from the majority Muslim community. The psychological aspect involved here is the use of religious identity as a means to create emotional bonds and shared values between the Rohingya refugees and the host community in Aceh. This reflects an attempt to evoke solidarity and sympathy, utilizing the strong religious identity among the Acehnese as a way to be accepted and supported.

However, in this context, the use of religious symbols can also create a psychological dilemma (Suwasono et al., 2019). While aiming to create emotional closeness, it can also become a source of conflict or tension (O’Donnell et al., 2022). The use of religious symbols by the Rohingya ethnic people can elicit varied reactions from the Acehnese community. Some may respond with sympathy and support, while others might feel threatened or worried about the rapid change in identity and culture within their community (Jerin & Mozumder, 2019). This can trigger social and psychological tensions between the local community and the refugees.

Regardless of the use of religious symbols, the fulfillment of humanitarian needs for the Rohingya refugees in Aceh also has a significant psychological impact. Efforts to meet these needs can provide a sense of security and psychological well-being for the refugees, helping them feel accepted and valued in the new environment (Uddin & Sumi, 2019). However, when these needs are hindered or inadequately met, it can create uncertainty, anxiety, and frustration, negatively impacting the mental and emotional well-being of the refugees and worsening the relationship between the refugees and the host community.

"Para pengungsi itu meminta agar diperlakukan sebagai pengungsi dan orang-orang yang perlu dikasihani. [The refugees ask to be treated as refugees and as people who need compassion]." (Harian Kompas)

This quote reflects the complex interaction between the Acehnese local community and Rohingya refugees, highlighting identity conflicts that arise in such
situations. The refugees' request to be treated as refugees needing compassion indicates a difference in perception regarding identity and social views between the two groups. The Rohingya may feel vulnerable and in need of special treatment, as reflected in their request. On the other hand, the Acehnese community, possibly feeling the economic and social impacts of the refugees' arrival, might have a different view of the situation, creating identity tensions between these groups.

Acceptance or rejection of the Rohingya refugees can be influenced by group identity and community perceptions. The Acehnese community's identity, strongly tied to history, culture, and religious identity, may be an important factor in shaping attitudes toward refugees (Némorin et al., 2019). When the community feels threatened or experiences negative impacts from the arrival of refugees, especially regarding resources and social integration, it can trigger disapproval or rejection of the foreign group.

Conversely, efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of the Rohingya refugees in Aceh can have deep psychological implications. When the community and government provide assistance or efforts to meet the refugees' basic needs, it can play a significant role in reducing social and psychological tensions between these groups. However, feelings of disapproval or identity conflict may persist, and humanitarian efforts may only address a small part of the existing psychological tensions between the two groups (M. R. Islam & Wara, 2022).

Thus, the conflict between the local community and the Rohingya refugees in Aceh not only involves humanitarian and social issues but also encompasses complex psychological aspects (Wells et al., 2019). Identity, perceptions, and humanitarian needs all play crucial roles in the dynamics of this conflict, and a deep understanding of these psychological factors can help formulate better solutions for integration and harmony between these groups.

"Tentu biaya yang dikeluarkan sangatlah besar. Terlebih mereka tidak memiliki uang yang memadai selama berada di Indonesia, tanpa kejelasan lama keberadaan mereka di Indonesia. [Of course, the cost incurred is very large. Moreover, they do not have sufficient money while in Indonesia, without clarity on the duration of their stay in Indonesia]." (Harian Kompas)

This quote highlights two important aspects in the psychological context of society that may contribute to ethnic conflict. First, the statement that the cost incurred is very large highlights financial and economic concerns within the local community. The presence of Rohingya refugees requiring many resources, including finances, can trigger tension among those who may feel an increased economic burden due to their presence (Sudheer & Banerjee, 2021). This can affect community perceptions and views of these refugees, given the economic impact borne by the government or local community.

The statement that Rohingya refugees do not have sufficient money and clarity about their stay indicates future uncertainty. This uncertainty, both financially and legally, can create psychological tension among those who may feel an increased economic burden due to their presence (Parveen & Sahana, 2022). Uncertainty about how long the refugees will stay, how they will meet their needs, and how this will affect the local community can create anxiety, confusion, and uncertainty, contributing to the conflict between groups.

Efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of Rohingya refugees in Aceh also play a role in the psychological aspect of the community. When basic needs, such as food, shelter, and protection, are not fully met for refugees, it can create dissatisfaction and frustration in the local community (Wells et al., 2019). The inability to provide adequate
assistance to needy refugees can also cause psychological stress and feelings of injustice in the community, affecting how they interact and relate to Rohingya refugees.

Overall, this quote reflects how uncertainty, financial concerns, and efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of Rohingya refugees in Aceh can impact the local community's psychology and contribute to ethnic conflict and group dynamics.

"Banyak orang miskin di sini. Mengapa kita harus mengurus ribuan warga Rohingya yang menimbulkan banyak masalah? [There are many poor people here. Why should we care for thousands of Rohingya people who cause many problems?]

This quote reflects two important psychological aspects in the context of accepting Rohingya refugees in Aceh: the perception of economic problems and dissatisfaction with the additional burden felt by some local community members. First, the statement "there are many poor people here" highlights awareness of difficult economic conditions in the community. It illustrates a group's perception that may feel limited in resources and support, creating anxiety about competition for limited resources (Genocide & Bakali, 2020).

Second, the statement "Why should we care for thousands of Rohingya people who cause many problems?" reflects the consequences of the local community's identity feeling burdened by the presence of refugees. Local or national identity can be an important factor in ethnic conflict, and in this case, the local community may feel threatened by the presence of a group of strangers who come with their own needs and challenges. This can create a sense of discomfort, fear of social and cultural change, and psychological pressure due to feelings of insecurity (Grzywacz & Lubina, 2022).

When identity and humanitarian needs collide, psychological conflict can arise. Although there are efforts to meet humanitarian needs, such as temporary shelters for refugees, the local community's psychological concerns may persist (Khan et al., 2022). In this context, it is important to understand that accepting refugees involves not only physical or material aspects but also psychological aspects that require dialogue, education, and empathy to reduce feelings of conflict and insecurity felt by the local community.

"Jika UNHCR membangun tempat penampungan etnis Rohingya di Aceh, maka akan mengurangi beban pemerintah pusat maupun Pemerintah Aceh. [If UNHCR builds shelters for Rohingya ethnic people in Aceh, it will reduce the burden on the central government and the Aceh Government]." (Dr. Abdul Rani Usman, M.Si, in the article Zakat dan Solusi Pengungsi Rohingya’)

This quote illustrates the psychological aspects of the Acehnese community in accepting Rohingya refugees, with the perspective that establishing a special shelter for the Rohingya would reduce the administrative burden on both central and local governments. This aspect highlights concerns and a desire to lessen the logistical and financial strain on the government associated with handling refugees. Psychologically, the Acehnese community may experience tension and anxiety regarding the social, economic, and infrastructural impacts of the refugees’ presence (Khan et al., 2022). This attitude indicates that the community wishes to meet its needs without sacrificing available resources, showing concern for internal needs while considering the responsibility toward the Rohingya refugees.
Local identity and humanitarian needs are two interconnected elements in the psychology of the Acehnese community in the context of accepting Rohingya refugees. A strong local identity can be a foundation for the community in considering the social and cultural impacts that may arise from the presence of refugees. They may feel the need to maintain their local identity and community stability while ensuring that the humanitarian needs of the refugees are met. The existence of a centralized shelter for the Rohingya refugees can be seen as a solution that takes into account the identity of the Acehnese community while managing the humanitarian impact of the refugee crisis.

In a psychological context, the anticipated reduction in government administrative burdens from the construction of a special shelter reveals a drive rooted in the community's need to maintain the stability and security of the local community. The sustainability of humanitarian needs for the Rohingya refugees in Aceh is seen as a priority that must be not only addressed but also dealt with while considering the internal interests of the community. This psychological aspect reflects a drive to balance local interests and needs while assisting the refugees.

"Kehadiran warga etnis Rohingya bukanlah urusan Indonesia. Indonesia tidak seharusnya memperlakukan etnis Rohingya sebagai pengungsi. [The presence of Rohingya ethnic people is not Indonesia's business. Indonesia should not treat the Rohingya as refugees]." (Hikmahanto Juwana, in the article "Menyikapi Gelombang Pengungsi Etnis Rohingya"

This quotation reflects a viewpoint that highlights the aspects of identity and the psychological response of the community to the presence of Rohingya refugees in Aceh. In the context of community psychology, this statement depicts a perception that the Rohingya ethnic identity is considered "foreign" and not entirely the concern of Indonesia. This view creates a psychological distance between the local community and the refugees, reinforcing the perception that they do not have an identity closely linked to the region, thus providing grounds for rejection.

