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Negotiating Unwanted Outsider Status

A study of Gang Subculture among Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh

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Abstract

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The emergence of the refugee gang subculture has changed its focus from being a regional to a worldwide problem, drawing on the findings of previous studies. Many past studies suggest that the massive influx of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar has not only amplified existing socioeconomic challenges but has also fueled concerns within the host population in Bangladesh regarding organized gang violence. Despite the growing concern, research on the Rohingya refugee gang subculture in Bangladesh remains considerably limited compared to the rest of the world. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the dynamics of Rohingya gang subculture in and out of refugee camps in Bangladesh. Using a qualitative phenomenological research design, data was collected from Rohingya gang members, host representatives, and several KIIs to fulfill the study objectives. Applying the subculture of deviance and moral panic theory to the analysis of field data, this research identified several important findings as: (1) seven criminal gang networks, varying in size and style, were found operating in and out of Rohingya refugee camps, where mostly delinquent youth became violent adults criminals; (2) past traumatic experiences, collective denial of social citizenship, discrimination in Myanmar and Bangladeshi refugee camps, and gang addiction for identity were identified as primary drivers for signing up for Rohingya gang membership; (3) illegal drug and arms trafficking, abduction, and property theft were reported as common organized gang crimes; (4) senior mentorship, loyalty to partners, and justifying harms for domination mostly characterized the style of Rohingya gang criminality; (5) despite religious and cultural similarities, hosts were found worried about Rohingya gang violence. This research sheds light on the underpinnings of the Rohingya gang subculture in Bangladesh, but further investigation needs to be done on the media's role in spreading fear in host-refugee relationships.

Keywords: Rohingya; Rohingya Refugees; Gangs; Refugee Gang; Deviant Subculture; Gang Subculture; Moral Panic; Folk devils.

Popular Science Description

Much of the previous research exposed that the subculture of refugee or immigrant gangs has become a global phenomenon, resulting in various consequences for the host country. Refugee subculture develops when refugees or immigrants in camps band together for shared objectives and accept transgressive behavior as a cultural reaction to the structural marginalization they experience. The ideologies that lead to group violence in communities can heighten the likelihood of peace and stability being disrupted in the host country. While residing for years in refugee camps in Bangladesh, many Rohingya refugee gangs were reportedly involved in committing group crimes in and out of refugee camps, straining the relationship between the refugees and their hosts. This raises questions about exposing the dynamics of the Rohingya refugee gang subculture.

This study aimed to explore the subjective experiences of gang subculture and group violence in and out of Rohingya refugee camps located in the south-eastern region of Bangladesh. The investigation was based on in-depth interviews conducted with gang members, security personnel, a Rohingya community leader, and representatives from the host community. This study's results indicate that many Rohingya refugees claimed to be involved in criminal gang activities at refugee camps despite their lack of prior criminal records. This research used participant accounts to identify key features of the Rohingya gang subculture. These include entry into the gang through skill development, loyalty to gang seniors and partners, justifying harm to restore dominance, and building identity. Followingly, the main factors found to influence their decision to join the criminal gang subculture include traumatic memories in their home country, collective denial of identity in both Myanmar and Bangladesh, and uncertainty in the future. The most reported Rohingya gang crimes in recent years include abduction, illegal drug and weapon smuggling, human trafficking, abduction, and property theft. This study employed a thematic analysis to examine the perception of gang violence within the Bengali host community following a massive influx of Rohingya refugees in 2017. Participants from the host community acknowledged the fear of violence that Rohingya gangs had caused in this region. Social media among all agents was found to play a significant role in generating moral panic among local inhabitants in nearby villages surrounding refugee camps.

The merits of this study extend to a wide range of stakeholders. Organizations may assist Rohingya refugees in getting the facilities they need to reduce marginalization in refugee camps; security personnel can improve strategies to reduce gang crimes and host-refugee hostility; and researchers can study the Rohingya gang subculture in more detail.

Acknowledgement

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The subculture of gangs is a global phenomenon with many common operational structures, values, and beliefs (Hagedorn, 2009). Through extensive research and media accounts, it has been observed that the presence of gang subcultures among refugees is not limited to a specific region but rather a global phenomenon. The significant increase in the number of refugees worldwide can be attributed to various factors, including military invasions and civil wars. Consequently, the refugee crisis has evolved into a global issue and is no longer confined to specific regions (Ali et al., 2017). According to the UNHCR Global Trend Report (2018), the number of forcibly displaced people increased from 59.5 million in 2014 to 65.3 million in 2017. The report also shows that one in 113 people worldwide is a refugee, with one in three (4.9 million) living in the world's least developed countries. Since 2017, approximately one million Rohingya people from Myanmar have sought refuge in Bangladesh to escape state-backed ethnic cleansing by the Burmese military. This massive influx of refugees has placed additional strain on Bangladesh's economy (Taufiq, 2021; Parmar et al., 2019).

According to Weiner (1992), in many cases, refugees were reported to engage in terrorism or cross-border illicit arms trafficking with domestic gangs in their host nations. In a similar view, Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006) argued that migrants from countries nearby bring fighters, weapons, and ideologies that feed group violence in communities, which increases the probability of disruption of peace and stability in the host country. Based on his research into criminal activity among Syrian refugees, Slavova (2015) concluded that many immigrant gangs are involved in anything from petty offenses like vandalism and robbery to more serious ones like militancy, drug cartels, and international crimes in their host country.

The influx of massive Rohingya refugees in 2017 has led to an escalation in security concerns in Bangladesh. According to a Bangladesh Police Report (2022), nearly 14 violent gangs are currently active in various Rohingya refugee camps located at Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas of Cox's Bazar district. Most groups include 5–20 members. Between August 2019 and September 2022, local police stations in Rohingya refugee camps recorded complaints of 2,441 incidences of organized crime, according to the Bangladesh Police Report (ibid.). The police report also reveals the total number of complaints filed, 185 concern illicit arms trafficking, 1,644 involve drug cartels, 88 concern rape incidents, 115 include murder cases, and 39 involve kidnapping cases. The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), the Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front

(ARIF), the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), the Rohingya National Alliance (RNA), the Munna gang, the Hakim gang, the Sadeq gang, the Hasan gang, the Asad gang, and the Rahim gang are the most well-known due to their alleged crimes and violence in refugee camps and surrounding communities (Taufiq, 2021). It is obvious from the foregoing data that the existence of many gangs in Rohingya refugee camps poses a significant security risk in the southeastern region of Bangladesh.

The question that needs answering now is why refugees in their host nation engage in criminal activity, including gang violence. Much of the research found that daily stressors like prison-like confinement to refugee camps, mobility restrictions, identity issues, cultural marginalization, difficulty integrating into the host community and traumatic memories of the home country make many migrants and refugees susceptible to forming deviant subcultures and engaging in transgressive acts to fulfill their ontological marginalization (Kiragu et al., 2011; Riley et al., 2017; Docy et al., 2016). Therefore, due to their extended exposure to disadvantaged situations, many refugee individuals are reported to be at greater risk of participating in various transgressive acts (D'avanzo, 1997). In the case of Rohingya refugees, gang activity was found directly related to both internal and external factors. The internal concerns include the traumatic memories of torture in Myanmar, the denial of fundamental rights, a desire for a free and secure Rakhine State in Myanmar, and the disruption of everyday life in refugee camps. The elements of external affairs encompass the Muslim Brotherhood ideology, transnational crime influence, and the presence of an environment suitable for the formation of gangs (Milton et al., 2017; Kudrat-E-Khuda, 2020; Uddin & Rahman, 2021).

Many national and international media outlets have reported on Rohingya refugees' alleged involvement in murder, robbery, theft, prostitution, drug, and human trafficking, internal vs. external clashes, and possible transborder terrorism (Khan & Yousuf, 2022; Ahmed, 202; Islam, 2020). The name "Rohingya" has become slang in Bangladesh, according to press reports over the last several years. From the perspective of the hosting population and the media, the Rohingya people are "drug addicts" and "breed like mice," adding to Bangladesh's overpopulation issue. (Shishir, 2019). The phrase "Rohingya" is controversial politically. In Bangladesh, they are called "forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals," whereas in Myanmar, they are illegal Bengali intruders. (Kudrat-E-Khuda, 2020: p 9; Ahsan Ullah, 2016).

In a study of the host-refugee interaction at Kenya's Kakuma refugee camp, Aukot (2002) found that limited shared resources and the lack of refugee-host community efforts cause friction and conflict between the refugee and the hosts. As the refugee population grows over the years, most

host communities see migrants as competitors for land, wood, employment, and water. The Turkana people of Kenya claimed that, unlike the refugees of Kakuma refugee camp, they didn't enjoy preferential access to fundamental amenities like education, health care, and water. In another study, Mogire (2011) found that refugees were engaged in organized crimes such as drug and human trafficking and illicit armed trade with rebel groups in Kenya and Tanzania, which fostered anti-refugee sentiment among the host community.

Both Pinson (2012) and Bonet (2018) found that a disrupted social environment characterized by outsider recognition by the host made Palestinian and Arab high school students and Iraqi refugee youths in the US feel status frustration in mainstream society. Due to this condition, many refugees have conflicting emotions and commit a range of crimes, which raises concerns about security in the host nation (Beutin et al., 2006). In Bangladesh, the increased gang crime among Rohingya refugees in camps has caused stress for locals, particularly those residing near the camps (Siddiqua & Mohiuddin, 2020). Despite the humanitarian attitude toward the Rohingya refugees in the early days in Bangladesh, many host community members now blame them for disturbing the region's peace and security, including the increase in different crimes (Khan & Minca, 2022).

1.2 Aims of the study

The key objective of this phenomenological research is to further our knowledge of the dynamics of gang subcultural style among Rohingya refugees in Bangladeshi refugee camps. This involves examining the processes of the formation of gang subculture, exploring the subjective interpretation of gang criminality, and identifying the justifications gang members use for their acts of violence. As the violence results in victims, this study also investigates the views of the host community and control agents on their perception of violence by Rohingya gangs both in and out of refugee camps.

In order to study gang subculture, Brotherton & Barrios (2011) propose focusing primarily on the criminalized social behavior of gang members. This behavior is characterized by a combination of hope and survival, innovation and accommodation, and resistance to social reproduction. To put it another way, a researcher interested in gang subcultural style has to know how gang members form their sense of gang identity and how they come to value violence against victims.

Cultural criminologists see transgression as an effort to overcome subcultural problems (Hayward & Young, 2004). Living under marginalization, with its ontological deprivation and uncertain future, fosters hatred and frustration. According to this view, deviancy is one way

people transcend legal barriers and reassert their identity and ontology. So, recognition and rule-breaking are interrelated (Hayward & Young, ibid.). Joining a gang provides individuals with a sense of identity, safety, and connection that may be lacking in their current living situation (Ponce,1990). This research employed the "Subcultural Theory of Deviance" to explore the fundamental dynamics of criminal gang subcultures within the Rohingya refugees residing in the host country.

When studying gangs, outsiders' perspectives are crucial (Cloward & Ohlin, 1961). Both crime and crime control are creations of deviant cultures, but their meanings are always changing due to their interactions and culturally established behaviors (Bevier, 2015; Bauman, 2008). Being depicted as outsiders, migrants, or refugees has long generated fear of harm in the host community's social order (Cohen, 2003). Moreover, the long-term presence of refugees causes anxiety and disputes in the relationships between hosts and refugees (Crisp, 2003). In light of those thoughts, I employed Cohen's (1972) "Moral Panic" theory to examine the host-refugee relationship in Bangladesh by collecting first-hand accounts of how locals and security personnel viewed the fear of harm posed by Rohingya gangs.

The following research questions were developed for the purpose of the design of this study based on its primary objective and theoretical underpinnings.

RQ1: What are the most common gang dynamics of the Rohingya gang subculture in terms of formation, operation style, and motivators?

RQ2: To what extent do Rohingya gang members describe their criminality and justify the harm they inflict?

RQ3: How do security agents and hosts perceive the criminality of Rohingya gangs in and out of refugee camps?

With the first RQ, this research aims to investigate the formation and style of gang subculture among Rohingya refugees, specifically focusing on the common stressors that lead individuals to join gangs. The second RQ provides an in-depth analysis of what gang life means to its members and how they defend violence as a reaction to their ontological deprivation. Finally, the RQ3 endeavors to investigate the perceived and actual fear perspective of Rohingya gang violence among the members of the host community in Bangladesh.

1.3 Novelty of the research

The current study is distinct from earlier research in two respects. This research aims to contribute to academia by examining the formation of a deviant subculture among members of Rohingya gangs. It explored how Rohingya gang members establish the meaning of gang loyalty

for themselves and promote violence as a way to shape their identity within their immediate camp settings. Secondly, as of now, none of the studies have examined the perception of gang subculture and the fear of violence among the hosts. Therefore, this research will provide valuable insights by exposing empirical differences (if any) between the claimed and real concerns among the host communities about the host-refugee relationships under the lens of security concerns. The study results will be helpful in many different contexts. Organizations can make sure Rohingya people have the necessary facilities to reduce their marginalization within refugee camps; policymakers can develop better methods to control refugee gangs and improve host-refugee relationships; and researchers can learn more about the gang subculture in Rohingya refugee camps.

1.4 Delimitations

Multiple studies, police reports, and media coverage indicate the presence of approximately fourteen distinct refugee gangs, varying in size, operating within the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Police report (2022) identifies various types of Rohingya gang affiliations, including drug cartel gangs, illegal weapons trafficking gangs, militant gangs, extortion gangs, human trafficking gangs, and abduction gangs. For my investigation, only a few gang network members were selected due to access and time limitations. To ensure future safety, I refrained from documenting the specific offense narratives or crime records of the participants during the data collection phase. Given the constraints of time and safety, this study relied on in-depth interviews with a variety of community professionals and KIIs (elected community leaders, security officers) to provide a comprehensive representation of the host community's perceptions of the harm posed by Rohingya gangs. No information was gathered or recorded with respect to gender identities since that aspect of gang activity is not the focus of this study.

