



Dynamics of Multiculturalism in Southeast Asia: Cultural Identity of Rohingya Muslim Refugees in Aceh, Indonesia

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Abstract: This study analyzes the dynamics of multiculturalism and the cultural acculturation of Rohingya Muslim refugees in Aceh, Indonesia, focusing on cultural identity, social interaction, and the education of the younger generation. Aceh was chosen as the research locus because it has consistently welcomed Rohingya since 2015, driven by cultural values and Islamic solidarity. A qualitative approach and case studies were used to understand how Rohingya identity is conveyed, negotiated, and maintained within the Acehnese social context. The results indicate that acculturation occurs primarily in the religious dimension and daily practices, but is selective and limited. Language barriers, the separation of living spaces through refugee camps, and the lack of legal status limit deeper social integration. The interaction between the two communities is more reflective of surface multiculturalism based on humanitarian empathy rather than structural integration. Meanwhile, education and the second generation of Rohingya show significant potential as agents of more adaptive acculturation through schooling and informal training. This study concludes that multiculturalism in Aceh is situational and requires more inclusive policy support, particularly in education, access to social interaction, and residential stability, so that relations between the Acehnese and Rohingya communities can develop sustainably and integratively.

Keywords: acculturation; multiculturalism; muslim minorities; Rohingya.

Introduction

The Rohingya humanitarian crisis over the past decade has become one of the most prominent refugee and human rights issues in Southeast Asia. Large-scale violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar, particularly since 2016–2017, forced hundreds of thousands of Rohingya to flee their homes, triggering a wave of displacement to neighboring countries and dangerous maritime routes. The international community, UN agencies, and humanitarian organizations have repeatedly documented rights violations, the destruction of villages, and conditions of statelessness that place the Rohingya in a vulnerable position without adequate citizenship protection. This phenomenon is not only a humanitarian crisis but also a regional political challenge that influences migration policy, diplomacy, and humanitarian practice in Southeast Asia (USA for UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency, 2024).

The Rohingya refugee crisis also emerged in a maritime context: boats filled with refugees frequently sailed the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal, and several dramatic incidents in 2015 placed Aceh at the forefront of the regional humanitarian response. In May 2015, thousands of Rohingya and Bangladeshis in vulnerable boats were found adrift, many of them brought to the Acehnese coast by local fishermen and authorities. Aceh's response at the time attracted academic attention because it combined emergency rescue measures with a distinctive local community response, a blend of religious solidarity, humanitarian norms, and local culture. Field studies and academic analysis indicate that these

actions were inspired by local Acehese values, traditional maritime norms, and religious principles emphasizing the obligation to help those in need (Missbach, 2016).

In Aceh, the acceptance of the Rohingya wave was influenced by widely known local cultural values, for example the tradition *peumulia jamee* (respecting and honoring guests/those who come) as well as strong Islamic norms in the social and institutional spheres. *Peumulia jamee* is not simply an ethic; it refers to a collective behavioral pattern that motivates Acehese society to accept, give, and provide temporary shelter to displaced foreigners. These practices are reinforced by a network of local ulama, zakat institutions, and civil society organizations that organize emergency aid and temporary accommodation. Field observations and cultural studies confirm that this combination of local religious and cultural values strengthens Aceh's readiness to provide short-term protection, even though legally their status is often temporary and tied to national policies (Febriandi, 2017).

However, initial acceptance by the local community does not automatically address more fundamental structural problems. Arriving Rohingya communities often face practical and symbolic challenges in maintaining their cultural identity: from language barriers and access to healthcare and education, to statelessness that hinders mobility and access to civil rights. The lack of citizenship recognition, fueled by Myanmar's national policies, such as the 1982 Citizenship Law, which excludes the Rohingya, creates conditions of widespread pre-poverty and vulnerability for the refugee diaspora. This means that despite religious solidarity and local assistance, sustainable social integration is difficult to achieve without a long-term policy plan that provides legal access, services, and economic opportunities (Mahmood et al., 2017).

The dynamics of acceptance and rejection of the Rohingya in Aceh must be viewed within a broader framework: Indonesian multiculturalism, grounded in the principles of Pancasila and local traditions of pluralism, but clashing with national boundaries and immigration regulations. Indonesia is not a formal refugee-hosting country (much of Southeast Asia is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention), so national policy tends to focus on emergency management and international cooperation. Within this framework, subnational responses, such as those in Aceh, represent a space of often ad-hoc "practical tolerance," highlighting the capacity of local communities to rescue and care for refugees, but also demonstrating the institutional limitations of changing the long-term status of refugees. Studies on contemporary multiculturalism emphasize that everyday practices—the daily interactions between local residents and minorities—often determine the quality of inclusion more than formal policies alone. Therefore, examining the Rohingya experience in Aceh offers an empirical opportunity to understand how multiculturalism operates at the local level when confronted with the constraints of state law (Sida et al., 2018).

Several previous studies also discussed the Rohingya case, such as research conducted by Nur Azizah, (2018), she explained that the August 27, 2017 attack carried out by the Myanmar Government through the military assisted by indigenous Buddhists had become one of the worst waves of the crisis explosion, with evidence that the military had committed crimes against humanity. The military committed violence, mass killings, rape accompanied by sexual violence, as well as mass burning of property owned by the Rohingya. As an institution that functions as the vanguard in providing action towards maintaining world security and peace, the UNSC is expected to investigate this case and provide a firm policy, either in the form of sanctions or recommending this agenda at the ICC. Unfortunately, the expected firm policy did not occur with the stagnation of discussions about the crisis at the UNSC. In this study, the author tries to explain what is the reason behind the UNSC's struggle to produce a firm policy in the forum (Azizah, 2018).

Numerous studies and reports from international organizations have documented the origins of the Rohingya crisis (the crackdown in Rakhine), the mass displacement figures since 2016–2017, and the consequences of statelessness. UNHCR reports (Global Trends and operational updates) and reports from Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International provide empirical data on violence, village burnings, citizenship restrictions, and the health/humanitarian impacts on the Rohingya. These studies and reports demonstrate the structural context (country of origin, Myanmar's citizenship policy) that shapes migration conditions and the need for international protection (Human Rights Watch, 2025; Jalal, 2025).

These sources map the state and humanitarian context that forced the Rohingya community into a diaspora and the emergence of sea routes that brought them to Aceh. At the peak of the boat migration wave (2015–2016), several studies and policy briefs analyzed the phenomenon of "boat

people” in the Andaman Sea and how Aceh became an emergency landing point. This research highlighted the “humanitarian at sea” dimension, rescue logistics, and the responses of local communities, often the first actors. Several policy studies highlighted the tension between national immigration law enforcement and local humanitarian imperatives (IOM, 2016).