The stance of not treating the Rohingya as refugees also reflects the psychological dynamics of the community in their humanitarian response. This indicates a conflict between fundamental humanitarian needs and the understanding of identity, where the priority of identity in this case outweighs the humanitarian obligation to assist individuals or groups in need of protection and assistance. Here, the ethnic identity and the view of who should receive humanitarian aid influence the community's rejection of efforts to meet the Rohingya refugees' needs.

As a result, ethnic conflict and social division may persist due to rigid identity views and unmet humanitarian needs. The rejection of fulfilling humanitarian needs and the perspective that the presence of the Rohingya is not Indonesia's concern underscore the profound psychological consequences in the process of accepting and integrating refugees. This can exacerbate social tensions, reinforce ethnic conflicts, and foster feelings of alienation and lack of recognition among the refugee group.

**Discussion**

The perception, attitude, and emotional response of the Acehnese community towards Rohingya refugees are shaped by a strong local identity, past conflict experiences, and concerns about resource competition and religious identity (Gulzar et al., 2021). This strong local identity influences views on refugees, creating internal solidarity but also fostering exclusivity towards groups considered 'foreign,' such as the
Rohingya refugees. Previous ethnic conflicts have heightened inter-ethnic tensions, leading to distrust and skepticism towards refugees.

Perceptions of self-capability in meeting humanitarian needs also play a role in the Acehnese attitude towards refugees. When resources are perceived as limited, the community tends to reject outsiders requesting assistance, creating a defensive reaction to prioritize local interests (M. M. Islam et al., 2021). The use of religious symbols by refugees to garner support also has complex psychological effects, creating social and psychological tensions in the Acehnese community.

The strong local identity influences how the Acehnese interact with Rohingya refugees. Cultural, historical, and religious identities create internal solidarity but can also foster exclusivity towards ‘foreigners,’ including the Rohingya refugees (Laoutides, 2021). Previous ethnic conflicts have intensified inter-ethnic tensions, creating distrust and forming skeptical or even hostile attitudes toward refugees (Laoutides, 2024).

The use of religious symbols by refugees to gain support reflects an effort to create emotional bonds and shared values between the Rohingya refugees and the host community in Aceh. However, this can also be a source of conflict or tension, reinforcing social and psychological tensions between the two groups.

Factors influencing the Acehnese community’s rejection or acceptance of Rohingya refugees from a psychological perspective include various complex aspects rooted in local cultural, historical, and religious identity. This identity creates strong internal solidarity but also fosters exclusivity towards those considered ‘foreign,’ including Rohingya refugees. This solidarity affects perceptions and interactions with refugees, often resulting in selective acceptance. Additionally, negative experiences with certain ethnic groups or past conflicts reinforce inter-ethnic tensions, creating distrust and forming skeptical or even hostile attitudes toward Rohingya refugees. Another influencing factor is the perception of resource limitations. When the community feels resources are limited, there is a tendency to reject outsiders requesting assistance, creating a defensive reaction to prioritize local interests. The use of religious symbols by Rohingya refugees can also be a source of conflict or tension. These symbols often reinforce social and psychological tensions among the Acehnese, who feel their identity and values may be threatened by refugees who share the same religious symbols but come from different cultural backgrounds.

All these factors create a complex dynamic in accepting or rejecting Rohingya refugees, influenced by local identity, past conflict experiences, concerns about resource competition, and the use of religious symbols (Borah & Irom, 2021). In 2023, there has been an increased awareness of the importance of education and a deeper understanding of different ethnic histories, cultures, and experiences (Mohr, 2024). Several educational initiatives have been launched to help the Acehnese community better understand the Rohingya refugees, opening up more inclusive perceptions and sympathetic emotional responses.