1.5 Key terminology

- **Refugee:** According to the 1951 Geneva Convention, a refugee is "a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (Geneva Convention, 1951, citied in Cieślińska & Dziekońska, 2019: P 4).

- **Gang :** Miller (1958) described a gang as a self-organized group with shared interests and connections. Gangs have a hierarchical leadership and power structure that work together to achieve specified goals, sometimes including illegal activity and control over a given region,

service, or business. Gang members' tattoos, insignia, and clothing differentiate them (Gilman et al., 2014).

- **Rohingya:** The Rohingya, a Muslim ethnic minority group in Myanmar's Rakhine province, lived there for centuries until shifting to Bangladesh to evade military persecution from 1972 to 2017. Despite their birthplace and generation inheritance, Myanmar has denied Rohingya citizenship since 1982. According to a UNHCR study report (2022), Rohingyas are now regarded as the world's biggest stateless refugee population.

- **Upazilla:** The Upazilla constituency is a component of the local governance structure of Bangladesh. The study collected data from the Ukhiya Upazilla of Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh.

1.6 Outline of the study

The thesis consists of six chapters. The following descriptions explain the strategies and components of following chapter.

- **Chapter two: Previous literature**
  I reviewed pioneer literature—published research findings, organizational reports, and national and international media coverage of Rohingyas, life in camps, subjective marginalization, gangs, and camp gang subculture—then briefly summarized the research gap and described this research's unique contribution to academia and other platforms.

- **Chapter three: Theoretical framework**

  The Rohingya gang subculture is examined using the subcultural theory of deviance and moral panic. This section describes relevant theoretical viewpoints and how they are planned to be applied in current research.

- **Chapter four: Methodology**
  In this section, I explained a thorough research strategy that involves recruiting study participants (gang members and host community members), collecting data, and analyzing the data to find a theme. I also mentioned ethical issues and limitations.

- **Chapter five: Results**
  This section is divided into three subsections. The first section discusses Rohingya gang formation, style, and motives. Following a composite representation of Rohingya criminal behavior, their views used to justify their violence are reported. This section concludes by investigating members of the host community's fear of harm inflicted by Rohingya gang violence.

- **Chapter six: Conclusion and Discussion**
  I have summarized the most important findings of the research in line with the study questions.

CHAPTER TWO
Previous Research

2.1 Introduction

This study aimed to examine the Rohingya refugee gang subculture in Bangladeshi refugee camps. This section provides a comprehensive analysis of global and Bangladeshi literature, as well as relevant media reports, focusing on gangs and their criminal activities within and outside refugee camps. The whole section is divided into different parts. These include the history of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, their daily lives at refugee camps, the subculture of gang activity among refugees, the factors that lead people to join gangs, and how the host community feel about Rohingya gangs and their perpetuated violence. I synthesized relevant literature from local and foreign sources to compare and describe the Rohingya refugee gang subculture in Bangladesh. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the research gap and the study's potential application for multiple stakeholders.

2.2 The road to refugee

One of the largest and most persecuted stateless populations is the Rohingya (Kiragu et al., 2011; Parmar, 2019). For decades, the Myanmar government has discriminated against and persecuted them in their place of birth. Therefore, following brutal attacks in 1978, 1991–1992, and 2016, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslim women, girls, boys, and men fled to Bangladesh. However, the total number peaked at nearly one million after Burmese military-backed persecution in August 2017. Rohingya refugees residing in Rakhine State, Myanmar, have faced severe persecution, which involves acts such as burning down communities, violence resulting in loss of lives, property destruction, and the sexual assault of women and children. As a result, this massive number of Rohingyas were forced take refuge in unregistered and registered 34 refugee camps located in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas of Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh to avoid military-backed ethnic cleansing in Myanmar (UNHCR Report, 2018). Considering the number of refugees residing in Bangladesh, it's called the "largest refugee home in the world" (Sultana, 2019: UNHCR Report, ibid.). With this massive refugee influx, the population count doubled while keeping the host community as a minority (UNHCR report, 2018; Siddique, 2019; Jerin & Mozumder, 2019).

2.3 Life at a refugee camp

According to Thomas (2017:p. 223), "detention camp life" may dehumanize. The refugee camps had a significant impact on cultural transmission, social norms, values, beliefs, societal organization, family patterns of childbearing, attitudes towards authority, and work patterns of

social associations, resulting in cultural disadvantages for younger people. Many scholarly studies show that refugees in camps struggle with developing an identity, social citizenship, resource scarcity, and discrimination. The following extracts are from studies that focus on refugee populations' struggles to survive in refugee camps, with a particular emphasis on the global and Rohingya refugee contexts.

2.3.1 Identity struggle

Refugees suffer most from identity loss (Pinson, 2012). He stated that limiting rights might undermine youth's identity and recognition. His study of Palestinian and Arab immigrants indicated that a disruptive social environment promoted the creation of a civic (Israeli) vs. national (Palestinian or Arab) identity, resulting in unhappiness and negative self-perception (Pinson, ibid., quoted in Sultana, 2019). Another likeminded study found that "Every Palestinian should have an identity. We may obtain an ID to retain our dignity. We aspire to return to Palestine, our homeland," (Ullah, 2014, p. 75). While studying Mexican migrants in Canada, Basok (2004) argued that restricted social membership limits their privileges. These challenges often limit their freedom, rights, and identity while creating an uncertain future. Clark-Kazak's (2012) research on young refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) shows that present processes for treating refugees in their living places are complex, insignificant, and unsafe, often limiting self-development. Citizens and refugees vary in such a social environment. Pittaway & Dantas (2021) examined how Sudanese immigrants in Australia struggled to work, have white friends, and have a meaningful social life. Because people say Sudanese kids are bad and constantly fight, which angers, depresses, and alienates them from mainstream society. The entire Sudanese population in Australia was criticized and shamed for a few bad Sudanese.

Rohingyas have always struggled with identity. The Rohingya people of Myanmar are one of the biggest humanitarian victims in recent history due to decades of persecution, discrimination, and marginalization (Cheesman, 2017; Kyaw, 2017). The Myanmar government called them "illegal Bengali immigrants to Myanmar." Bangladesh names them "Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Citizens (FDMN)." (Babu, 2020: p 9). Liminality, statelessness, and confined camp life have left the Rohingya people in an identity crisis and vulnerable to transgression (Sultana, 2019). In ethnographic research on Rohingya refugees' identity dilemma, Uddin (2020: p117) reported that Rohingya people described their situation as, "Our lives belong to others because we belong to no one. We are neither Burmese nor Bengalis, hence neither Bangladesh nor Myanmar recognize us. We assumed stateless people had no place in any nation since if you live in someone else's country, they determine your fate." Due to persecution, Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh for better

living conditions. Bangladeshi society views them as "illegal migrants," "socially dysfunctional persons," and "unwelcome outsiders" (Uddin, ibid.).

2.3.2 Living environment stressors

Turner (2015) found that Burundian refugees were physically unsuited for the region's hot and dry environment. He also remarked that refugees in camps called themselves "living dead" since they had no future. The camp was like being on standby while the world went on without them. In another study, Smart and Smart (2017) found that the Hong Kong government's strict regulations to limit the mobility of Vietnamese refugees within camps negatively affected refugees' mental health.

The Rohingya are also trapped in the refugee camp and have no choice but to stay there. As a result, many refugees attempted to flee the camps in search of better opportunities in Bangladesh. While some succeed, many are captured. Law enforcement officials have put up many security checks to prevent this unlawful Rohingya refugee movement (Siddique, 2019). Lately, to restrict the Rohingya refugee movement, Bangladeshi authorities have been building barbed-wire walls around the large camps. To control who enters camps and to keep an eye on all groups working inside refugee camps, the Bangladeshi government has lately set up a civilian administration and especially assigned special forces. This is to prevent anything illegal from happening (Karin, 2020; Milton et al., 2017).

2.3.3 Lack of opportunities

The lack of educational and livelihood possibilities has left most Rohingya people in a condition of uncertainty, particularly young people (Hoque et al., 2023). Rohingya refugees are barred from legal employment, although some of them were reported to work informally at the local labor market. Refugees in the informal market are vulnerable to income discrimination and unethical work practices, removing legal protections in the case of harassment (Ahmed, 2010). In another study, Phiri (2008) found that Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are forced to work covertly, illegally, and for low wages. The Rohingyas in question have experienced significant hardship in their efforts to secure a basic standard of living and fulfill their fundamental human needs. Additionally, the official policy of camp restriction hinders the formal interactions between the locals and the Rohingya refugees (Crabtree, 2010; Ansar & Khaled, 2021).

2.3.4 Security concern

In his research on Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, Uddin (2020) stated that refugee camp residents constantly prioritize security for themselves, their families, and their communities. Camps become crime scenes at night. Most Rohingya refugees said they fear the night in refugee

camps because each day ends with horrific accounts of loss or damage to family, neighbors, or property. Gang violence within Rohingya camps is primarily driven by dominance and control dynamics. Rohingya gangs are raising anxiety in the camps and among the local community (Ullah, 2022). In a similar finding, Mamun (2021) noted that living in a refugee camp is terrible at night. A Rohingya refugee in Kutupalong described that they often hear people crying at night. A Manji (Rohingya camp leader) who helps maintain order in one of the refugee camps said that innocent Rohingya people run to adjacent camps when gangs start violence. If refugees don't comply with them, gang members use inhuman brutality on them (Mamun, ibid.).

2.4 Gang subculture in refugee camps

According to a Bangladesh police report (2022), roughly fourteen small and large criminal gangs operate in the 34 Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar district. Over the previous two and a half years, many Rohingya criminals have reportedly been charged with 2,441 offenses at local police stations. The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), a transnational insurgent group with a strong presence in refugee camps and Burma, the Nabee gang, named after a transboundary drug mafia, and the Hakeem gang for ransom and abduction in and out of refugee camps, have been found mostly responsible for organized crimes in refugee camps. Most organized crimes include armed robbery, kidnapping, extortion, murder, drug cartels, prostitution, and human trafficking. While taking advantage of refugee vulnerability, these gangs deliberately established their networks by enticing and recruiting young Rohingyas ('Aljazeera', 2020).

2.5 Reasons for refugees joining gangs and committing crimes
2.5.1 Gang affiliation reason- Safety & protection

According to Cowart & Cowart (1993), Southeast Asian refugee children in the US like gangs because they provide support, power, and respect. Gang membership shields victims from other hostile organizations. In a similar vein, Im & George (2021) showed that Somali immigrants advocated for gang loyalty for protection and aid. They said most refugees had no protection, food, shelter, or relatives. These impoverished youth have few options other than gang membership. Thus, gangs and drugs were necessary for survival. Gang participation relieves stress and satisfies their in-camp safety, psychological, and social needs (NgMak et al., 2004). Violence to establish dominance is growing in Rohingya camps. Power is typically the driving force behind gang violence in Rohingya refugee camps. In this way, Rohingya gangs pose a panic to both Rohingya and host populations (Ullah, 2022).

2.5.2 Gang affiliation reason- Avoiding trauma & stress

Individuals dealing with present and past trauma have described many functional reasons for entering gangs, including seeking initial safety and basic resources via violent actions. Somali refugees' pursuit of gang participation as a coping technique for lasting memories of terrible losses, painful events, and suffering is notable. Gang members often use the gang lifestyle to cope with the stress and terror of living in vulnerable situations (Im & George, 2021). According to Ng-Mak et al. (2004), refugee children with gang connections may desensitize to violence and embrace delinquent and violent behaviors as a way of surviving. Based on their study of Southeast Asian gangs in America, Cowart and Cowart (1993) hypothesized that many immigrants joined gangs to escape their everyday loneliness.

2.5.3 Gang affiliation reason- Financial security

Vigil and Yun (1998) found that gangs provided disadvantaged Vietnamese teenagers with monetary support. Vietnamese American youths committed crimes for financial gain, according to the research. Gang membership allowed these teenagers to live in luxury with weapons. Venkatesh found that many people living in slums see gang members as family. Gang membership financially benefits its members like a family (Venkatesh, 1997).

2.5.4 Gang affiliation reason- Loneliness & frustration

Isolation and unhappiness enhance deviant behavior among Vietnamese American teens. They joined gangs because of social exclusion (Vigil & Yun, 1998). Vietnamese youths are "at the "margins" of two different ethnic spheres, betwixt and between cultures and identities, not quite belonging to either" (Vigil & Yun, 1998: p. 118). In Orange County, Vietnamese American teenagers developed delinquent attitudes due to a lack of social integration and a persistent feeling of alienation (Wyrick, 2000). Toy (1992) examined the rise of Chinese Vietnamese (Vietnamese ethnic Chinese) gangs in San Francisco. He found that many Chinese-Vietnamese and Vietnamese children felt like outcasts in both the mainstream and their own ethnic group and peers. And gang leaders exploit the materialistic needs of young individuals by recruiting and grooming them.

2.5.5 Gang affiliation reason- Peers influence

According to Huang and Ida (2004), gang membership has been associated with experiences of bullying and social exclusion among teenagers from Vietnamese and Asian American backgrounds. Because of racial, cultural, and other differences, there may be conflict between Vietnamese Americans and other ethnic youths. Many immigrant youths who have experienced bullying or mistreatment from their classmates look to their peers for social support or protection

(Vigil, 2002, cited in Hong, 2010). Huang and Ida (2004) discovered that some Vietnamese American teenagers join gangs to fit in with their peers. In a similar vein, Thai (2003) discovered that interaction with delinquent peers increased the chance of antisocial and criminal conduct among Vietnamese juvenile gangs in Honolulu. Kim and Goto's (2000) research found that affiliation with delinquent peers was the biggest predictor of Asian American teenage delinquency and gang participation.