Most Rohingya studies focus on Bangladesh, Malaysia, or aspects of international law. Research focused on Aceh offers a novel contribution because it is a special case, a region with strong popular Islamic norms (sharia), local hospitality traditions (peumulia jamee), and a history as a maritime region frequently assisting refugee boats. Empirical analysis documenting daily practices such as neighborly assistance, the role of Islamic boarding schools/ulama (Islamic scholars), mosque activities, and market interactions will enrich the literature on “local hospitality” and reveal variants of multiculturalism that differ from urban or refugee contexts.

Theoretically, a study of the cultural identity of the Rohingya diaspora in Aceh must incorporate literature on diaspora, cultural identity, and acculturation. Stuart Hall emphasized that diasporic identity is not a fixed substance, but rather a cultural process that is continually negotiated within the context of history, power, and cross-cultural encounters; it is both produced and a space for resistance and adaptation (Hall, 1990). Will Kymlicka and the multiculturalism literature highlight how minority rights and cultural recognition are crucial elements in shaping inclusion policies (Kymlicka, 1995). Meanwhile, John W. Berry's acculturation model offers an analytical framework for the adaptation strategies (integration, assimilation, separation, marginalization) adopted by individuals or groups when confronted with the dominant culture (Berry, 2005). Using these frameworks allows for an analysis that examines whether and how the Rohingya community maintains its traditional practices, adapts to Acehnese norms, or experiences marginalization in the new social space.

The importance of understanding this phenomenon extends beyond academic considerations. The social and political implications of how Aceh, and Indonesia more generally, responds to the Rohingya diaspora touch upon issues of foreign policy, human rights, and local social stability. If local politics can develop culturally sensitive inclusion mechanisms, such as support for Rohingya children's education, facilitation of cross-lingual communication, or collaboration with humanitarian organizations, there is an opportunity to transition from an “emergency response” to integrative management. Conversely, failure to provide legal pathways and economic access could prolong conditions of precariousness, detrimental to both the Rohingya community and local social cohesion. Therefore, studying the dynamics of multiculturalism that highlight Rohingya cultural identity in Aceh goes beyond documenting historical experiences; it also generates relevant policy recommendations for local, national, and international actors (UNHCR, 2018).

With this background, this study aims to describe and analyze the process of negotiating Rohingya cultural identity when interacting with Acehnese society, identifying patterns of acculturation, structural barriers, and the potential for multicultural practices that lead to social inclusion. This study will utilize a qualitative case study approach, combining document analysis (UNHCR/humanitarian organization reports) and academic literature studies. The findings are expected to provide empirical contributions to the literature on multiculturalism and diaspora in Southeast Asia while also proposing policy recommendations grounded in local Acehnese experiences.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a socio-cultural case study design to understand the dynamics of multiculturalism and Rohingya cultural identity in Aceh in depth. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to capture meanings, experiences, and identity negotiation processes that cannot be explained through quantitative data alone. As explained by Creswell (2013) and Denzin & Lincoln (2009), qualitative research allows researchers to examine social phenomena from the perspective of participants holistically, especially in the context of minority groups or marginalized communities (Creswell, 2014; Denzin, 2009). The socio-cultural case study design was used because the research focuses on the Rohingya communities temporarily residing in West Aceh and North Aceh, thus allowing for the exploration of daily social interactions, forms of cultural acculturation, and the responses of the Acehnese community to the presence of the Rohingya diaspora. The selection of West Aceh and North Aceh is based on the fact that both have been the

main landing and shelter locations for Rohingya since 2015, as documented in reports from the UNHCR, IOM, and academic publications.

Data collection included analysis of UNHCR and IOM reports, Aceh government documents, and credible news archives. The literature review included academic research on the Rohingya, acculturation, multiculturalism, and the social context of Aceh. To analyze the data, this study employed thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify patterns of meaning; social interaction analysis to understand the dynamics between the Rohingya community and Acehnese society; and the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2018) model, which includes three stages of analysis: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This analytical model provides a systematic framework to ensure that the data interpretation process is transparent, measurable, and oriented towards academically accountable findings (Miles et al., 2014).

Results and Discussion

Cultural Identity of the Rohingya Community

a. *History of Rohingya Identity*

The Rohingya cultural identity cannot be understood without examining its complex historical roots in the Rakhine region (formerly Arakan), western Myanmar. The Rohingya are a Muslim group who have lived in this border region for centuries. Various studies indicate that Muslim communities have been present in Arakan since the 9th to 15th centuries, through Indian Ocean trade routes, relations with the Sultans of Bengal, and the migration of South Asian Muslim traders (Alam, 2019; Leider, 2018).). However, this identity has become the object of political and historiographical dispute in modern Myanmar, particularly after the establishment of the nation-state under the post-colonial Burmese government. In the historical context of Myanmar, the Rohingya identity has been systematically delegitimized. The Myanmar government, through the 1982 Citizenship Law, did not recognize the Rohingya as one of the 135 official ethnicities in Myanmar. This marked the beginning of a massive process of statelessness, in which the Rohingya were deprived of citizenship, mobility, education, and other social rights (Human Rights Watch, 2000). Ullah (2011), through historical and sociological studies, states that this structural exclusion shaped the Rohingya identity as a group "exiled from history," politically positioned as "illegal immigrants" despite having settled there for centuries (Ullah, 2011).

In the following decades, Rohingya identity became increasingly embedded in a narrative of collective suffering. The conflicts of 1978, 1991–1992, and the culmination of the 2012–2017 tragedy strengthened the community's internal solidarity. Mahmood et al. (2017), through a comprehensive study in *The Lancet*, stated that Rohingya identity was formed through three main elements (Mahmood et al., 2017): first, a history of political exclusion; second, communal violence and Myanmar's military operations; and third, a long diaspora and refugee experience. Thus, Rohingya identity is not only an ethnic heritage but also a product of a history of colonialism, discriminatory state policies, and the collective experience of being victims of human rights violations. Upon entering Aceh, this collective memory, comprising trauma, oppression, and internal solidarity, served as the foundation of their diasporic identity. Their identity was not simply "brought with them" but also reshaped in the context of their new lives, where the memory of suffering became a crucial component in maintaining their togetherness, dignity, and ethnic identity. In Aceh, this identity interacted with the new socio-cultural context. They arrived as sea refugees, rescued by Acehnese fishermen in 2015 and subsequent waves, and were viewed as "oppressed Muslim brothers." This gave the Rohingya identity a unique position: as victims of global oppression but also as a group religiously valued by Acehnese society (Fitria, 2020).

b. *Islamic Religious Values in Rohingya Identity*

Islam is a central component of Rohingya identity. Islam is not only a belief system but also a marker of social identity that binds the community. Much of the literature describes Rohingya Islam as traditional Islam influenced by South Asian theological practices, Sufism, and madrasah-based pedagogical traditions (Human Rights Watch, 2000; Yegar, 1972). For the Rohingya, Islamic religious values are inseparable from the political realities in Myanmar. In the context of Myanmar, a predominantly Bamar Buddhist country, Muslim identity is one of the reasons the state disregards and stigmatizes the Rohingya. This delegitimization has led to Islam becoming a symbol of resistance

and internal solidarity. Mahmood et al.'s (2017) research shows that for the Rohingya, being Muslim is not only a spiritual dimension, but also a socio-political identity that affirms their existence as a distinct group from the Buddhist Rakhine ethnic majority (Mahmood et al., 2017). In diaspora life, including in Aceh, Islam plays a vital role as a mechanism for community unification. Religious identity helps the Rohingya maintain cultural values through various mechanisms, such as religious activities (religious study groups, congregational prayers), informal religious education for children, commemoration of Islamic holidays, and maintenance of wedding traditions and socio-religious rituals. Islam serves as a cultural anchor for the diaspora community. Giddens (1991) calls this a "reflexive project of the self," where identity is formed through a narrative of cultural continuity reinforced through rituals and traditions (Giddens, 1991).