With the growing dominance of social media, there has been an increase in advocacy campaigns and awareness of humanitarian issues. Social media can play a crucial role in changing public perception of Rohingya refugees, fostering empathy, and influencing positive attitudes towards them. Recent efforts to form collaborative initiatives between Acehnese local identity and Rohingya cultural identity aim to create cultural bridges and shared values to foster more harmonious interactions between the two groups (Y. Sonafist, 2023).
Some recent observations highlight the positive impact of refugee involvement in various aspects of community life, such as contributions to economic, cultural, and educational fields. This has helped change perceptions and encourage broader acceptance of Rohingya refugees. While there are still concerns about resources, recent efforts have been made to address defensive reactions to assistance requests. Increased awareness of humanitarian conditions and more coordinated responses have led to slight changes in how the Acehnese community reacts to Rohingya refugees. New approaches involving psychological, sociological, and educational perspectives have been adopted to address the identity conflicts underlying the rejection or acceptance of Rohingya refugees. This aims to reduce social and psychological tensions between the two groups (Rassool, 2021).

In the context of integrating psychology and Islamic law, the acceptance of Rohingya refugees in Aceh can be analyzed through several key aspects that reflect humanitarian values and social justice as stipulated in Islamic law. One main reason why the Acehnese community accepts Rohingya refugees is the strong humanitarian concept in Islamic law, which emphasizes fair treatment and assisting those in need (Ahmad Ridwan et al., 2023; Sopyan et al., 2022).

From the perspective of Islamic law, Rohingya refugees can be considered part of the "asnaf fakir." The Acehnese community, which is predominantly Muslim, feels a moral and religious responsibility to help those in difficult conditions (Supena, 2022). This reflects Islamic values that prioritize social justice and well-being for all individuals regardless of religion, race, or ethnicity.

The humanitarian concept in Islam strongly emphasizes the importance of providing protection and assistance to people affected by disasters or difficult circumstances. In the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, there are many recommendations to help others, especially those who are suffering and unprotected. The highly religious Acehnese community internalizes these teachings and sees helping Rohingya refugees as fulfilling their religious duty. This not only enhances social solidarity but also strengthens their religious identity as faithful and righteous Muslims.

Aceh’s history and culture also play a significant role in accepting refugees. Aceh is known as the "Veranda of Mecca" and has a long history as a center for spreading Islam in Indonesia. Strong Islamic values and a culture that values humanity make the Acehnese community more open to accepting and helping those in need, including Rohingya refugees. The awareness that Islam teaches compassion and assistance to fellow humans, regardless of their background, encourages the Acehnese to act according to these principles.

Social psychology aspects also support this acceptance. Strong religious identity and community solidarity play a major role in shaping positive attitudes towards refugees. The Acehnese community may see Rohingya refugees as part of the larger Muslim ummah that needs help and protection. This creates a collective sense of responsibility to support them, which aligns with Islamic values of brotherhood and community solidarity.

However, in the application of Islamic law to Rohingya refugees, it is also important to consider principles of justice, security, and the well-being of the local community. This relates to efforts to maintain a balance between providing assistance to refugees and ensuring that the needs and interests of the local community are met (Listriani et al., 2020).

With the integration of psychology and Islamic law in the acceptance of Rohingya refugees in Aceh, efforts have been made to understand the psychological perspectives of
the local community in accepting refugees while ensuring that the acceptance aligns with humanitarian values and principles of Islamic law. This creates a solid foundation for building harmonious interactions between the Acehnese community and Rohingya refugees, considering identity and humanitarian aspects from both perspectives. New efforts, such as raising awareness, cultural identity collaboration, evolving responses to humanitarian needs, and multidimensional approaches to addressing identity conflicts, have been undertaken to improve perceptions, expand inclusion, and reduce tensions between the two groups.

**Conclusion**

This research reveals that the perception, attitude, and emotional response of the Acehnese community towards Rohingya refugees are significantly influenced by a strong local identity, past conflict experiences, and concerns about resource competition and religious identity. Aceh's cultural, historical, and religious identity creates strong internal solidarity but also feelings of exclusivity towards groups considered 'foreign.' Previous ethnic conflicts have heightened inter-ethnic tensions, fostering distrust and forming skeptical or hostile attitudes toward refugees.

The use of religious symbols by refugees to gain support creates complex psychological impacts, reinforcing social and psychological tensions. However, the humanitarian concept in Islamic law, which emphasizes fair treatment and assistance to those in need, plays a key role. A multidimensional approach involving psychology, sociology, and education addresses identity conflicts, laying the foundation for harmonious interactions between the Acehnese community and Rohingya refugees. The integration of psychological and Islamic law perspectives in accepting refugees strengthens inter-group relationships, taking into account aspects of identity and humanity.

**References**