2.5.6 Gang affiliation reason- Gaining identity

Many past studies suggest that people with identity concerns participate in transgressive group activities to express their anger, fears, and frustrations. For certain youngsters, joining a gang helps them build their identity. Besides making money, gang activity gives adolescents a sense of belonging and fulfillment while avoiding legal issues. The individuals in question were self-employed and thus possessed autonomy in their work. They could fight to release their anger, and they weren't confined by a timetable. Powerful gangs enjoy causing fear in people and have a strong feeling of brotherhood (Hochhaus & Sousa, 1987; Pinson, 2012; Bonet, 2018).

2.6 Host and refugee relationship dynamics

Due to the lack of a uniform, theoretically defined conceptual definition of social cohesiveness, examining the impact of refugees on social aspects of host life is a difficult task. According to Guay(2015), amutually cohesive community is typically characterized by the notions of inclusion, collaboration, a sense of belonging, trust, and generally solid, positive connections. In contrast, poor social cohesiveness is often characterized by social tension and/or fragmentation, conflict, and negative emotions including fury, anxiety, and threat perceptions among community members (Guay, 2015). In empirical research based on Sudanese refugees in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, Aukot (2003:76) found that host Turkana and refugee populations got along well in the camp's early years. Nevertheless, this wonderful connection has deteriorated over the course of time. Turkana and the Sudanese Dinka tribe, who dominated the camp in its early days, were extremely tense now. Hosts reported refugees were responsible for stealing, fighting, raping women, and murdering Turkana. On the other side, host Turkanas were accused of livestock theft and other crimes in refugee camps. Likewise, while studying host and refugee relationships, Maystadt & Verwimp (2009) found hostile relationship between the host-Turkish and Syrian refugees. The following literary texts explore host-refugee relationships, including both positive and negative dynamics, within various contextual frameworks.

2.6.1 Positive cohesion with the host community

Refugees' effects on social networks in low-income Tanzania are examined in Whitaker's (1999) research. The author explains that Tanzanian hosts make many friends with migrants, especially around the camps. These social contacts include reciprocal visits, marriages, funerals, and regional sporting tournaments. The author argued that host communities don't blame refugees for changing social dynamics since the area's fast population expansion makes it inescapable.

Most Rohingya refugees escaping persecution have settled in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya and Teknaf areas. During their early days as refugees in Bangladesh, most of the host community members sympathized with Rohingya refugees (Palmer, 2011). Ansar and Khaled (2021) found two historical links between the Rohingya refugee population and the Bengali community. There are religious and linguistic connections between the two groups.

2.6.2 Negative cohesion with the host community
2.6.2.1 Situation- Struggling livelihood
Refugee camps are frequently in poor, secluded areas where host people struggle to live. That indicates the refugee influx affects locals (Grindheim, 2013). Refugees increase the demand for land, water, forest damage, and firewood in an area (Ali et al., 2017). In order to accommodate refugees, Kenya's government has forced the host community off their property. The camp restricts locals' movement in areas where important infrastructure, like aid agency offices, is located. This has caused resentment between the refugee population and the local residents, resulting in frequent conflicts (Ikanda, 2008).

Resource shortages are a major problem from the host community's perspective. Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh has been reported to be facing the same resource shortage since the Rohingya refugee exodus. Deforestation, inflation, and competition for socioeconomic possibilities are harming the host community due to Rohingya migration (Khatun & Kamruzzaman, 2018; Tay et al., 2019). Therefore, refugees are often portrayed negatively. Another study indicated that 66.8% of respondents believed Rohingya refugees fled because of their own acts. The Rohingya were also seen as ungrateful to the host community (Jerin & Mozumder, 2019).

2.6.2.2 Situation- Security concern
According to Crisp (2003), host-refugee disputes are more common in camps, which provide elements of hostility. Similarly, Girma (2016) notes that the large number of migrants has increased crime, theft, and deaths in the host community. Refugee-host confrontations are projected to intensify ethnic tensions, create economic competition with locals, and develop rebellious social networks by smuggling firearms and exploiting camps to recruit and conceal criminals. (Shaver & Zhou, 2015, quoted in Ali et al.,2017). According to Jacobsen's (2002) study on refugee and host relations, the host community may face security challenges upon

refugee arrival. Local crime and violence, refugee-local population conflicts, organized crime, drug smuggling, and human trafficking are all possible sources of such conflicts.

The deaths of 147 Garissa University college students in April 2015 and 67 people at Westgate retail Mall in September 2013 (Anderson & McKnight, 2014, cited in Ali et al., 2017) and other attacks, especially in the Northeastern and Coastal regions, have resulted from Kenya's refugee policy. Following the August 1998 twin bombings at the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, which killed 224 and wounded nearly 5,000 people. Thus, the Kenyan government blames these attacks on harboring refugees from numerous countries, mostly Somalians (Champagne et al., 2005). For Rohingya refugees, Milton et al. (2017) said that nearby refugee camp inhabitants and security officials voiced increasing safety concerns after seeing gang violence in multiple Rohingya refugee camps over the past few years.

A security official at Kutuplanong camp in Cox's Bazar district highlighted Rohingya gang violence. He had information regarding Rohingyas engaging in drug trafficking, smuggling, and other illegal activities. They are members of different gang groups who give refuge, money, and identification. To build their reputation and show that they are the toughest gang in and out of the camp area, they fight and don't even dare commit heinous crimes, including murder. Camps become battlegrounds at night when gangs run uncontrolled. He also described how most security staff fear to go inside refugee camps at night (Hossain et al., 2021).

Lintner (2009), cited in Ullah (2011), alleged that Harkat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami (HUJI), an international Islamic Jihadi organization, used the Rohingya refugee camp and its residents who had fled to Bangladesh to save lives. According to Rahman (2010: p 235), "the Rohingya camps in the Cox's Bazar area are ideal recruiting grounds for Islamic extremists." In another study, Uddin (2020) claimed that Myanmar terrorist organizations use refugee camps in Bangladesh for illegal arms trafficking. The national leadership is especially concerned that these activities incite violent operations within the mainland of Bangladesh. The analysis of previous studies reveals an apparent pattern of escalating anti-Rohingya attitudes among the Bangladeshi host groups residing in proximity to the camps. This phenomenon becomes more evident when a significant proportion of individuals within the host society express an urgent need to see the rapid repatriation of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh to their place of origin in Myanmar (Afrin and Hussain, 2016; Uddin, 2020).

2.6.2.3 Situation- Given facilities
As stated by Ali et al. (2017), the allocation of scarce natural resources and the uneven treatment of both groups by relief organizations and government authorities contribute to host-refugee tensions. According to Betts (2009), refugees have access to better education, healthcare, and

basic needs than the host population. Ethiopian and Ugandan hosts say Sudanese migrants have put pressure on their natural resources, especially amid the recession. As refugees were given preferential treatment over the host community, there was dissatisfaction among the members of the host community (Ek & Karadawi, 1991).

Uddin's (2020) ethnographic study found six main elements that deteriorated the Rohingya refugees' connection with the local Bengali community. Among them, the distribution of limited resources and prioritizing Rohingyas over locals in terms of foreign aid trigger hostility among many host community members.

2.6.2.4 Situation- Cultural difference

Cultural differences may generate refugee-local conflict. The natives of Kenya accused Somali immigrants of violence, rudeness, arrogance, and abuse, according to Mogire & Mogire (2011). Similar arguments from Bangladeshi hosts were found concerning Rohingya refugees. Despite sharing religion, language, and food habits, locals described Rohingya immigrants as uneducated, aggressive, and rude. However, the hosts talk differently and don't mind the Rohingya refugees who've lived there for years; mostly the newly arriving refugees worry locals (Siddique, 2019).

2.7 Media and host-refugee relationships

Majavu (2020) reports racial profiling, bad media coverage, and prejudice against Sudanese refugee male teens in Australia. Australian media portrayals of South Sudanese youth organizations in Melbourne as "African Gangs" have fostered racial intolerance and prejudice against African youths. "African gang" stigmatized the whole Melbourne African refugee population by portraying young African immigrants as dangerous, unpredictable, and aggressive. Labeling someone a "gang member" provokes dread, suspicion, and hostility, according to Majavu (ibid.). In turn, unfavorable media coverage and cultural discourse affected South Sudanese youth's mental health and self-esteem (Pittaway & Dantas, 2021). This scenario echoed when the media in Bangladesh portrayed Rohingya refugees negatively. Rohingya refugees have been accused of murder, robbery, theft, prostitution, drug trafficking, mob violence, internal and external conflicts, and potential terrorism, which has alarmed the host community (Roul, 2023; Islam, 2020; Ripon, 2022).

2.8 Review summary and research gap

As of now, much of the literature discusses the brutally persecuted Rohingya in Myanmar (Kiragu et al., 2011; Parnini et al., 2013; Ullah, 2011), the mental health impacts of persecution, conflict, and historical trauma, mixed with everyday environmental stresses associated with prolonged relocation, statelessness, and living in restricted refugee camps (Riley, 2017; Milton

et al., 2017; Uddin 2020), and the security concerns of Rohingya refugee criminals (Riley, 2017; Bangladesh police report, 2022; Mamun, 2021). Despite some organizational reports, very limited studies on the Rohingya gang subculture in Bangladesh have been found. Whatever studies focused on Rohingya criminals, they were limited to documenting the crimes based on socio-economic and political grounds. So, the academic investigation of the meaning and rationality of crimes from the Rohingya gang members' point of view is still widely untouched. This study addresses the current gap in the literature by exploring how the Rohingya gang subculture formed and increased security concerns among the host community while affecting the essential aspects of daily life in and out of refugee camps. The following are the main areas where this study will primarily contribute:

- This research set out to examine the dynamics of Rohingya gang subculture, including gang formation, gang style, and common motivations for joining gangs. Following, examine how Rohingya gang members define gang crimes and justify violence. Thus, this study addresses the liminality that drive some Rohingyas to join or form gangs and commit transgressive acts to resolve their ontological identity crisis and chronic marginalization as refugees.

- This study also aims to investigate the perceived and actual fear of Rohingya gang violence within the host community. Since the media and control agents' accounts reveal Rohingya gangs and their shared harm as a security concern not only for the Rohingya community but also for the host people.

Although this study focuses on Rohingya gangs in Bangladesh, its findings can be relevant to other areas where refugees and local communities frequently interact with one another. This is especially relevant in cases where hosts and refugees have similar cultural backgrounds. The findings of this research are expected to be important for politicians, academics, and other institutions to design strategic policies targeted at reducing gang-related criminal activity in the Rohingya camps and the surrounding communities.

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

Albert Cohen's (1955) subcultural theory of deviance and Stanley Cohen's (1972) moral panic are used to answer key research issues in this study. This chapter first uses the subcultural theory of deviance to explore the origins, beliefs, and styles of gang subculture among forcefully displaced Rohingya refugees in popular culture. In doing so, it critically explains how gang membership gives meaning to their lives and how they justify violence to reflect their subcultural identity. Later, while violence and victimization coexist, the moral panic theory explains how the host community, including control agents, describes the perceived and actual fear of violence based on Rohingya gang crimes in and out of Bangladeshi refugee camps. Plans to incorporate those concepts into my current study perspective come after thorough discussions of each theory from the theorist's account.

3.2 Deconstructing subculture of deviance

A "subculture" is a subsection of the dominant culture with its own norms, beliefs, and values, according to Cohen (1955). This phenomenon commonly occurs when individuals facing circumstances of social isolation and band together to provide mutual assistance to each other. This subculture can arise within racial and ethnic minority groups, residents of slum neighborhoods, and immigrant populations. Cohen claimed that subcultural groups' behaviors vary significantly from those of the dominant culture, even if they are part of mainstream society. To further define subcultural groups, (Cohen and Short, 1958, cited in Stancu, 2021) argue that deviancy and autonomy are of great importance to their members. Thus, subcultural members show loyalty to one another and oppose family, school, and community supervision.

Feelings of status deprivation among subcultural members are the foundation of Cohen's (1955) subcultural theory (cited in Pisoiu, 2015). Here, "Status frustration" refers to the desire to achieve a certain status in popular culture. When they can't acquire this status, people may develop alternative value orientations that push them to create a subculture where they can define status in ways they can accomplish (Cohen, ibid.). Thus, deviant subcultures are defined by their deviant beliefs, practices, and appearances, which earn them respect and recognition.

Like Cohen, Cloward & Ohlin (1961) believe that criminal subculture includes particular deviant norms, values, and styles, such as clothes, music, language, and ritual. In their subcultural hypothesis, they postulated that members of disadvantaged groups feel upset due to a lack of means and that illicit behavior is taught and culturally transferred. The main goal of gang subcultures is to establish a reputation centered on toughness and participate in acts of violence

that cause harm. Based on the above thoughts, we can see deviant subcultures develop inside dominant cultures because of a shared response to a set of common problems (Cohen, 1955; Cloward & Ohlin, 1961).

3.2.1 Formation of deviant subculture and its style

Subculture theories in criminology concentrate on the formation, features, and activities of deviant subgroups that are different yet related to the dominant culture (Blackman, 2005). According to Becker (1953), subcultural members learn delinquent behavior from other members of the group. Violence is an essential part of deviant subcultures. In his research on the subculture of violence, Miller (1958) claimed that some subcultures' value systems demand violence in particular social circumstances when identification conflicts with popular culture. Sandberg (2009) asserts that group violence is essential within the subculture of street gangs. Street gang members use violence and threats to prevent disrespect and establish social status. Usually, senior members mentor young members of a deviant subculture, teaching them about crimes, expertise, and loyalty (Cohen, 1955).