One unique factor in the Acehese context is the shared Islamic values between the Rohingya and the local population. Aceh is a region that implements Islamic law and has traditions of local wisdom, such as *peumulia jamee* (honoring guests), which influences the community's acceptance of the Rohingya. Research by Darnela (2021) in the *Al-Jamī'ah Journal* found that Acehese people view the arrival of the Rohingya not only as a humanitarian crisis but also as a moral-religious responsibility. This Islamic solidarity creates positive interactions and encourages the formation of value-based multicultural relationships (Darnela, 2021). Although both are Muslim, there are differences in religious practices, rituals, and cultural expressions. Several elements indicate acculturation, namely: first, the use of Acehese or Indonesian in certain religious services; second, adaptation of dress or social behavior to Acehese norms; third, participation in local religious activities; and fourth, adaptation of ritual traditions to the rules of refugee management institutions. On the other hand, some Rohingya rituals are maintained, such as traditional Arakanese wedding traditions, certain *dhikr* (remembrance of God), and a social structure based on the extended family. This demonstrates that religious identity becomes a space for negotiation between integration and cultural preservation.

Psychosocial studies of refugees (Jacobsen, 2001; Porter & Haslam, 2005), religion can be a source of "cultural resilience." Among the Rohingya, religious rituals play a role: healing collective trauma, a mechanism for emotional reinforcement, a symbol of hope and continuity of identity, and a reconstruction of the meaning of life after the loss of their homeland. In Aceh, the Rohingya community often spends their time reading the Quran, praying in congregation, and engaging in other religious activities that help reduce the psychological stress caused by experiences of violence and displacement. Rohingya cultural identity has been shaped by a long history of exclusion, ethnic conflict, and oppression by the Myanmar state. Islam plays a central role not only as a belief system but also as a glue for identity, a source of collective narratives, and a force for solidarity within the diaspora. While in Aceh, Rohingya Islamic values converged with those of the Acehese community, resulting in an integrative cultural interaction that still leaves room for the preservation of Rohingya cultural traditions. Rohingya identity in Aceh is therefore dynamic, layered, and constantly negotiated.

c. Language, Customs, Clothing, and Social Structure

Rohingya cultural identity is a blend of a long history in the Arakan region (now Rakhine State, Myanmar), South Asian Islamic traditions, and collective experiences as a group experiencing oppression and a prolonged diaspora. When the Rohingya community entered Aceh, both in the 2015 wave and the 2020–2023 wave, they brought with them a strong cultural identity, encompassing language, customs, dress, internal social structures, and value systems that had developed over centuries. This identity is not merely a symbol, but a mechanism for cultural resilience amidst conditions of uncertainty, alienation, and the loss of a homeland. The Rohingya language, known as Rohingya/Zahmagyi or Rohingyalish, is an Indo-Aryan language that shares linguistic similarities with the Chittagonian language of Bangladesh, but is distinct from the Burmese language spoken by the Bamar ethnic majority. Leider (2018) states that the Rohingya language has developed as a separate community language, with its own distinctive phonology, vocabulary, and grammatical structure. This language is a core part of Rohingya identity because it serves not only as a means of communication but also as a symbol of ethnic diversity in Myanmar (Leider, 2018).

Within the diaspora, including in Aceh, the Rohingya language remains the primary language for daily communication. A study by Fitria (2020) shows that the use of the Rohingya language in refugee camps in Aceh is a strategy for maintaining collective identity and fostering solidarity networks between families and groups. However, interactions with the Acehese community and

humanitarian organizations require limited use of Indonesian, leading to functional bilingualism (Fitria, 2020). Nevertheless, the Rohingya community continues to prioritize their mother tongue as a marker of identity that distinguishes them from other groups in Aceh. The Rohingya language is a key factor in maintaining their emotional ties to their homeland and the Rohingya diaspora scattered across other countries. Rohingya customs reflect a blend of Islamic traditions, Arakanese rural customs, and patrilineal family values. Although the Rohingya have experienced repeated diasporas since 1978, various cultural practices remain, particularly wedding rituals, family traditions, traditional healing practices, and religious rituals. For example, Rohingya marriages have a ritual structure consisting of a proposal, a sharia-compliant marriage, a family feast, and the recitation of specific prayers influenced by South Asian Islamic traditions (Yegar, 1972). These traditions are still maintained in Aceh, although their implementation is often limited due to humanitarian agency regulations or living conditions in the camps (Yegar, 1972).

Fitria (2020) noted that some families continue to adhere to traditional Rohingya marriage practices, such as the separation of men's and women's spaces, dowry arrangements, and the involvement of the extended family in deciding marriage partners. This demonstrates that customs are an important part of maintaining Rohingya cultural identity in the diaspora (Fitria, 2020). Furthermore, the tradition of mutual cooperation within the community, such as helping to build communal spaces in camps, cooking together, and collectively caring for children, remains evident in daily life. These practices represent a cultural heritage that has long been ingrained in Rohingya community life. The Rohingya community's clothing reflects a combination of conservative Islamic traditions and South Asian customs. Rohingya women typically wear long headscarves, skirts or longyis, and dark or brightly colored clothing depending on their age and marital status. Men often wear longyis or sarongs, simple shirts, and at religious events, peci or kopiah (traditional Islamic caps). In the Acehese context, Rohingya clothing is not significantly different from that of the local population, as both are Islamic, but it still has distinctive characteristics, particularly in the patterns of the longyis and the style of hijab. Mahmood et al. (2017) show that clothing for Rohingya women is not only a religious symbol but also serves as a means of protecting their identity amidst the vulnerability of refugee situations (Mahmood et al., 2017).