Subcultural narratives must include justifications for the harm that members of subcultural groups have caused. Matza (2018) argued that delinquents utilize techniques of neutralization to rationalize their criminal actions within subcultural contexts, without acknowledging the criminal nature of their behavior. In this scenario, individuals commonly employ strategies to evade accountability for their actions. These tactics include denying any wrongdoing, ignoring or downplaying the victim's suffering, criticizing those who accuse them, and invoking higher loyalties, such as the moral duty to support friends in difficult circumstances (Matza, ibid.).

3.2.2 Reasons for joining gang subculture

The question is why do young people mostly join gangs? According to Fagan (1989), joining gang entails more than just recruitment. These include members' economic, social, and personal considerations. However, Cohen (2003) stressed the cultural reaction to marginalization. The emergence of subcultures among young people can be attributed to the inherent injustices of the existing class system, which present difficulties for individuals in terms of social adaptation and maintaining their societal standing (Cohen, ibid.). Cloward & Ohlin (1961) provided a thorough explanation of Cohen's attempts at gang responses and the neighborhood's effect. They posit that neighborhood characteristics play a significant role in the emergence of subcultures of delinquent gangs. Potential offenders are thought to join three deviant subcultures as a way to cope with their living conditions. The subcultures discussed are (1) the criminal subculture, which links delinquency to adult criminal behavior; (2) the conflict subculture, which does not see a direct

link between juvenile and adult criminal activity; and (3) people who don't fit into either the legal or criminal subcultures are drawn to the retreatist subculture, which is focused on using illicit drugs.

Similar to other subcultures, the delinquent subculture arises as a reaction to challenges that are not commonly experienced by individuals in mainstream society. Subcultures, therefore, function as a defensive mechanism, protecting their members from the responses of the larger society (Thorsell & Klemke, 1972). According to Hayward's (2010) research, transgressive behavior is becoming more common not just because it's exciting but also because it gives participants control over their destiny. Joining a gang gives its members a sense of identity, stability, and connection they may not have at home. This way, gang loyalty fosters self-reliance and social security (Ponce, 1990). Furthermore, Hochhaus & Sousa (1987), in their study of gang subculture, found that the influence of peers in the name of protection motivated many young boys to join gang subculture.

3.2.3 Subcultural theory of deviance in refugee gang context

Refugee gang subcultures form when immigrants and refugees work together and engage in transgressive behavior in reaction to their systematic marginalization in refugee camps (Uddin, 2020). Similarly, Cottee (2011) suggests that jihadism is a culturally marginalized group's subcultural reaction to popular culture. Insecurity and institutional denial of fundamental rights increase the risk of instability and hatred (Fineman, 2008). According to Cohen (1955), subcultural members join in group delinquency due to "status frustration." When their identity is undermined, people seek alternate beliefs in reaction to societal rejection.

Therefore, the subcultural theory of crime is a useful framework for examining the gang dynamics among Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Rohingya refugees are reported to have no citizenship rights either in Myanmar or Bangladesh (Kudrat-E-Khuda, 2020). Agamben (1998) posited that stateless individuals develop deviant subcultures due to their condition of "bare life," which renders them marginalized in relation to the dominant culture. Uddin (2019) called Rohingya refugees in Bangladeshi host camps "subhuman" in his anthropological investigation. "Subhuman" refers to those born into human society but not affiliated with any state parties. Lack of identity and collective denial of rights frustrate them. The Rohingyas experience intense hardship and dehumanization as a result of their statelessness in both Bangladesh and Myanmar. Moreover, living in refugee camps can lead to significant frustration due to the presence of social injustices and an uncertain future (Uddin, ibid). In this situation, for socially and culturally marginalized people, crime and transgression can function as means to overcome challenges and

construct their identities (Hayward & Young, 2004). As a method of coping with their marginalization and identity crisis, some Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are said to have ties to criminal gangs operating inside the camps (Cheung, 2012).

3.3 Fear of folk devils and moral panic

The study of gang subculture involves an examination of how outsiders perceive and explain it (Cloward & Ohlin, 1961). The current study uses the theory of moral panic, which Stanley Cohen (1972) and Ben-Yehuda (1990) further developed, to explain the dynamics of the host-refugee relationship with a focus on the expression of fear and conflict. Stanley Cohen, in his 1972 book "Folk Devils and Moral Panics," explained that based on fabricated fears of folk devils, the media and crime control agents call for actions.

Here, folk devils symbolically represent perceived threats. Folk devils represent the perceived threat. The folk devils in question encompass a wide range of categories, including drug dealers, sex traffickers, muggers, individuals carrying AIDS, terrorists, illegal immigrants or refugees, and criminal gangs (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2010). Put simply, in moral panic theory, the public's fear of crime committed by minorities can be attributed to stereotypes that have been perpetuated by the unjust execution of crime-control measures by the state (Pickett et al., 2012), and negative media portrayals of minority groups (Rumbaut & Ewing, 2007). In my study, Rohingya refugee gangs are considered "folk devils."

According to the subcultural diversity viewpoint, individuals are more likely to be afraid of crime if they fear people with different appearances or customs (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Lane & Meeker, 2000). So, this perspective links fear of crime to worries about living in a culturally varied and racially or ethnically diverse community (Merry, 2002). Literature often suggests that hosting refugees may present safety concerns for the host community, whether these concerns are actual or perceived. One of these suggests that refugees who have experienced violence in the past may be more likely to commit future acts of violence. Another argument is that marginalization, such as limited opportunities and an uncertain future, may increase the likelihood of engaging in illicit activities among the refugee community (Depetris-Chauvin & Santos, 2018).

Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2010) outlined five elements that should be studied in folk devils. (1) Concern: A moral panic requires moral issues and certain actions. This worry is usually directed against a group or specific category that is socially portrayed as the folk devil. (2) Hostility: Because moral panics feature folk demons, it requires some hatred and resentment against

individuals or communities who perform this stigmatic action, often in a stereotypically prejudiced and degrading manner. (3) Consensus: A moral crisis requires consensus among its proponents. While a consensus throughout society that a given group or culture constitutes a serious moral threat affords considerable and strong reinforcement for those who fabricate "others" as folk monsters. (4) Disproportion: According to Goode & Ben-Yehuda (ibid.), 'panic' means disproportionality, which might have two meanings. First, a moral dilemma has infected society and threatens to turn it into a moral disaster. Simply put, many individuals assume folk devils affect them when they don't, or not in the same proportion as assumed. The second interpretation pertains to the societal reaction to moral panic. Exaggerations can include the fabrication of figures, the spread of urban legends, and the circulation of imaginative stories involving violence. (5) Volatility: Cohen (1972) depicted moral panics as explosives that explode or subside suddenly. Moral panics, like volcanoes, may remain latent for years before erupting (Cohen, ibid.). Moral panic grows and spreads at varying rates over time, depending on the carriers involved.

3.3.1 Moral panic theory to refugee context

Much of previous research studied how refugees affect hosts' fears of crime. According to Lomo et al. (2001), Ugandan refugee camps created new relationships and connections between refugees and host populations. This research found a negative association that leads to ongoing host-refugee conflicts for several reasons. The host population also assumed Rwandan refugees were engaged in violence and assaults on the host nation with militant organizations, according to their research. Similarly, based on subgroup threats, Akyuz et al. (2023) found that Syrian immigrants increased Turkish residents' fear of crime. To study host and refugee relationships, my research mostly used Goode and Ben-Yehuda's (2010) model of moral panic among Bengalis (the host community), which has five key elements: exaggeration of moral threat and responses, concern about an issue, disproportion of claimed risk, and hostility toward folk devils.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Both the study objectives and the gap in existing literature emphasize the need for empirical investigation of the gang subculture among Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Cultural criminologists typically reject the use of quantitative methodologies in their investigation of the relationships between culture and crime (Ferrell & Sanders, 1995). Therefore, this study employed a transcendental phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994) to examine subjective experiences of gang subculture among Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The primary objective of phenomenological qualitative research is to comprehend the essential or meaningful aspects of an individual's firsthand knowledge with a particular subject. And this is accomplished by conducting a thorough and comprehensive investigation into their personal experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2012). The main limits and ethical issues that prompted this research are described in this part, along with case selection, data collecting, and analysis. The study design outlined above is comprehensively explained in the subsequent descriptions.

4.2 Selection of site

For a phenomenological study, it is not necessary for participants to be in the same location, but the research respondents must be familiar with the study phenomena and able to articulate their subjective experiences (Van Manen, 2023). The research was conducted both at the registered and unregistered twenty six (26) Kutupalong refugee camps located at Ukhia Upazila of Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh. This location was chosen for the study due to the prevalence of Rohingya gangs and their reported crimes in the region's refugee camps. This assertion is supported by existing information, government records, and media coverage. Figure 4.1 on the following page describes the geographical location of the study area along with various data points.

4.3 Case selection

According to Polkinghorne (1989), phenomenological research should include anywhere from five to twenty-five people who have firsthand experience with the subject being studied. This study gathered data from a variety of participants, including five Rohingya gang members from various affiliations, one Rohingya community leader, four representatives from the host community including an elected community leader who were all reported residing near Kutupalong refugee camp, and two law-enforcing personnel with direct experience in crime control and maintaining peace at Rohingya refugee camps.

Figure: 4.1 Rohingya refugees by location.
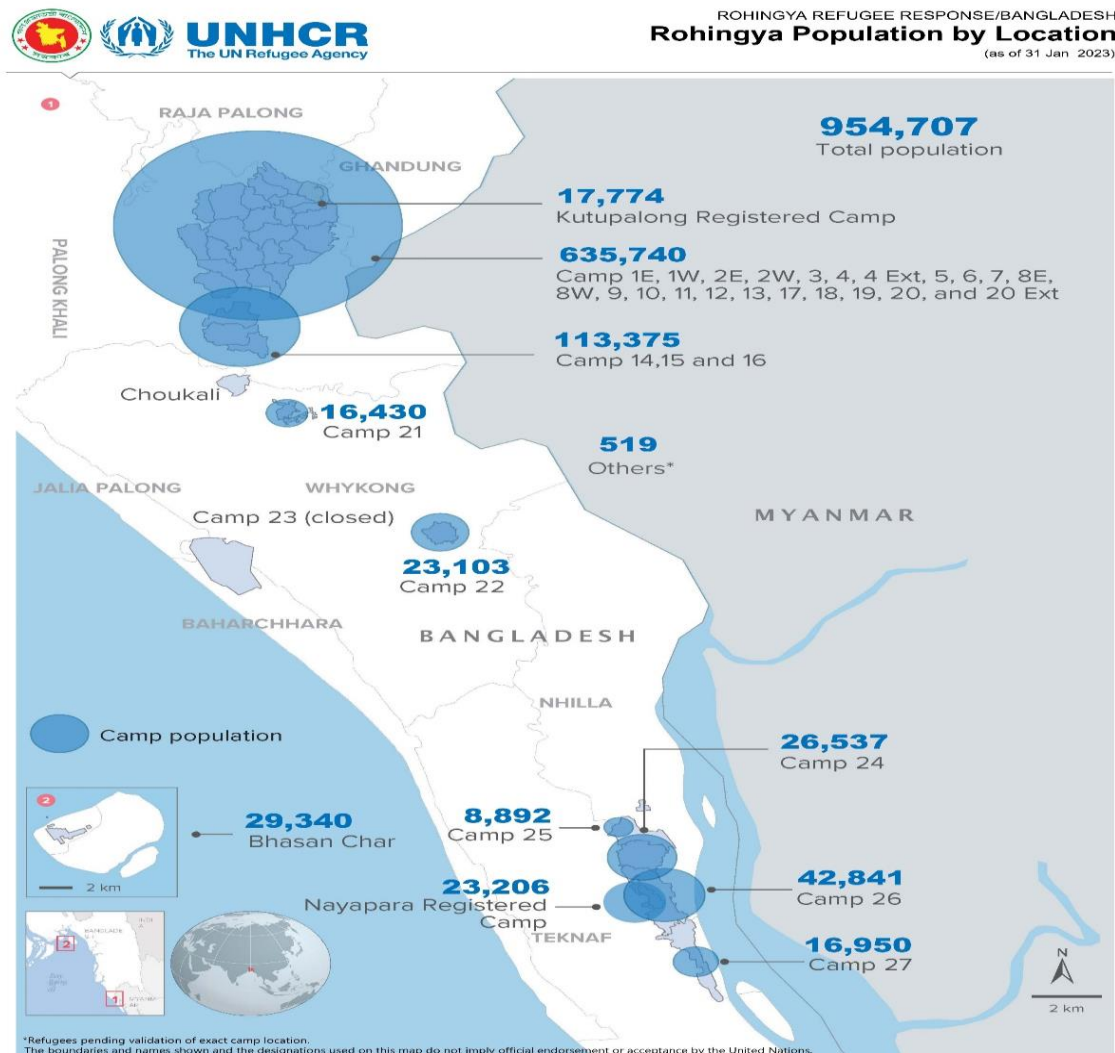
Source: GOB -UNHCR Joint Registration of Rohingya Refugees, 31 January 2023.

For my study, I interviewed a total of 12 participants, all of whom claimed to be at least 18 years old. Due to the lack of registered data regarding the number of gang networks engaged in criminal activity within the Rohingya camps region, identifying and selecting participants, particularly those from the Rohingya gang network, appeared to be challenging during this research. Following a qualitative research approach, "snowball sampling" or "chain referral sampling" is recommended for studying hard-to-reach and high-risk study samples (Penrod et al., 2003; Creswell, 2012). Consequently, the snowball sampling approach is suited for gang members, who are often stigmatized and hard to identify (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). The following is a composite description of the procedure used to recruit participants for this research.

4.3.1 Respondents: Gang members and Rohingya community leader

Participants were selected based on their membership in a Rohingya gang and their age (18 or older). And the respondents that were chosen for this research belonged to different gang affiliations, including those involved in abduction, illicit drug and illegal arms smuggling, and human trafficking. Of all gang informants, three were identified as former gang members, while two were currently active members. These individuals were between the ages of 20 and 34 and had received less than five years of education. Those who stated they had formal education attended Madrasas, Islamic institutions with a primary school curriculum that teaches the Muslim faith. I used both my own personal connections and those of people working for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that aid Rohingya refugees to initiate conversations with members of criminal gangs operating in the camps. Through the utilization of mediator networks, I effectively established communication with members of the Rohingya gang, successfully persuading them to participate in my research. To build up trust and address the research's sensitivity, I explained the research objectives, possible uses of the field data, and a safety plan for interview. Similarly, a Rohingya community leader was chosen to examine gang dynamics in refugee camps from the lens of the Rohingya people using a similar technique.

4.3.2 Respondents: Host community representatives

For this study, six host members were recruited to investigate the perception of the host community towards criminal activities involving the Rohingya gangs in and out of refugee camps. Four participants from the local host community who were reported to reside within a two-kilometer radius of the Kutupalong Rohingya refugee camps were recruited as community member representatives for this study. One of them was reported to be an elected local government representative (locally known as the union parishad chairman), who represents the constituency of several villages near the Rohingya refugee camps. All four individuals are male and possess varying professional backgrounds, which include being a student, a shopkeeper, a farmer, and a political figure. Additionally, they have educational qualifications ranging from primary to graduate level. Furthermore, to evenly explore the culture of gang subculture among the Rohingya refugees, two key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted for this study. One was a police officer, and the other was the Camp in Charge (CIC). These two security officers were found to be officially in charge of and to have firsthand knowledge of Rohingya gang crimes both within and outside of the refugee camps.

4.4 Data collection

Data for this study was collected from February to mid-April 2023, spanning a two and a half-month period. This study employed both primary and secondary data to address the research

questions. Conducting pilot testing is crucial for enhancing the reliability, validity, flexibility, and confirmability of the data-collection instrument (Priddis & Rogers, 2018). Since the qualitative interview is conducted in a conversational manner (Yin, 2015), a pilot study was done with one respondent from each group to decide the kind of questions to include in the interview protocol and to estimate the amount of time needed for data collection. A semi-structured interview protocol was created based on the piloting experience. The following is a comprehensive description of data collection procedures.

4.4.1 Interview protocol formation

An interviewing protocol was developed for this study based on discussions with stakeholders in the Rohingya refugee camps and other studies that used a life-course approach to assess refugee or immigrant gang members. The questions primarily address topics such as childhood, education, reasons for seeking refuge, current living conditions, gang membership and activities, motivations for joining a gang, and perception of violence. Similarly, questions were formulated to focus on host community representatives to understand their perceptions of the actual and perceived fear of gang-related crimes inflicted by Rohingya gangs. All questions were first translated from English into Bengali. Later, since I wanted to do the interview in their native language, questionnaire was then translated from Bengali into Arakan-Rohingya by a Rohingya translator with the author's assistance. During data collection, I found that despite Bengali (the host language) not being recognized as a Rohingya dialect, the majority of Rohingya inhabitants in refugee camps regularly speak and understand it.

4.4.2 Documenting interview

Informed consent, both oral and written, was obtained from each participant prior to conducting each interview session. According to Whittemore et al. (2001), the credibility and integrity of the research design can predominantly guarantee the validity and reliability of qualitative research. To ensure the research's validity, I prioritized establishing trust with Rohingya gang members and host informants. I explained the purpose of the research and conducted interviews in a secure place where informants, especially gang members, felt safe. Two out of five interviews with gang members were conducted in multiple rounds to avoid mentally or physically exhausting the interviewees (because the issues covered are frequently perceived as emotionally tiring), while the remaining interviews were wrapped up in a single round. The duration of all interviews ranged from 45 to 70 minutes. In accordance with Polkinghorne's (1989: p. 57) recommendations for maintaining validity during the data collection phase, I refrained from engaging in irrelevant discussions and avoided influencing participants while they described their experiences. I have employed field notes for gang members who did not provide

consent for audio recording, and for other individuals, I made use of both recordings and field notes. For this study, I followed Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein's (2007) fieldnote guidelines. I included relevant details in the interview, such as the date, time, and information about the individual's age, family, and education. During fieldwork, both verbal and nonverbal data, such as slang, stress, emotion, and body language, were documented as best as possible to get insight into gang members' perspectives of gang subculture, criminality, and perception of harm.

4.4.3 Secondary data

This research utilized crime data obtained from local police stations, various media accounts of Rohingya gang violence victims, and socioeconomic data on Rohingya refugees' daily stressors and challenges from national and international humanitarian organizations, including UN reports. These sources were used in conjunction with interview data to examine and explain Rohingya gang crime in refugee camps.

4.5 Data analysis

Phenomenological data analysis follows a systematic procedure (Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). For this research, I thoroughly examined field data, including interview transcripts, and field notes from various participants, such as gang members, members of the host community, and security agents on multiple occasions. Careful data analysis led to the construction of a framework detailing such aspects of the Rohingya gang subculture as the recruiting process, underlying motives, experiences of life with and without a gang identity, the future, and the perspectives of host communities. During field data analysis, I took note of notable phrases, words, or quotations that reflected the participants' views of the gang subculture. This was done to determine the participants' similarities and differences about certain issues—a procedure called "horizontalization" by Moustakas (ibid.). Finally, I started to concentrate on choosing final themes after utilizing multi-cycle data analysis to group and refine open coding into more general patterns and themes. More information on each level of analysis is provided below.

4.5.1 Preparation

Field notes were used to supplement interviews and provide analytic memos of participant stories. After each day's interview, I elaborated on the minor points and observations of the field notes when I got back from the field to avoid losing them. The detailed notes were translated from the Rohingyas' Chittagonian language to Bengali and English, respectively. And audio recordings (of host community participants) were transcribed, which was found to be time-consuming but helpful for understanding the events. In this phase, particularly I paid attention to the guidelines proposed by Polkinghorne (1989, p. 57) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) regarding

the validity of qualitative research. I played the audio tape and showed the participants the field notes to get their confirmation that the recorded data was accurate. Later, with the help of a Rohingya translator, I double-checked the accuracy of the translation and transcription to ensure that no essential meaning was lost in transit.

4.5.2 Thematic data analysis

Processing qualitative data begins with converting it into a format for categorization and ranking, then finding categories and ideas while carefully analyzing the text (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In doing so, using research questions and insights from the theoretical (subcultural and moral panic) model, I sorted and evaluated all interview scripts to identify important themes and patterns. And the procedure was carried out using a multi-level coding framework. In qualitative research, coding is a crucial stage in data analysis where raw data is transformed into a structured format for easier examination and understanding by the researcher (Lee & Fielding, 1994). For this research, NVivo 12 qualitative data analysis software was used for organizing and coding field data, including interview scripts of gang members and host community members. Nevertheless, I did not fully rely on the software, as the data was diverse and rich. I often used my judgment to identify or cross-check themes related to concepts such as gang member life, living conditions, perception of gang criminality, motivations, education, and childhood memory. Table 3.1 provides details of the coding process plan, which is derived from Saldaña's (2013) coding manual for qualitative researchers. In phenomenology studies, the most used coding frameworks are concept, emotion, in vivo, and causation coding to develop themes (Cypress, 2018).

Table 3.1: Theme-making process using different levels of coding framework.

Coding Stage	Objective	Strategy	Research Questions	Participants	Code/Theme
FIRST CYCLE CODING					
Open coding	Using micro-analysis of interview scripts to identify concepts and ideas.	**Attribute coding:** Participants demographic profile. **Concept coding:** Based on research questions, identify verbatim concept on gang's dynamics, style, motivators, early	RQ1	All respondents	Codebook count 29
			RQ2	Gang members	64

		life, group criminality and perception of violence among hosts, etc.	RQ3	Host community members, Security agents, and a Rohingya community leader	44
SECOND CYCLE CODING					
Pattern coding	Coding of codes. Pattern coding creates category labels that identify conceptual similarity between open codes and assign common meaning to data (Cypress, 2018).	Sequentially splitting open codes under individual lump codes.	RQ1	All respondents	Gang formation and style, Motives for joining Rohingya gang subculture- Background factors, Immediate factors (Neighborhood factors, Financial factors, and Outsider influence factors).
			RQ2	Gang members	Entry to gang subculture, Identity reborn, Brotherhood interaction, Prison memory, Regret and gang exit, Preventing disrespect and earning reputation, Establishing dominance, and End suffering.
			RQ3	Host community members, Security agents, and a Rohingya community leader	Us vs them (Concern), Anti-Rohingya sentiment (Hostility), Fear and harm panic (Consensus), Exaggerated panic (Disproportion), Panic grows & spreads (Volatility).
FINAL CODING (THEME MAKING)					
Selective coding	Reduce the second cycle codes to best few categories to generate the final theme and patterns used for presenting the research findings.	Categories of categories. To create few umbrella themes for each research question, several previous categories are reduced to selective codes.	RQ1	All respondents	Dynamics of Rohingya gang subculture
			RQ2	Gang members	Gang membership & criminality, When harm is absolute
			RQ3	Host community members, Security agents, and a Rohingya community leader	Rohingya gangs as Folk Devil

4.6 Ethics plan

Bryman (2008: pp. 118–124) suggested four ethical concerns for research. The safety of study subjects must come first, followed by participant informed consent. Informants should know the study's purpose and be free to decline interview questions. Ensuring privacy and avoiding deception are the third and fourth ethical issues. The ethical considerations outlined by Bryman (2008) were carefully considered throughout my research into the dynamics of the Rohingya gang subculture. In the following, I'll detail how I dealt with some of the most pressing ethical considerations—such as obtaining informed consent from gatekeepers and ensuring the safety, and anonymity of study participants—in accordance with guidelines set out by the Swedish Research Council in 2002.

4.6.1 Gatekeeper permission

Entering Bangladesh's Rohingya refugee camps requires official permission from government body. As a Bangladeshi citizen, I knew this rule. To carry out my research on the Rohingya gang subculture, I, therefore, applied for official permission from the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) to visit Rohingya camps and other host locations in mid-February 2023. My application assured that the study wouldn't be politically motivated, distort the perception of Bangladesh, or transgress research ethics. Consequently, I received consent from the national gatekeeper (RRRC) to conduct this study in the Kutupalong refugee camps located at Ukiya Upazilla of Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh.

4.6.2 Informed consent and guidance

Mack & Woodsong (2005) claimed that qualitative research frameworks need informed consent from study participants. I interviewed both literate and illiterate people for my study. Thus, I read the Bengali-Arakan consent form to illiterate participants. As an essential document, I got participants' written and verbal consent. Supportive interview guide was used during data collection. In the beginning, I informed participants that the interview was voluntary, they could stop it, and they didn't have to answer any confusing or stressful questions. I also informed them they may withdraw their participation even after the interview.

4.6.3 Safety and risk management

I used the following measures throughout my study to make sure participants felt comfortable sharing their subjective experiences. Because I wanted to make the gang members feel comfortable and gain their trust, I conducted most of my interviews with them face-to-face in a refugee camp. I took field notes throughout the interviews with gang members since all of them were against audio recordings. This is due to the fact that some of them still have to keep their identities a secret due to the risks they face. Furthermore, the anonymity of interviewees was ensured by fictitious code names. For example, gang members were coded as (GM1, GM2, GM3, GM4, GM5), host persons as (HCP1, HCP2, HCP3, HCP4), and security agents as (SA1, SA2). During the interview, my informants were assured that I would not investigate their criminal background, crime scene, or collaborators. Because some interviewees were reported to still have gang affiliations. Documenting interview-end narratives and letting participants hear filed notes help me build trust. The trust was proved when I noticed a gang member who stressed the need to share his experiences to avoid future Rohingyas from following in their footsteps. Reflexivity is the researcher's position "through which meanings are made rather than found" (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, p. 414). As a Bangladeshi researcher, I possessed prior knowledge and familiarity with the subjects, which enabled me to competently conduct this research. Prior

knowledge of Rohingya culture also helped me build rapport. Although I was familiar with the participants' culture and beliefs, I attempted to stay impartial during the whole phases of this research.

4.7 Limitations of the study

Throughout the course of this research, the following limitations have been identified and addressed. Firstly, difficulties arose in developing a study strategy and carrying it out in the field due to the paucity of reports and literature that provided background for the phenomenon of Rohingya gangs. Secondly, since the place of study was reported to be hostile, logistics and security challenges were required to be addressed throughout this study. My affiliation with NGOs and law enforcement organizations served as a safeguard during the data collection process, particularly while interviewing gang members. Thirdly, time and safety concerns restricted me initially from finding and convincing gang members. This research recruited five Rohingya gang members from different crime backgrounds and recorded the composite description of their gang life to reveal Rohingya gang subcultures in host country. However, I don't claim neither this research nor its merits represent all Rohingya gang members or gang networks. Similarly, rather than picking random samples to assess the host population's perception of the Rohingya gang subculture, I selected a range of informants, including some KIIs (elected community leaders, security personnel,) and different professional host community members to evenly represent the host community. The interviews in both the host community territory and refugee camp went smoothly without any difficulties or issues. Most respondents were found grateful for the focus on their concerns. Despite clearly stating my academic researcher role, participants frequently approached me for help with prompting repatriation process to Myanmar, seeking foreign aid, and addressing various everyday challenges.