Several field observations recorded by Darnela (2021) indicate that Rohingya women prefer to maintain traditional clothing styles rather than adopt Acehese women's styles. They consider clothing not only a cultural symbol but also an expression of family honor. Thus, clothing serves as a space for identity negotiation, allowing them to maintain a distinct appearance without contradicting Acehese Islamic norms (Darnela, 2021). The Rohingya social structure is heavily influenced by the patrilineal family model, with adult males holding a dominant decision-making role. Nuclear families typically live close to each other or in the same block in refugee camps, and kinship ties are strong. This social structure remains intact even in the diaspora. Fitria (2020) found that each Rohingya refugee camp in Aceh has an "internal leader" or community leader who acts as a liaison between refugees and international agencies such as the UNHCR and the IOM. This structure represents traditional leadership in Arakan, previously held by religious leaders, traditional leaders, or senior men in the family (Fitria, 2020). Social hierarchy is also evident in the way they organize their living spaces, for example, separating women's and men's areas and maintaining strict interaction norms. This suggests that the Rohingya community maintains traditional social structures despite being in a new environment.

d. The identity of the Rohingya who were brought to Aceh

Upon their arrival in Aceh, the Rohingya community brought with them a multi-layered cultural identity. First, ethnic identity, where being Rohingya is the primary marker. This identity has been strengthened by Myanmar's history of oppression and attempts to erase their presence. Within the diaspora, this identity serves as a symbolic form of resistance and internal solidarity. Second, religious identity, as Muslims, the Rohingya have relatively uniform daily worship practices, such as congregational prayer, children's religious studies, and other religious rituals. This religious identity facilitates their interaction with the Acehese community, which is also Muslim and has a strong religious culture (Darnela, 2021). Third, they maintain and preserve their cultural identity, Rohingya language, family traditions, social relations, and traditional clothing. This serves as a "cultural home" for a community that has lost its physical home. Fourth, d. diaspora identity and victims of violence. Experiences as victims of ethnic cleansing, military violence, and mass displacement are integral to

Rohingya identity. Mahmood et al. (2017) refer to this identity as “an identity rooted in suffering and resistance” (Mahmood et al., 2017). This diaspora identity influences how they form a new community in Aceh, one that seeks security, solidarity, and stability.

Dynamics of Multiculturalism in Aceh

a. Attitude of Acehnese Society

The dynamics of multiculturalism in Aceh, in the context of welcoming Rohingya refugees, demonstrate how local communities manage cultural diversity through religious values, customs, and community leadership. Aceh, as a region with strong Islamic characteristics, possesses unique social structures and cultural traditions. When the Rohingya refugee influx arrived in 2015, and in subsequent waves, the Acehnese responded by affirming their cultural identity as a community that honors guests, upholds solidarity among Muslims, and respects the guidance of religious scholars and traditional leaders. The positive response of the Acehnese people to the Rohingya did not occur spontaneously, but rather arose from the interaction of three main elements: Islamic solidarity, traditional values such as *peumulia jamee* (the principle of mutual respect), and the moral authority of religious scholars. These three elements form a distinctive pattern of multiculturalism in Aceh that serves as a bridge between the local community and the Rohingya community, which has different cultural backgrounds, languages, and historical experiences.

Islamic solidarity is the most dominant factor driving Acehnese open acceptance of the Rohingya community. Aceh is known as a region with a strong Islamic identity, reflected in the history of the Samudra Pasai kingdom, the Aceh Darussalam Sultanate, and the implementation of Islamic Sharia law. When Rohingya refugees arrived by sea, Acehnese people viewed them not simply as victims of a humanitarian tragedy but as fellow believers who must be helped. Research by Darnela (2021) shows that the narrative of "oppressed Muslims" significantly influenced how Acehnese people responded to the Rohingya arrival. This solidarity was evident when Acehnese fishermen voluntarily rescued Rohingya boats adrift at sea, an action that even contradicted initial instructions from security forces (Darnela, 2021). In several interviews conducted by Fitria (2020) in her dissertation, Acehnese fishermen stated that helping fellow Muslims is an integral part of their religious teachings and should not be abandoned (Fitria, 2020).

This Islamic solidarity serves as a mechanism for faith-based multiculturalism, distinct from liberal multiculturalism, which typically emphasizes plurality without a religious basis. Aceh practices a model of religious multiculturalism, in which Islamic values serve as a framework for accepting the cultural differences of the Rohingya. This aligns with the concept of *ummah* in Muslim migration studies, where shared religion often transcends national and ethnic boundaries (Mandaville, 2010). This shared religious identity gives the Acehnese a sense of "emotional and theological connection" with the Rohingya, fostering a growing multiculturalism driven by a sense of Islamic brotherhood. In addition to religious solidarity, Aceh has an important traditional value that has significantly influenced the acceptance of the Rohingya: *peumulia jamee*, the tradition of honoring guests. This value has existed since the time of the Acehnese kingdom and is an integral part of the customary system (*hukom ngon adat lagee zat ngon sifeut*, meaning "custom and law are like substance and nature, inseparable"). According to several other anthropological studies, *peumulia jamee* means not only providing food or temporary shelter, but also showing respect, protection, and defense to guests. This value is what makes the Acehnese people feel a moral obligation to protect the Rohingya when they arrive in a vulnerable situation.

In the context of refugee acceptance, *peumulia jamee* serves as socio-cultural capital that enables harmonious interactions between the Acehnese and Rohingya communities. Residents provide food, clothing, temporary shelter, and even protection from potential threats to their safety. This culture demonstrates that Aceh's multiculturalism rests not only on religious doctrine but also on customary ethics that govern social relations. Rohingya-Acehnese cultural interaction is facilitated because local communities have a cultural foundation for accepting newcomers, especially those who arrive in vulnerable situations. Ulema and community leaders have a significant influence in shaping Acehnese attitudes toward the Rohingya. Aceh is known as a region with a strong moral leadership structure, where clerics wield significant legitimacy in the social, political, and cultural life of the community. Therefore, the attitudes and fatwas of clerics play a crucial role in shaping public opinion regarding the Rohingya. In 2015, many charismatic Acehnese clerics issued a call for the public to

help and accept the Rohingya. This call strengthened the religious legitimacy of the rescue efforts carried out by Acehese fishermen. In field interviews recorded by Fitria (2020), several clerics even referred to helping the Rohingya as a "sharia obligation" (*fardhu kifayah*), considering them oppressed Muslims (Fitria, 2020).

Traditional leaders, village heads, and gampong leaders also play a crucial role. They organize aid, facilitate communication between refugees and international agencies, and ensure that the presence of refugees does not lead to social conflict. The support of these community leaders strengthens harmonious multiculturalism. Religious leaders and traditional leaders serve as cultural mediators, explaining the differences between Acehese and Rohingya customs and creating space for dialogue. Without their role, interaction between the two groups would likely be more difficult, given the differences in language, customs, and social structures. Theoretically, the multiculturalism that emerged in Aceh has unique characteristics: first, it is based on Islamic solidarity, second, it is strengthened by local customs, and third, it is guided by the moral authority of religious scholars and traditional leaders. This model differs from modern multiculturalism, which tends toward secularism. Aceh demonstrates that multiculturalism can grow from the interaction between religion and local culture, not solely from state policy.

The interaction between the Acehese and the Rohingya demonstrates a form of everyday multiculturalism (Wise & Velayutham, 2009), a form of multiculturalism present in daily practices such as providing food, facilitating religious services, teaching languages, and helping to provide basic necessities. Although the presence of the Rohingya also creates minor conflict dynamics such as cultural misunderstandings or restrictions on refugee mobility, religious and customary values buffer potential tensions. In the context of Rohingya acculturation, Acehese multiculturalism is a key factor enabling the emergence of an acculturation-integration strategy (Berry, 1997), albeit on a limited basis. This is evident in shared religious rituals and social activities involving both the local community and refugees.

b. The Role of the Government and Humanitarian Agencies in Handling Rohingya Refugees in Aceh
The presence of Rohingya refugees in Aceh since 2015 has opened a significant chapter in the history of refugee management in Indonesia. Aceh has become one of the regions most frequently receiving Rohingya refugees due to its geographic proximity to sea migration routes from Myanmar and Bangladesh. Their management is inextricably linked to the collaboration between the local Acehese government, the Indonesian national government, and various international humanitarian agencies such as the UNHCR, the IOM, and local and global NGOs. The dynamics of multiculturalism in Aceh are also significantly influenced by how these policies and institutions shape the refugees' living spaces. Indonesia is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. This means that Indonesia does not legally have binding international obligations regarding refugees. However, the government recognizes the existence of refugees through a humanitarian approach. Refugee management in Indonesia is generally regulated through Presidential Regulation No. 125 of 2016 concerning the Management of Refugees from Abroad, ad hoc technical regulations of regional governments, and cooperation with international institutions (UNHCR, IOM). According to Missbach (2017), this policy does not create a comprehensive protection system but focuses on administrative aspects, temporary shelter, and cooperation with international institutions (Missbach, 2017).

The Aceh government welcomed the Rohingya with a humanitarian and religious-based approach. As a special region with special autonomy, Aceh has the flexibility to provide a different socio-cultural response compared to other regions in Indonesia. Several local policies that have been implemented include the establishment of a Rohingya Refugee Handling Task Force, involving local governments, village officials, and community leaders, the use of regional emergency funds for the provision of food, initial health services, and basic necessities, and coordination with UNHCR/IOM to ensure long-term assistance and the transfer of refugees to official shelters. According to Fitria (2020), one of Aceh's strengths is the local government's ability to integrate Acehese traditional values and Islamic law in handling refugees, thus creating a relatively stable situation compared to other regions in Indonesia (Fitria, 2020). Although the local government's attitude tends to be positive, several significant challenges remain, including the lack of a time limit for refugees, dependence on international agencies, social tensions resulting from refugee mobility, limited long-

term shelter facilities, and a shift in public response from sympathy to saturation (2015–2023). Aceh's policy is in fact in a dilemma: on the one hand, the community wants to help based on religious and customary values, but on the other hand, government capacity is very limited. This indicates the need for a stronger national policy to support the region.

In addition to local and Indonesian governments, several international organizations also play a crucial role in this regard, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which is the primary actor in handling refugees in Indonesia. UNHCR's role includes: first, registration and verification of refugee status. UNHCR identifies, interviews, and verifies Rohingya individuals to determine their status as refugees or asylum seekers. This verification is crucial because it determines access to assistance, determines whether individuals are potential for resettlement, and provides basic legal protection. UNHCR (2020) noted that the majority of Rohingya arriving in Aceh meet the refugee category based on the principle of non-refoulement (UNHCR, 2020). UNHCR ensures that refugees are not returned to their countries of origin, receive emergency health care, and have access to basic services. They also advocate for Indonesian government policies to prioritize human rights instruments. Although resettlement to a third country is a long-term solution, very few Rohingya refugees are successfully resettled. The global political situation has led Western countries to increasingly restrict quotas. Missbach (2017) states that the limited resettlement capacity has resulted in the sheltering operation in Indonesia being "semi-permanent," thus prolonging the Rohingya's dependence on international aid (Missbach, 2017).

Another organization, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), plays a more direct operational role in the daily lives of refugees. IOM is responsible for providing temporary shelter, food packages, clean water, hygiene kits, and sanitation services. According to IOM (2021), most camps in Aceh are managed with the full support of this agency (IOM UN Migration, 2021). IOM also collaborates with the Aceh Health Office and local NGOs to provide health checks, medicines, psychosocial support for trauma victims, and maternal and child health programs. In addition, IOM also arranges area separation, deploys security personnel, and provides guidance on regulations to avoid conflict between refugees and the local community. Although access to formal education for refugees in Indonesia is limited, IOM provides language classes, basic skills training, and educational activities for children. This role is crucial to minimize refugee burnout and promote limited social integration.

The Process of Acculturation of Rohingya Culture in Aceh

a. Religious Field

The process of cultural acculturation between the Rohingya and Acehnese communities cannot be separated from the central role of religion in both communities. Both the Rohingya and Acehnese are Muslim communities, embracing Islam as the foundation of their social, moral, and cultural lives. This shared religious affiliation created a relatively harmonious initial acculturation environment when Rohingya refugees arrived in Aceh. However, this similarity does not eliminate the differences in practices, traditions, or religious expressions that persist in daily life. Therefore, religious acculturation between the two communities is a dynamic, gradual, and multi-layered process.

Since the first wave of Rohingya arrivals in Aceh in 2015, the Acehnese people have spontaneously shown empathy, solidarity, and acceptance toward them. Many studies have shown that Islamic values are a key factor in the positive response of the Acehnese people. In Darnela's (2021) research, the Acehnese people view the Rohingya as oppressed Muslims who must be helped based on religious teachings. This sentiment is reinforced by the moral imperative of Acehnese clerics, who declare that saving the Rohingya is a *fardu kifayah* (obligatory duty) for Muslims in Aceh (Darnela, 2021). Kesamaan identitas religius ini menciptakan jembatan integratif yang memungkinkan This shared religious identity creates an integrative bridge that allows the Rohingya to feel less alienated. In refugee camps or in the villages where they stop, Rohingya are often invited to participate in religious activities with the community, such as congregational prayers, religious studies, or celebrations of Islamic holidays. These activities serve as a space for social interaction that accelerates the acculturation process.

Both Acehnese and Rohingya people generally follow the Shafi'i school of thought, although the level of understanding and application of this school varies according to educational background. Human Rights Watch (2000) and Yegar (1972) note that Rohingya have long followed the Shafi'i school of thought as part of the South Asian Islamic tradition (Human Rights Watch, 2000; Yegar,

1972). The similarity of the schools facilitates integration in ritual practices such as: prayer procedures, fasting times and procedures, marriage contracts, mahram and aurat regulations, and Qur'an recitation patterns. In various interviews collected by Fitria (2020), many Acehnese people stated that Rohingya religious practices are not significantly different from their own, thus facilitating the process of cultural acceptance (Fitria, 2020). In several shelter locations, Rohingya participate in: congregational prayers at local mosques, listening to Friday sermons, attending children's religious studies, and engaging in social activities such as mosque mutual cooperation. The IOM and UNHCR noted that joint religious activities in Aceh strengthened the psychosocial well-being of refugees (IOM UN Migration, 2021). These activities served as a means of acculturation, bringing together two Islamic traditions in the same space without pressure to standardize practices.