Then, while conducting in-depth interviews with members of the host community to assess their perception of the Rohingya gang subculture and fear of gang violence, I experienced data saturation and somewhat reality exaggeration (the Hawthorne effect; Merrett, 2006). Finally, the several translation levels made the data collection and analysis process challenging. As it's preferable to analyze data in the local language, I've translated the questionnaire, field notes, and transcription as closely as possible to the original with a Rohingya translator. Some original expressions conveying participants' feelings were left unchanged. Thus, to maintain tone and meaning, I used a native-language quotation and an English translation side by side. The findings of this study may not apply to other gang networks, but for sure, they will benefit refugee crime research and policy from a developing country perspective.

CHAPTER FIVE
Results & Discussion

5.1 Introduction

Using phenomenological data analysis from twelve informants—Rohingya gang members, security agents, community leaders, and the host community—I constructed various themes to answer research questions. This chapter is mainly divided into three subsections based on previously documented themes. Firstly, 'Dynamics of Rohingya Gang Subculture,' where I focus on documenting the formation, styles, and common reasons for joining Rohingya gang subculture. Secondly, 'Gang Criminality and Justification of Harm,' where I explain Rohingya gang violence by documenting their entry, preparation, interaction, identity construction, regret dynamics, and exit. Finally, 'Rohingya Gang as Folk Devil,' where I examine host community moral panic using Goode & Ben-Yehuda's (2010) theory of moral panic: concern, hostility, consensus, disproportion, and volatility regarding folk devils.

5.2 Dynamics of Rohingya gang subculture

For cultural criminologists, the act of transgression is mostly concerned with addressing subcultural problems such as gaining identity and recognition inside popular culture while controlling the destiny of its members (Hayward and Young, 2004). Cottee (2011) expanded this view by applying the subcultural theory of deviant behavior to explain how some members of the culturally marginalized group used jihadism and terrorism as a cultural response to their subcultural problems. Studying refugee gang subculture requires first understanding refugee subculture. In a study with Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, Uddin (2020) defined refugee subculture. Refugee subculture emerges when immigrants or refugees in refugee camps band together for the same goals and accept transgressive actions as a cultural response to the structural marginalization they face (Uddin, ibid.). The subcultural theory of deviance has been employed to address research questions one and two. The following sections will explain the grouped themes, quotes, and prior literature using this theoretical lens to understand the formation, style, criminality, and common reasons for joining the Rohingya gang subculture.

5.2.1 Rohingya gang formation and style

According to Cloward and Ohlin (1961), criminal gang subcultures are characterized by deviant norms, values, different formation, and styles. According to a security agent (2023), there were seven Rohingya gangs operating in refugee camps: the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), Nabi, Asad, Master Munna, Raju, and

Hakeem gang. Although other participants, including members of gangs, have different numbers, I stay with the information given by a state security agent. Therefore, this study identified just seven instead of fourteen operational Rohingya gang networks, which contradicts the findings of the Bangladesh police report (2022). The majority of Rohingya gang crimes, according to participants' testimony, include drug cartels (YABA & Crystal myth), illegal arms trafficking, abduction, robberies, human trafficking, rape, and battle for camp dominance. According to field data, most Rohingya gangs include between five and twenty members who are between the ages of sixteen and forty, and they normally last for one to a few years. During the interview, a 21-year-old gang member claimed that most gangs are named either by their founders' names or the types of crimes they commit.

While analyzing the narrative of a 33-year-old gang member, it becomes evident that various gangs possess distinct territorial jurisdiction within which they conduct their illegal operations. For example, ARSA was known for engaging in transborder crimes in both Myanmar and Bangladesh, whereas gangs such as Hakeem and Nabi primarily operate within the camps and the host community. This was echoed in a security personnel statement where he mentioned that "each gang group has its own jurisdiction and dominance in refugee camps. It seems they divided the whole refugee camp based on their influence and interests," (SA2, 2023). In my research on Rohingya gangs, I didn't come across any visible gang trademarks or symbols that distinguished them from their rivals. To find out why, a 21-year-old gang member said that "in view of gang members' protection and anonymity in our community, we prefer not to use any visible symbol or trademark." Therefore, in contrast to gangs in other regions, Rohingya gang members lack identifiable characteristics for the purpose of analysis and comparison. To ensure the safety of the members, most of the Rohingya gangs were found operating from a secret base or place in the refugee camps along the border between Myanmar and Bangladesh, according to both gang members and control agent interviewees who participated in this study.

5.2.2 Reasons for gang membership

Fagan (1989), in his study, stated that living in a marginalized environment drives individuals to engage in deviant activities to relieve their anger, concerns, and frustrations. And membership in a delinquent group not only facilitates financial gains but also fosters a sense of fellowship and achievement among its members in their collective actions. Similarly, to decode the motivators behind gang loyalty, it is necessary to examine members' past life, such as their childhood experiences and family life (Hagedorn, 2009). The following descriptions provide insight into the key factors that contribute to the formation of the Rohingya gang subculture in

the host country. This section is primarily divided into two main categories based on grouped data. The first category focuses on background factors, including childhood adversaries and traumatic events. The second category explains the immediate factors, including years of marginalized refugee life, that drive many Rohingya youths to join various gang affiliations.

5.2.2.1 *Background factors: Childhood adversaries*

Participants in this study who were affiliated with gangs reported experiencing various forms of hardship during their childhood. In one case, a 34-year-old gang member described his troubled neighborhood and conflicts with neighboring boys. Another young gang member talked about dropping out of school early because he lost his father to a group of Buddhist monks in Myanmar when he was 9 years old. Likewise, 21- year-old gang members talked about the adverse impacts of having a broken family and growing up in poverty. Only GM3 shared about his stable childhood and decent lifestyle until the Burmese military persecution in 2017. However, GM2 has a different story than the rest. Because his parents moved to Bangladesh in 1992 and resided in numerous refugee camps in Cox's Bazar area. Thus, most of his early years were spent in refugee camps. While referring to his childhood, he said, "all I can say is that consider me a half human. Everything essential for normal human half was allowed to me." [Field data, 2023]

5.2.2.2 *Background factors: Traumatic memory during ethnic cleansing*

Refugees endure severe trauma when they are in exile through forceful displacement. Torture, violence, family losses, forced migration, and acculturation challenges during displacement are common traumas among refugees (Weiss et al., 2016). My interviews with gang members revealed that many of them had lost loved ones and possessions in the ethnic cleansing carried out by the Myanmar military's Janta in 2017. Here are some selected narratives of their traumatic memories. A 20- year- old gang member referred to the army of Myanmar as Hynes- who took literally everything from his life. "I witnessed family member killings right before my eyes. I wish they could kill me along with my family," said another young gang member (26). A 34-year-old gang member recalled horrific mass killings in Rakhine state, Myanmar, in August 2027. He described "while torching and killing Rohingyas at our village, those beasts (Burmese army) kept saying—you are all bloody Bengalis, illegal intruders to our land—now die."

5.2.2.3 *Immediate factors: Stateless life at refugee camps*

"Detention camp life" may dehumanize. Life at a refugee camp significantly disrupts cultural transmission, social norms, values, beliefs, societal roles, childbearing, views towards authority, and social relationships among its inhabitants (Thomas 2000: p.223). The study found that both the literature review and the respondents identified various vulnerabilities experienced

by Rohingya as stateless refugees residing in Bangladeshi refugee camps. While mentioning uncertain future and poor living conditions at refugee camps, gang interviewees described the situation as:

"Our fantasies and lives are confined to 20- to 10-foot shacks in which all my family members sleep, dream, and mourn. Every day, we battle to have a full stomach to feed everyone. Several times, I was unable to manage fish and meat for my family for a long period of time" (GM3, 2023). Similarly, pointing out concern for his son's growth at refugee camp, a 34-year-old gang member said, "I can't afford to satisfy my son's desire and help him grow well like a normal citizen" (GM1, 2023). Another gang member commented on the uncertain future, saying, "our life is like a soccer ball, with one kick pushing in and the other pushing back. We really don't know where it will finally stop" (GM4, 2023). A gang member shared his story about how some host community members took advantage of their vulnerabilities. "I was practically half-paid compared to the local workers. When a Bangladeshi worker gets 500 BDT ($5) for 8 hours of labor, whereas I used to get paid 200 BDT ($2). Nobody I have here to complain about this discrimination" (GM2, 2023). [Field data, 2023]

5.2.2.4 *Immediate factors: Status deprivation*

Based on the preceding testimonies, the gang members I interviewed emphasized their stateless stigma throughout the conversation. According to Agamben (1998), stateless people live a "bare life" since the legal system and dominant culture do not recognize them. In his study on Rohingya refugees, Kudrat-E-Khuda (Babu) (2020: p. 9) highlighted this non-citizenship issue as "the Myanmar government designated Rohingya as illegal Bengali immigrants to Myanmar." Bangladesh calls them "Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Citizens (FDMN)." Similarly, in another study, Uddin (2020: pp.67) expressed the Rohingya identity crisis by stating, "we are neither Burmese nor Bengalis, so neither country recognizes us. We believe stateless people have no place in any country since if you live in someone else's territory, they determine your fate."

Following are excerpts from interviews with gang members that address the identity crisis:

> *"We cannot vote, attend school, speak freely, travel without restriction, or own property in Myanmar or Bangladesh because we are not citizens. In Myanmar, Buddhist monks call us "Bengali Muslim intruders," while in Bangladesh, despite our shared language and religion, we are still considered 'illegal outsiders',"* a 33-year- old gang leader (GM2) shared.

> A young gang member (GM5) added regarding stateless identity as *"we now believe that Rohingyas are born without social citizenship rights. Our lives over the past few years at refugee camps in Bangladesh have been like those of a caged bird or a beggar who requires food and money from others."*

A senior gang member (34) shared his frustration regarding the collective denial of citizenship during the interview as:

> "…. *Our present refugee status is not by choice, but by unfortunate destiny. I never imagined I'd live such a life today. Is it a sin to be a Muslim? I'm not sure why the Burmese government is unwilling to grant Rohingya citizenship, although multiple generations of my family have documented residing in Burma. I sometimes curse my creator, Allah, for this existence in which there is no future but a succession of horrific persecution and discrimination.*" [GM1, March 27, 2023]

5.2.2.4 *Immediate factors: Anxiety, discrimination, and retaliation*

For gang members, joining a gang is a way to alleviate the tension and anxiety of surviving in hostile environments (Im & George, 2021) and loneliness (Cowart & Cowart, 1993). Vigil and Yun (1990) conducted research on Southeast Asian gangs in the United States and concluded that many of its members join these groups because they feel socially mismatched in their everyday lives.

A 20-year-old gang member (GM4) I interviewed made a similar point as "I had no option to open a social circle; from dawn to dusk, I am restricted to the same place for years. I found gang life enticing because it gave me friends, job, and money." Considering everyday stresses and discrimination as refugees, a senior gang member commented, "when locals think Rohingyas are terrible and only know violence, it hurts and angers me. It is false. you know...We can't work, leave camps, or do anything without Camp in Charge (CIC) permission. Don't you think this is a clear violation of human rights?" (GM1, 2023). Nearly every gang member interviewed expressed a hunger for the chance and the means to exact revenge on attackers (Myanmar army). A young gang member (21) expressed as "memories from Myanmar are bleeding me every moment. I want revenge…. I want to do anything to teach them. After joining the gang, I now have the chance to teach them and take revenge for the casualties they caused on me and my family" (GM5, 2023).

The above accounts indicate that gang members expressed various frustrations in their refugee lives as motivations for their involvement in gangs. Status deprivation is a key component of a deviant subculture. It justifies violence and transgression because deviants lack identity and status in mainstream society (Cohen, 2013).

5.2.2.5 *Immediate factors: Bad neighborhood*

According to Hochhaus and Sousa (1987), gang membership is driven by friendship, protection, excitement, attraction, and peer pressure. Thai's (2003) study of Vietnamese juvenile gangs in America found that associating with delinquent peers increased the likelihood of joining and committing crimes. In my study, gang members I interviewed acknowledged peer influence, protection, and attraction as a motivation for joining gangs. A 20-year-old active member spoke about peer influence as:

> *"A friend of mine from another camp called me to join their drug trafficking gang. In return, he offered me protection and money. You know, I joined his group without thinking. Now I'm more powerful than ever."* [GM4, March 8, 2023]

A gang member cited personal and family security as a motivator for joining. This is how a 33-year-old gang leader stated the security benefit of gang identity.

> *"Killing people is so easy at refugee camps because there is no fear of being punished. Here, one can kill for just a meal. My sister's husband attempted to protect her from a group of local molesters last year, but they brutally killed him. As of now, none of the culprits have been arrested or brought to justice. I still see them living freely without any fear… you know, 'even animals have the right to be safe, but Rohingyas don't have."* [GM2, April 19, 2023]

One of the five gang members I spoke with curiously described his attraction to gang identity as the primary motivation for joining the gang subculture.