Although religion serves as a "shared cultural language," there are certain differences in rituals, symbols, and religious expressions between the Rohingya and Acehnese communities. These differences have given rise to a gradual process of acculturation through cultural negotiation. The Rohingya bring with them Islamic traditions influenced by South Asian culture, which differ in several aspects from Malay-Acehnese Islam. Some of the differences noted include: first, the way they recite prayers after prayer. Rohingya tend to recite short, individual prayers, while Acehnese people often do so in congregation.

Second, regarding the tradition of reciting the maulid (mawlid) or specific dhikr (remembrance of God). Aceh has its traditions of dhikr rakan (remembrance of God), samadiah (remembrance of God), and the recitation of the Barzanji book. The Rohingya do not share these traditions, although they respect these practices. Third, regarding the tradition of religious orders (tariqa), Aceh has a long history of the Shattariyah, Qadiriyah, and Naqsyabandiyah orders. The Rohingya generally practice simpler Islam and are not tied to any particular order. These differences do not lead to conflict, but are clearly visible in daily interactions. During celebrations such as Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, the Prophet's Birthday, and the Islamic New Year, Rohingya adhere to common Islamic practices but differ in their food, special clothing, and forms of family togetherness. For example, Rohingya women wear the traditional Arakanese longyi, while Acehnese women wear the gamis or baju kurung. In interviews with Fitria (2020), several Rohingya women revealed that they still prepare traditional foods such as semoi, nyancha, or other flour dishes on major holidays, albeit in simple ways in the camp (Fitria, 2020). Acculturation occurs when they also taste typical Acehnese dishes such as kuah beulangong, ayam tangkap, or kuah sie reuboh provided by the community on major holidays.

One significant difference is the method of religious education for children. Acehnese children are accustomed to learning in traditional Islamic boarding schools (TPA) or Islamic boarding schools (Dayah) with a specific curriculum, while Rohingya children are accustomed to learning in a family environment based on memorization. In the camps, the IOM and NGOs provide Quranic recitation classes using the Acehnese method, so that Rohingya children become accustomed to imitating the recitation of prayers and verses in the Acehnese style. This is an example of acculturation through the internalization of new practices. In terms of religious authority, Rohingya are typically led by ustaz (Islamic teachers) or local figures with basic religious knowledge. They lack a formal clerical structure like the MPU (Ulama Consultative Assembly) in Aceh. While living in Aceh, some Rohingya leaders learned from local clerics or engaged in dialogue with them about differences in Islamic jurisprudence and tradition. This enriched their religious understanding and created a discussion-based acculturation process.

Intensive interactions occur in mosques or mushalla (prayer rooms), where Acehnese and Rohingya people mingle without significant language barriers. Congregational prayer creates a form of spiritual equality, where cultural differences become insignificant. According to Wise & Velayutham (2009), communal routine-based activities are often the most effective spaces for acculturation because they do not require explicit discussions of identity differences (Wise & Velayutham, 2009). Some Acehnese clerics deliver special sermons specifically for the Rohingya, sometimes using simple Malay. These religious microcommunications accelerate symbolic integration between the two communities. Acculturation in Aceh has not eliminated the Rohingya's religious identity. Instead, it has strengthened their identity as a Muslim diaspora that is recognized, valued, and supported. Rohingya identity in Aceh has undergone three forms of transformation: first, the strengthening of religious identity, as Rohingya feel safe and accepted as fellow Muslims. Second, modifications to religious practices, such as participating in Acehnese-style dhikr (remembrance of

God) and maulid (Islamic birthday celebrations). Third, the preservation of Rohingya traditions, where they maintain their traditional clothing, food, and religious holiday rituals. Thus, religious acculturation is selective: some elements are accepted, others are retained.

b. Language and Communication

Language is a crucial factor in the process of acculturation and social integration. In the context of Rohingya refugees in Aceh, language is one of the most significant challenges determining the quality of social relations between refugees and the local community. The Rohingya speak their own ethnic language, Rohingya/Zahmagyi, which linguistically belongs to the Indo-Aryan language family and bears similarities to the Chittagonian language of Bangladesh (Leider, 2018). Meanwhile, the Acehnese people speak Acehnese and Indonesian, two languages from the Austronesian family and completely unrelated historically or structurally to the Rohingya language. This difference creates significant communication barriers and directly impacts the dynamics of social interaction, acculturation, and integration between the two communities.

The Rohingya language has long served as a symbol of cultural identity and a tool for maintaining internal solidarity. However, the unfamiliarity of this language to people outside the Rohingya community has been a factor hindering integration in Aceh. This linguistic isolation was noted by Human Rights Watch (2000), which stated that the Rohingya language tends to be exclusive because it lacks a widely recognized standard writing system, despite contemporary efforts to write Rohingya using the Latin alphabet (Human Rights Watch, 2000). Consequently, upon their arrival in Aceh, daily communication becomes difficult, primarily because: the Rohingya do not understand Acehnese, do not master Indonesian, and the Acehnese do not understand the Rohingya language. This situation creates significant obstacles to building understanding in everyday life.

Rohingya has a phonology, grammar, and lexicon that are close to Bengali, while Acehnese has characteristics that are unique to Malay-Acehnese. For example: the Rohingya noun system uses certain endings that are not found in Acehnese, Acehnese has a different vowel and diphthong system, Rohingya sentences tend to follow the SOV (Subject–Object–Verb) structure, while Acehnese follows the SVO structure. These differences widen the linguistic distance, making the language learning process more difficult for both parties. Indonesian can be a bridge of communication, but Rohingya are not accustomed to using it, Indonesian language learning in the camps is very limited, and Acehnese people do not always use Indonesian in their daily lives. The IOM noted in its annual report that most Rohingya began to learn basic Indonesian words after several months in the camps, but this ability was insufficient for complex conversations (IOM UN Migration, 2021).

Language barriers tend to make interactions between Acehnese and Rohingya communities shallow and practical. Many conversations revolve around requests for assistance, explanations of basic needs, and simple conversations about food or belongings. This hinders deep social integration because communication cannot expand on more complex topics such as values, norms, or life experiences. Wise & Velayutham (2009) state that communication is the core of everyday multiculturalism. Without dialogue, multiculturalism remains symbolic, not substantive (Wise & Velayutham, 2009). Language is not only a means of communication, but also a medium for understanding social norms. Because they don't understand Acehnese or Indonesian, Rohingya often struggle to understand social norms such as social customs between men and women, traditional Acehnese dress codes, communal dining etiquette, and the boundaries between public and private spaces. These misunderstandings sometimes lead to negative perceptions among local communities. Fitria (2020) noted several cases where language differences led Acehnese residents to perceive Rohingya behavior as "impolite," when in fact it was simply due to their ignorance of local norms (Fitria, 2020).

According to Berry's (1997) theory, language barriers often lead to a "separation" acculturation strategy, where minority groups choose to interact only with their own group. Rohingya tend to form strong internal groups due to limited communication with Acehnese society (Berry, 1997). This is evident in the tendency for Rohingya to gather together in camps, social activities limited to their own community, and minimal in-depth interaction with their Acehnese neighbors. As a result, the Rohingya community remains a "cultural island" separated from the surrounding community. In many cases, language mediators emerge informally, such as Rohingya children who are quicker to learn Indonesian, local volunteers, IOM officers who understand some Rohingya, and fellow refugees who have lived in Malaysia and understand Malay. This reliance on mediators makes communication

indirect and prone to misinterpretation. UNHCR (2020) noted that one of the biggest challenges in managing Rohingya refugees in Indonesia is the limited number of professionally competent language mediators (UNHCR, 2020).

In education, Rohingya children often struggle to attend classes run by NGOs due to inability to understand Indonesian language instructions, a lack of teaching materials in their mother tongue, and low levels of early literacy in Rohingya (due to the lack of a standardized writing system). In healthcare, language barriers make it difficult for medical staff to explain procedures, diagnoses, or treatment recommendations. This has also been noted in reports by the IOM and Human Rights Watch as a critical issue for Rohingya refugees (Human Rights Watch, 2000; IOM UN Migration, 2021). Because religion does not require high language proficiency for basic practices like prayer or religious studies, religious acculturation between Aceh and Rohingya progresses more quickly than linguistic acculturation. This aligns with Darnela's (2021) findings, which suggest that religion is the most effective medium for Rohingya-Aceh interaction (Darnela, 2021). The Rohingya language also serves as a psychological buffer to maintain identity. Some refugees feel safe using their mother tongue because it strengthens internal solidarity and reduces feelings of alienation. However, this slows the process of cultural adaptation.

Mahmood et al. (2017) noted that for the Rohingya community, past trauma reinforces the need to maintain their mother tongue as a symbol of their ethnic identity (Mahmood et al., 2017). Without Indonesian or Acehnese language skills, Rohingya opportunities to work, interact productively, participate in local activities, and build long-term social relationships are severely limited. In many cases, language barriers keep them in the status of "permanent guests," not part of the community. Language plays a crucial role in determining the quality of acculturation and social integration between the Rohingya and Acehnese communities. The Rohingya-Aceh-Indonesian language barrier slows down interaction, creates social separation, and limits understanding of local norms. However, religious spaces serve as a more effective acculturation medium because they rely less heavily on verbal communication. Therefore, Indonesian or Acehnese language education programs for Rohingya refugees are crucial to accelerate social integration and reduce the potential for cultural conflict.

c. *Daily Social Interactions*

Daily social interaction is a crucial indicator of the success of the acculturation process between Rohingya refugees and the Acehnese community. Although relations between the two communities are generally based on humanitarian solidarity and Islamic brotherhood, the level of interaction that occurs in daily life tends to be limited and formal. Language barriers, differences in customs, the legal status of refugees, and socio-political concerns are limiting factors in the process of deeper acculturation. Neighborly relations between Acehnese and Rohingya refugees are significantly influenced by the location of the shelter. In areas such as North Aceh or West Aceh, which are close to residential areas, interaction patterns tend to be more intense. Acehnese people often provide food, clothing, or play with Rohingya children. However, these interactions are more charitable than dialogical or integrative. Fitria (2020) in her field study showed that Acehnese feel compelled to help the Rohingya due to the principle of "*ukhuwah Islamiyah*" (Islamic brotherhood) and the *peumulia jamee* culture. However, after basic needs are met, social relationships often cease at formal boundaries and do not foster deep closeness (Fitria, 2020).

This is in line with the findings of Wise & Velayutham (2009) that multicultural societies often establish relationships of "surface harmony," where social closeness appears positive, but is not accompanied by substantial cultural exchange (Wise & Velayutham, 2009). Rohingya refugees generally live in camps managed by IOM or UNHCR, and this creates a separate social space between the Rohingya and local residents. Camps are closed and have specific rules, restricting local residents from freely entering except for specific activities. This situation limits opportunities for building genuine neighborly relationships, such as visiting each other or sharing household activities. The physical separation of spaces within the refugee shelter system is often a major barrier to integration, as it prevents the natural social interactions that typically occur within neighborhoods.

Although activities outside the camp are monitored, some Rohingya refugees are permitted to visit food stalls or markets near the shelters, usually in small groups and accompanied by security personnel. Interactions with local Acehnese traders are generally simple and practical. Several

Acehnese residents reported that the Rohingya purchase instant noodles, cheap clothing, soap, children's toys, and simple food supplies. Rohingya children are often seen playing in public areas near food stalls or on the beach, interacting with local children through gestures, physical play, and nonverbal communication. However, these interactions do not reach a deep level of social integration due to language barriers, differences in social values, and mobility restrictions. According to a 2021 IOM report, market visits are one of the few forms of open social interaction between Rohingya and Acehnese communities, but they are still categorized as controlled social interaction (IOM UN Migration, 2021).

The Rohingya lack legal employment status in Indonesia. This prevents them from working in markets, local businesses, or other economic activities. According to Jacobsen (2001), economic participation is a key catalyst for accelerating social integration (Jacobsen, 2001). When economic access is blocked, daily social interactions are severely limited, as they are excluded from community activities such as farming, trading, or laboring; they lack social standing within local economic networks; and they are not involved in cooperatives, weekly markets, or the economic community's mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*). Thus, the Rohingya play a virtually non-existent economic role in Aceh's social structure, minimizing the opportunity for economic-based acculturation. Religious studies at mosques or congregational prayers provide a fairly effective meeting place for Acehnese and Rohingya communities. However, interactions in these spaces are ritualistic and do not always result in deep interpersonal conversations. Darnela (2021) found that religious-based activities bring the two communities together, but the nature of the interactions is more "formal communal" than individual (Darnela, 2021).

Acehnese people frequently organize charity events, such as clothing donations, Quranic education, and support for Rohingya orphans. These activities give the impression of harmonious relationships, but they also create a dynamic of dependency that reinforces differences in social status. According to Spivak (1988), such relationships often position minority groups as objects of aid, rather than equal social subjects (Spivak, 1988). Rohingya children interact with local education volunteers, attend Quranic recitation classes, and learn basic Latin writing. The children's interactions tend to be more fluid and utilize more nonverbal communication, allowing for a more natural acculturation process. However, language barriers remain a major barrier to expanding interactions within the family or community.