> *"At 22, I joined a gang because it seemed attractive. I found that our Ukhiya Rohingya refugee community feared them and avoided confrontations with them. You know, (...) they could do whatever in our camps without fear. They have guns. I was deeply attracted by that gangster lifestyle."* [GM3, April 04, 2023]

5.2.2.6 *Immediate factors: Financial prospect*

According to research conducted by Vigil and Yun (1998), Vietnamese gang members residing in the United States as refugees report making a decent income via gang activities. Similarly, a 34-year-old gang member spoke about financial gain amid marginalized refugee life as:

> *"I used to make $700 a month trafficking narcotic before I left the gang, money that I could never have saved in a year living in a refugee camp. Since I could support my family with the money I made, I didn't give a damn what the others thought."* [GM1, March 27, 2023]

5.2.2.7 *Immediate factors: Outsider influence*

One host community informant and Rohingya community member connected local politicians (the Mafia) to Rohingya gang formation and networking during field interview. Thus, the elected local government community leader (UP chairman) spoke about the local mafia influence as:

> *"In recent times, local gangs have hired numerous Rohingya people using their disadvantaged position at refugee camps. Local mafias, including politicians, give shelter, money, and guns to Rohingya gangs to increase their power and create a crime network in this region. Those mafias use Rohingyas mostly to do illicit drugs and weaponry across borders. You know …Rohingyas are available work for any payment, even if it's life-threatening or taking life."* [HCP4, April 8, 2023]

When discussing external influence, a Rohingya community leader raised similar concern as,
> *"In the name of help and freedom, both local mafias and ARSA recruit Rohingya people for gangs and use them for different criminal activities. Rohingyas are just trapped on their hand."* [RCL April 05, 2023]

Feelings of anger and hostility are intensified by the experience of marginalization, which is defined by a lack of fundamental needs and an uncertain future. When seen through this lens, delinquency is a way for people to assert their autonomy and independence from the limitations

of the law. As a result, the concepts of identity and rule-breaking become intricately linked to each other (Cohen, 2003).

5.3 Gang subculture and criminality

In his concept of gang subculture, Bauman (2008) argued for a collective feeling in which gang members construct a common style of deviancy within their shared space. Two methods to understand the link between transgressive acts and deviant groups are how deviant identity is developed inside a subcultural network and how members of deviant groups collectively respond to the rejection of mainstream culture (Cloward & Ohlin, 1961). The following are excerpts from interview transcripts with gang members, in which they discuss their experiences entering, preparing for, regretting, and leaving the gang.

5.3.1 Entry to gang subculture

"If you think 'being a gang member' is like agreeing to a set of rules by reading them and signing off on them, think again. Gang identity is a synonym for "gain and death" because you will always have multiple enemies, including rival gangs, law enforcement, and other parties………so, to be a part of it, one requires a great deal of mental and physical strength." [GM2, March 27, 2023]

The 33-year-old ex-Rohingya gang leader who gave the stories above spoke about the risks associated with gang participation and the necessary degree of strength as well as preparedness. Subcultural group members learn delinquent behavior and values of loyalty from the senior members of the group (Becker, 1953; Cohen, 1955). According to this view, all gang members I interviewed described their intense preparation for gang membership in and out of Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh. While sharing his early days, a Rohingya gang leader described his preparation for gangs as,

"...when I joined the arms trafficking gang, my leader instructed me to learn how to use guns and, if necessary, kill people. (slang) I was extremely terrified, as it was my first time handling a deadly weapon. When I first shot a victim, both my hand and mind were numb. Honestly, I will never forget that day in my life. We had a control structure in which youth received training, information, and assistance. Senior group members guide the youngsters. It is like a family where we learn from seniors." [GM2, April 19, 2023].

Another former gang member pointed out mandatory arms training for survival, saying "I was engaged in transborder drug and arms trafficking. We frequently faced attacks from rival organizations and law enforcement in our line of work. Consequently, to part of our group having skills on arms were essential" [GM3, April 04, 2023].

Whereas an active gang member spoke big about his skills and reputation among his gang partners by saying, "it took a long time for me to become a dangerous. My gang named me a 'killer shooter.' You know, hard work always pays off." [GM4, March 8, 2023]

5.3.2 Identity reborn

Upon joining a gang, individuals gain new identity, security, and social support that they may not have had at their previous home (Ponce, 1990). A powerful gang identity exhibits a strong

sense of fellowship among members and derives a sense of satisfaction from instilling fear in outsiders (Hochhaus & Sousa, 1987; Pinson, 2012; Bonet, 2018). In interviews, three gang members said gang identity brought many benefits for them as:

> *"My gang membership was like a second birth for me. Because my lifestyle, reputation among my peers, and place in the community have all altered over the night since I entered this life. In a way, this gangster status was a boon since it provided excellent solutions to the problems of an uncertain future and endless vulnerability."* [GM2, April 19, 2023]

> *"Unlike refugee life, I felt safer and happier as a gangster. Despite the 24-hour death threats and bodily harm, I do enjoy my life with gang members. You know..... if you don't take risks, you can't gain anything. I got shot twice and was saved from the door of hell. I don't know if I can breathe tomorrow or not, but today is "my life, my rule," I'm the king of my own life."* [GM5, March 13, 2023]

> *"My gang affiliation not only supported me financially but also provided opportunities for making brotherhood among gang members, networking with different communities, and having star level security. As a gang member, there is no tension to manage my food, clothes, entertainment, living place, or bill.... (chuckles) You can call it "the luxury of slum."* [GM4, March 8, 2023]

5.3.3 Brotherhood dynamics and trust

Subcultures serve as safeguards, shielding their members from the responses of the larger society (Thorsell & Klemke, 1972).

> *"Even though there were many tragic tales, we shared our feelings, everyday stories, and collective gains when we met. You know, it is like a band of brothers (chuckles). Whatever pain you experienced ultimately vanished as the day ended. I used to consider my partners as members of family. You are really at risk in this line of business if there isn't mutual trust and support within the group. Therefore, our top gang ethic was trust and brotherhood"* (GM3, April 04, 2023).

A young Rohingya gang member recalled his gang interaction as follows:

> *"I see gang members as one big happy family. We stick together and keep each other safe during gang activities. You know, last month, while fighting with rival gang from other camps, one of our brothers got shot at. We didn't let him down; instead, we walked him away to a safe place and managed everything for his treatment. You know we sleep together, eat together, and smile together. Above all, we trust each other."* (GM5, March 13, 2023)

According to Cowart & Cowart (1993), support, power, and mutual respect made gangs attractive. Like my informant's accounts, Im and George (2021) claimed that Somalian immigrants joined gangs for protection and assistance. A former gang member also revealed the devastating effects a betrayal of trust can have on the lives of gang members.

> *"Trust was the primary value that our gang prioritized. I have experienced numerous situations in which my life was at risk. Betrayal by a partner is occasionally the cause of such situations…MIRJAFAR (traitor) is found everywhere. Since then, trust has come to mean more to me than anything else."* [GM2, April 19, 2023]

5.3.4 Prison memory

According to this study, four of the five gang members had bad prison memories in Bangladesh. All four commonly claimed imprisonment was 'like hell.' Here are a few accounts from participants on incarceration in Bangladesh.

"I think I spent a third of my life as a refugee in prison (laughs)... simply another (slang) life. I don't want to return to Bangladeshi prisons since it is a devil's den to me" (GM1, 2023). While mentioning prison culture, another former gang member said, "prison is a land of bad. You must be either a shark or a guppy. You will be a servant for all if you are a guppy" (GM3, 2023). Another 20-year-old current gang member, while in custody, was harassed because of his Rohingya identity, as he explained, "my Rohingya identity was abused there. I experienced mistreatment from Bengali prisoners" (GM3, 2023).

5.3.5 Regret and exit

Out of the five gang members, three reportedly defected for different reasons. While mentioning his long psychological stress, a gang leader explained as "I couldn't sleep without a sleeping pill during my active time in the gang because of anxiety, community isolation, and fear of death. I wish I could restart my life" (GM2, 2023). To consider family safety and avoid community rejection, another senior gang member left the gang. He described as

"Fear of harm to family members and refusal to reintegrate one's own community." He also added that after leaving the group, death threats were running after him. He was reportedly hiding in other camps and couldn't settle anywhere for long. He claimed with big frustration, "I'm their enemy now. I don't know when my life will end between bullets" [GM3, April 04, 2023].

I interviewed a former gang member who claimed that he has been secretly trying to stop as many young Rohingyas from joining gangs at refugee camps.

"Ahr Rohingya Bahio. Haigo Jibone Najaiyon (Don't come to this life at all, brother). Agun Manser Jibon Nayon..(it's not decent human life)... Ane Ak Minitue Moron Aium (you can kiss death anytime or any minute)... you know whatever you earn from this life will come back to you as 'KARMA.'" [GM1, March 27, 2023]

The above accounts demonstrate that despite the fact that they were in grave danger, all three gang members eventually decided to give up their gang membership for reasons such as family protection, fear of violence, and guilt.

5.4 When justifying harm is absolute

By "justification of harm," we refer to strategies in which perpetrators deny the suffering that they inflict on victims while condemning the situation to avoid taking responsibility (Cloward & Ohlin, 1961). This study coined several narratives about gang members who argued for violence and harm in their group actions.

5.4.1 Preventing disrespect and gaining reputation

In a study of the street gang subculture, Sandberg (2009) asserted that the necessity of violence is integral to gang members' efforts to achieve status and prevent disrespect. Following this discourse, one gang member expressed:

"On this dangerous journey, I've had hundreds of memories of single and group harm, both to Rohingya and local people. You know, initially I used to hesitate, but later I got used to it. I started believing violence was the only way I could ensure my influence and earn a reputation with this refugee identity. Perhaps this is called 'gang life,' where emotion has no value." [GM1, March 27, 2023]

5.4.2 Establishing dominance

The need for dominance is one of the major factors in the prevalence of gang violence among Rohingya refugees. Thus, Rohingya gangs do cause concern to both Rohingya and the host populations. (Uddin, 2020; Mamun, 2021). A gang leader said in an interview that how fear helps rule as:

> *"Life has taught me that fear is more powerful than love. You understand my point? As long as you have power, nobody will bother you unnecessarily. I knew people in my community never treated me positively, but they never stepped in to go against my rule... Now, as soon as I abandoned my gang identity, their fear faded.*" [GM2, April 19, 2023]

Another gang member spoke about how to control and instill terror in the neighborhood by using violence.

> "*Beating or harming a single, isolated victim causes alarm among the locals. You don't have to do much to show our power and influence. Everyone fears. So, use fear to control them."* [GM4, March 8, 2023]

5.4.3 End suffering

While examining refugee gang subculture, Ng-Mak et al. (2004) observed that many young immigrants were desensitized to violence and their stated engagement in transgressive activities to alleviate pain**.**

> *"Imagine my suffering in Burma under the military Janta and in Bangladeshi refugee camps. I just thought gang membership solved my marginalization. In this journey, there were countless times I had to cause harm. It doesn't matter who or how many are in front of me. I could bleed for blood money."* [GM5, March 13, 2023]

Deviant subcultures use deviant ideology, exposure, and acts to acquire respect and recognition within their own subculture while justifying harm to mainstream society (Cohen, 2003). Based on the accounts above, gang members rationalized their engagement in violent activities as a means to establish dominance, gain recognition within the wider community, and overcome feelings of marginalization.

5.5 Rohingya gang as folk devil

When studying gang subcultures, it is crucial to consider how outsiders perceive them (Cloward & Ohlin, 1961). From a subcultural diversity standpoint, Lane & Meeker (2000) found that native people living among ethnically different and non-citizen people are more likely to fear crime and harm. Using Goode & Ben-Yehuda's (2010) theory of "moral panic," the following sections describe the perception of the host community representatives, including control agents, regarding Rohingya refugees, with an emphasis on fear of harm.

5.5.1 Us vs them (Concern)

According to Goode & Ben-Yehuda (2010), for there to be a moral panic, there must be moral issues and a reciprocal response. Fear is often aimed at some social category or group that has taken on the role of the folk devil. In my study, host community representatives considered

Rohingya gangs a symbol of the folk devil, instilling fear of crime and victimization among residents residing in close proximity to the refugee camps. Fear of criminality perpetrated by Rohingya gangs, as described by a host community leader as:

> *"I hear complaints from my constituents almost daily as an elected representative. Fear of violence, property theft, kidnapping, and Rohingya confrontations are most prevalent. Since the 2017 Rohingya refugee exodus, tranquility has suffered in this area. My jurisdiction has experienced an increase in narcotics, guns, people trafficking, and abductions over the years. Since serving the constituency before the Rohingya exodus, I've never seen such a rise in crime. Like most people in my constituency, I now fear long-term peaceful cohabitation with Rohingya refugees."* [HCP4, April 8, 2023]

Host community members were interviewed about their impressions of refugee camps, focusing on safety concerns. Host community members gave a variety of accounts about the Rohingya refugee camps, including "epicenter of crime," "fear zone," "warehouse of crime," and "safe haven of criminals." A 22- year- old student from the host community shared his view regarding Rohingya refugee camps as:

> *"It's a [slang] horrible place these days. You will find most of the refugee makeshifts are warehouses of yaba, or crystal myth drug. As I do live close to the refugee camp, at night refugee camps turn into a fear zone where gun fights, people's cries, and screams are regular phenomena. Having breakfast and hearing of one, two, or more killings at camps during turf wars the night before becomes a common occurrence. Along with my Bengali neighbors, my family and I are concerned about our safety at the moment."* [HCP3, April 11, 2023]

All six host community stakeholders, including control agents, agreed on an increase in security concerns in and around Rohingya refugee camps in the Ukhiya upazila of Cox's Bazar district, regardless of their differing perspectives on crime types and group violence. This study's findings are consistent with those of Grindheim (2016) concerning the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya and Girma & Ababa (2016) concerning the Tierkidi refugee camp in Gambella, Ethiopia; in both cases, hosts report feeling unsafe due to gang violence perpetrated by refugees.