Intermarriage between Acehnese and Rohingya is almost non-existent, this is due to the Rohingya not having legal status that allows marriage registration, Acehnese and Rohingya families have strict internal marriage norms, limited mobility makes romantic interactions impossible, and social stigma and fear of customary conflict. According to Mahmood et al. (2017), intermarriage in stateless communities like the Rohingya is very rare because their ethnic identity is often seen as "too fragile" or "risky" to be associated with long-term (Mahmood et al., 2017). The absence of intermarriage makes cultural integration very limited. In fact, according to Barth (1969), inter-community marriage is one of the highest indicators of acculturation and cultural integration (Barth, 1969).

d. Education and the Young Generation

Education for Rohingya refugees in Aceh is one of the most important aspects of the long-term process of acculturation and social integration. Rohingya children and adolescents born or raised in Aceh form what is often referred to as second generation diaspora, a group of refugee children who have spent most of their lives outside their homeland. This generation has a different cultural experience than their parents, having grown up in an Islamic Acehnese environment, yet also subject to the social, economic, and legal restrictions of refugee status. Therefore, education is a crucial platform for examining how Rohingya children's identity, integration, and acculturation are formed. Indonesia is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and therefore lacks a permanent system for formal education for refugees. However, in 2019, the Indonesian Ministry of Education issued Circular Letter No. 14 of 2019, allowing refugees to attend school at the early childhood education (PAUD), elementary school (SD), junior high school (SMP), and senior high school (SMA) levels as part of fulfilling their basic rights. However, implementation of this policy has been uneven.

In several areas of Aceh, particularly North Aceh, some Rohingya children began attending local public schools between 2019 and 2021. IOM (2021) data shows that this access was made possible through collaboration between the local government, the Aceh Education Office, IOM, and local schools (IOM UN Migration, 2021). When Rohingya children entered school, they began learning

Indonesian, made local friends, and participated in school activities such as sports and group study. Schools became a primary space for acculturation due to the intense exchange of values, language, and behaviors. Consistent with Berry's (1997) theory of acculturation, children's interactions at school facilitate integration strategies, especially when the school environment is accepting of their presence (Berry, 1997). However, several obstacles have emerged, such as limited identity documents, requiring exceptions for school admission; teachers lacking specialized training in dealing with refugee students; Rohingya children experiencing language barriers, resulting in them falling behind in math, science, or social studies; and regular absences due to being moved from one camp to another by the government. Fitria (2020) noted that some Rohingya children who had attended school were ultimately unable to continue their education due to the camp relocation (Fitria, 2020).

Because formal education is not fully accessible, informal education is a crucial resource for Rohingya children and adolescents. The IOM, UNHCR, and various local NGOs are conducting Indonesian and English language classes within the camps. These language lessons are crucial for reducing social isolation, facilitating communication with the Acehese community, and improving children's ability to adapt to daily life. According to a 2020 UNHCR report, language classes have been shown to improve Rohingya children's interaction skills with medical personnel, teachers, and the Acehese community (UNHCR, 2020). Several NGOs, such as the Geutanyoe Foundation, provide training in sewing, handicrafts, simple design, basic farming, and computer skills. This training strengthens the sense of independence and improves the mental health of Rohingya youth, who often experience trauma (Mahmood et al., 2017). These productive activities also help reduce social tensions between refugees and the local community by providing a positive space for young people to engage in activities. Dayahs (Islamic boarding schools) and religious institutions in Aceh often provide Quranic education for Rohingya children. Due to their shared religious beliefs, this education serves as a fairly effective medium for acculturation. Rohingya children learn to read the Quran using the Acehese method, follow local prayers, and imitate the religious customs of the local community.

The second generation is the group with the greatest potential for acculturation. They grew up in Aceh, interacted with local residents, and absorbed Acehese cultural values, yet remained influenced by Rohingya traditions through their families. Rohingya children speak Rohingya at home, learn Indonesian in school and NGO activities, and learn some Acehese from their surroundings. This model creates a dual linguistic identity, which, according to Fishman (1991), often emerges in second-generation diaspora communities. Language serves as an indicator of identity flexibility: Rohingya children adapt linguistically more quickly than adults (Fishman, 1991). Children develop cross-cultural friendships more quickly through ball games, traditional games, collaborative learning, and arts activities. This aligns with the theory of everyday multiculturalism (Wise & Velayutham, 2009), where everyday micro-interactions form the basis of tolerance and acceptance. However, these interactions remain limited because Rohingya children's mobility is restricted, camp relocation disrupts the continuity of friendships, and schools do not always accept undocumented students.

Although the second generation possesses greater acculturative capital, their status remains fragile. They lack citizenship, legal status for future employment, guaranteed access to higher education, and guaranteed residency in Indonesia. According to research by Mahmood et al. (2017), this statelessness globally causes young Rohingya to often experience uncertainty about their future, which impacts their mental health and motivation to learn (Mahmood et al., 2017). Education and the challenging youth also provide significant opportunities for long-term social integration through language skills and friendships, the formation of a hybrid identity between Rohingya and Acehese cultures, and increased future economic potential through skills training and the development of multicultural awareness among Acehese and Rohingya communities. According to Jacobsen (2001), education is the "most sustainable means of integration" for refugee communities in transit countries (Jacobsen, 2001).

Conclusion

This research shows that the dynamics of multiculturalism between Rohingya refugees and the Acehese community take place within complex social relationships, influenced by shared religions, local culture, and state policy structures. Aceh has become an important space for the Rohingya to find a temporary sense of security due to Islamic solidarity and the cultural values of *peumulia jamee*.

This has created a positive initial acceptance, although it has not yet developed into deep social integration. Rohingya cultural identity, shaped by a long history of marginalization in Myanmar, remains strongly embedded in daily life in Aceh, particularly in language, family structure, and Shafi'i religious practices. While shared religious beliefs with the Acehnese community create opportunities for acculturation in religious rituals and socio-religious aspects, differences in language and lifestyle remain major barriers. The social interactions that do occur tend to be formal and limited to religious activities, community donations, or small transactions within the camps. Segregated living spaces (refugee camps) and uncertain legal status reinforce patterns of surface multiculturalism. Education and the younger generation are the most promising aspects for fostering long-term acculturation. Rohingya children who attend local schools or informal Indonesian language classes have better adaptation skills, but unequal access to education, displacement, and psychosocial trauma remain serious challenges. Overall, multiculturalism in Aceh is situational, not structural. The social relationships that are built rely more on moral solidarity than on formal integration frameworks. For this multiculturalism to develop into sustainable and inclusive relationships, policies are needed that strengthen access to education, open spaces for interaction, housing stability, and social assistance for refugees. Without long-term policy support, the Rohingya community risks remaining in the position of "permanent guests," accepted but not fully integrated into Acehnese society.

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