5.5.2 Anti-Rohingya sentiment (Hostility)

Moral panic characterizes hatred and resentment towards an individual or a specific community in a manner that is stereotypically prejudiced and degrading (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2010). Although Rohingya and local people have cultural, religious, and linguistic connections (Ansar and Khaled, 2021), the host community people expressed concerns including disputes, anxiety, and fear (Uddin, 2020; Kudrat-E-Khuda (Babu), 2020; Jerin & Mozumder, 2019). Most of my responders justified their choice to attribute fear to the whole Rohingya population rather than simply just gang members. The following excerpts provide insights into the perceptions of the Rohingya community by host community representatives, considering social, cultural, and security viewpoints.

"We are both Muslims, but they are arrogant and lose their temper easily. They fight and quarrel over tiny things. I fear them—truly fear them. They have no work and nothing to do. Since they're stateless, they have no obligations to any state." [HCP1, March 26, 2023]

The perception of Rohingya gang criminality was clearly reflected in the statement made by a leader of the host community.

"The people of Bangladesh initially expressed sympathy towards the Rohingyas as a result of the severe persecution that they endured at the hands of the Burmese military. We helped them by giving them food, housing, and clothes in the early days of 2017. However, as time goes on, we can see their true color. You know, numerically speaking, we are a minority in comparison to them. They currently number twice as many as the host Bengali population, which consists of almost a million people. Many of the villagers living in the adjustment area for the Rohingya camps in my district have recently been moved to other areas while abandoning their homes due to fear of violence or the memory of harms." [HCP4, April 8, 2023]

The accounts clearly demonstrate hostility towards the Rohingya refugee group. This finding aligns with the results of a study conducted by Jerin and Mozumder (2019), which claimed that 66.8% of participants from the local population held the belief that the Rohingya were disrespectful towards their hosts and brought many troubles to the lives of the local community.

5.5.3 Fear and harm panic (Consensus)

Goode & Ben-Yehuda (2010) posit that a moral panic needs a significant consensus among its proponents. When a society widely agrees that a particular group or community is a moral threat, it provides strong backing for individuals or platforms that fabricate "others" as folk devils. In my research, practically all respondents either partly or entirely agreed on the fear of harm from Rohingya refugees. Long-term camp placement affected refugee-host relationships, according to Lomo et al. (2001). In certain cases, hosts blame migrants for their problems. From his interviews with Rwandans living as refugees in Uganda, he found that locals blamed refugees responsible for crimes and assaults on their country. In my study, host participants highlighted many Rohingya's involvement in criminal networks such as drug trafficking, kidnapping of Rohingya and local people, robbery, and teasing, which affects their generation-long peace and stability in this area. Nevertheless, the host community's leader urged against painting only the Rohingyas as bad character. He said that "blaming Rohingyas solely for this security concern is unethical because many locals are now actively part of the organized crime rackets" (HCP4, 2023). Following are scripts derived from field data in which interviewees discussed their personal narratives and heard victimization accounts. Firstly, hosts who fear Rohingya gangs based on others' harm stories say:

"Rohingya gangs play a leading role in regulating the Yaba (illegal drug) cartel network in the region, maintaining active connections with transborder drug trafficking. They mostly sell yaba and crystal myths, ruining our youth. I think it's a million-dollar illegal drug business racket" (HCP2, 2023).

While describing reasons for shifting ancestral house, an informant (farmer) from the host community shared, "*I shifted far from the camp to escape the Rohingya Hakeem gang, who repeatedly abducts and extorts our community people*" (HCP1, 2023).

Regarding family concerns, another host participant said, *"for the safety of my two sisters, we are always tense. My father always wants them to get married quickly to avoid harm from Rohingyas"* (HCP3, 2023).

The following was said by a 48-year-old community leader while recounting the horrific event of five persons being abducted by a Rohingya gang:

"*Four of the five Bengalis abducted from my constituency last month were rescued by police from the closest densely mountainous jungle. Freed victims alleged seven Rohingya gang members abducted and tortured them for ransom. During the hostage period, because of brutal torture, two of them got injuries from broken hands. 'Ara Garib Manus, Ato Taha Koi Paiton, Na Ditum...Ango Kotha Hune, Amago Upor Mardhor Barai Diche... Ai Jibonto Dojokh Dekchi' (We are poor people and couldn't afford the ransom. After rejecting the ransom, they beat us like animals. We witnessed hell during our hostage). Like this, hundreds of host-person victims are reported over the past few years. I must admit that not all Rohingyas are bad people; some of them have indeed been transformed into beasts.*" [HCP4, April 8, 2023]

Due to the prevalence of multiple gang networks, even ordinary Rohingyas were reported to be frightened for their safety inside the refugee camp. This is clear in the accounts of a 32-year-old Rohingya leader (Maji), who stated his fear as:

"*Life is risky 24/7. Gang members believe I and my coworkers are spies and alert Bangladeshi police. My family fears for my safety. In recent months, ARSA, one of the largest refugee gangs, brutally murdered three of my colleagues in different camps. At night, we patrol and avoid deep camp visits for safety. In the refugee camp, we live like this. 'Brother-Ane Aar Lifer Kohan Guarantee Nai' (our life has no guarantee here).*" [RCL, April 05, 2023]

Now, a respondent shared his personal account of how gang violence affected him and his family.

"*Look where I live now. We moved here to save our lives. Allow me to tell you about what happened to my family. I'm known as financially solvent in my community. Before the 2017 Rohingya exodus in my area, nothing bad to call upon. Losing farmland to settle Rohingyas opened the window to my suffering. This way, our days were somehow passing until mid-2021. My real trouble began, however, when, on the night of September 23, 2021, a band of dacoits, subsequently identified as the 'Rohingya Hakeem Gang' robbed my home and abducted my son. That night, a man called my name and asked for aid in my neighbor's name. I unlocked the door of hell without thinking. Before I did anything to stop them, a group of five- to six-armed gang members stormed my house and tied me up in front of the family. Out of fear, my wife began to cry and beg for release. They took my home's valuable assets and my younger kid with them. I spent the whole night crying because I was so terrified that I couldn't even speak. Later, neighbors attempted to save my boy but failed. The next day, an unknown number called and asked me to give the gang member 7,00,000 BDT ($7,000) to save my kid. Following on, I mistakenly informed the cops, which resulted in getting lots of torture videos and pictures of my son while hostage. My entire family was in torment during those days, concerned about our ability to save our son. To rescue my kid, I sold part of my possessions and secretly reached the given location in the neighboring hill forest. My son finally returned to me, and I was more than*"

happy with that. However, I'll never forget that horrible night in my life. To prevent further victimization, we decided that day to vacate our ancestral home and move to a nearby village. Since then, we have resided in this new location." [HCP1, March 26, 2023]

Refugee clashes with hosts are predicted to enhance ethnic tensions and rivalries between them (Shaver & Zhou, 2015). The above testimonies of both the host community members and the Rohingya leader clearly illustrate the widespread fear experienced by both communities. Many hosts relocated as a consequence, and security guards tightened their security measures, such as overnight patrols, to avert more damage.

5.5.4 Exaggerated panic (Disproportion)

In this stage, Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2010) argue that moral panic from folk devils run through two separate stages. First off, panic escalates into crisis when the general public perceives folk devils as a genuine threat, despite the stark contrast with actual reality. Secondly, collective response to the panic by fabricating figures, tales, and media representation. This section examines the reaction of host community members to the panic instigated by Rohingya gangs. Following the first condition, the host community representative's (popular culture) perspective of Rohingya gangs is as follows:

> "*The vast majority of Rohingyas are violent and prone to criminal behavior. They have not received an education and have no interest in doing so. I think the Burmese army expelled them because some of them committed offenses in Myanmar. Here, we housed them, fed them, and provided them with land, and now look at their response; many of them are troubling us, which ended up costing local people's lives. Criminals from the Rohingya community have a reputation for being brutal and threatening.*" [HCP1, March 26, 2023]

Based on participant account, the Rohingya community as a whole was portrayed negatively in the narratives above. To investigate moral panic, Cohen (1972) proposes using this theory to look at how the media and control agencies responded to inflated requests that were seen as threats. Nonetheless, a member of the security force and a member of the Rohingya community raised concerns about the media's unfair involvement in creating fabricated threats and tales during their interviews. Following a view of the security agent informant as:

> "*While not all news is false, there is a notable deficiency in cross-checking. Local and foreign newspapers often report Rohingya crime news without adequately verifying information and statistics. Typically, spokespersons serve as the primary source of news. Therefore, I don't completely trust the authenticity of media news.*" [SA1, April 17, 2023]

Rohingya community leader expresses concern over negative media portrayal of the entire Rohingya community as:

> "*I absolutely disagree with labeling the whole Rohingya people as "criminals." We're not all bad people here, honestly. While some Rohingyas may engage in criminal activity, the majority of us are peaceful.*" [RL, April 5, 2023]

In Australia, Majavu (2020) discovered similar effects with Sudanese refugees. Based on a few incidents, negative coverage in the press in Melbourne, and discriminatory treatment by mainstream culture, the entire Sudanese community is portrayed as an "African gang" and a threat to their peaceful lives and existence. In line with Goode and Ben-Yehuda's (2010) second condition, two of my participants responded as follows:

> For a host community leader "news about the Rohingya crimes have profound implications for me. You know, if any news about my constituency is published or broadcast, I use it as a source to resolve the difficulties. To me, the media serves as a source of firsthand knowledge." [HCP4, April 8, 2023]

> For security personnel who use media news for drives at Rohingya refugee camps said, "In the same way that we take into account public complaints, we also take into account media stories about crimes in Rohingya camps or neighboring areas in order to immediately combine actions at the place of occurrence." [SA2, March 06, 2023]

Both crime and crime control are components of deviant cultures, but their meanings change with their interactions (Bevier, 2015). Through an analysis of host participant accounts and existing literature, this research looked at the widespread negative representation of Rohingya identity in a variety of contexts. In my study, just one member of the host community reported having personal experience with violence at the hands of Rohingya gangs, while the rest relied on accounts from others. Therefore, despite the absence of firsthand encounters with violence perpetrated by Rohingya groups, this study revealed the existence of a noticeable fear of panic among the majority of the host informants. Additionally, security official respondents in charge of upholding law and order at the Rohingya refugee camp also noted that the media's portrayal of Rohingyas has been stained by controversy and sometimes exaggeration.

5.5.5 Panic grows & spreads (Volatility)

Cohen (1972) argues that moral panic may be like a dormant volcano, emerging suddenly after a period of inactivity. This research identified media as a major source of fear in the host community. And the following comment is an example of a person advocating for media trust without assessing the need for fact-checking. Interviewing a 35-year-old host revealed that "I trust media news, especially my son's Facebook news. Not concerned much about the accuracy of the news. We act as a group whenever news of crimes committed by Rohingya in our area makes headlines" (HCP2, 2023). A 42-year-old security agent who has spent years in Rohingya camps described the need of controlling the spread of fake news or exaggerations of facts in order to prevent future conflicts between the two communities and maintain peace and stability in this region. This section presents findings indicating that social media had a substantial role in disseminating fear of folk devils (namely, Rohingya gangs) inside the host members, as compared to other forms of media.

CHAPTER SIX
Conclusion

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the gang subculture style among Rohingya refugees residing in various refugee camps in Bangladesh. Using a qualitative phenomenological research approach, I endeavored to answer the focal research questions, which include exploring the common style, formation, and motivators of the Rohingya gang subculture, followed by an understanding of gang criminality and the perpetration of doing harm within the gang members. Finally, I examined the dynamics of the host-refugee relationship through the lens of the fear and panic that the Rohingya refugee gangs pose. The research was conducted in the Kutupalong Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar district, located in the southeastern part of Bangladesh. Twelve respondents, including gang members, host community representatives, and KIIs (control agents and elected representatives), were interviewed for this study. During the data collection phases, the highest importance was placed on key ethical considerations such as gatekeeper permission, informed consent, participant anonymity, and safety. Using insights from Albert Cohen's "Subcultural theory of Deviance" and Stanley Cohen's "Moral Panic" theory described in 'Chapter three', I analyzed and interpreted the collected field data to document multiple themes and patterns for each research question. Furthermore, to ensure the validity of the data, each respondent verified the authenticity of the field data after either hearing or reading field notes or audio transcription. Recruiting and convincing respondents, specifically gang members and security agents, as well as conducting secure interviews with Rohingya gang members, posed significant challenges during the data collection phase. Despite my prior knowledge of the Rohingyas, I had difficulty understanding the accent and language of the Rohingya people. However, with the help of a Rohingya translator, I managed to address those issues. The details of this process are outlined in 'Chapter four'. In the subsequent sections, I will provide a concise summary of the primary findings for each research question, followed by potential contributions and personal reflection.

The task of identifying a comprehensive portfolio of the exact number of Rohingya refugee gangs appears to be challenging, given the limited data provided by the informants. The number varied among different groups of informants. Through the analysis of field interview data, it was found that mostly seven Rohingya gangs, namely ARSA, RSO, Hakeem, Nabi, Raju, Munna, and Asad, were reported to be actively operating within the Rohingya refugee camp. According to statements from gang members, the most prevalent recorded crimes include drug trafficking

(specifically YABA and Crystal myth), arms smuggling, kidnapping, robbery, human trafficking, rape, and battles for control of camps. The duration of a Rohingya gang is normally one to few years, and its membership ranges from five to twenty people between the ages of 16 and 40. However, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), which was reported to have more than 1,000 members, has been noted as having a major impact on refugee camps and the transborder networks between Myanmar and Bangladesh. Throughout my investigation, I found that gang networks with defined geographical jurisdictions were common. This suggests that individual gangs had successfully established and maintained their authority within specific territories and were found to be effectively managing their gang-related activities within these selected areas. My research also revealed that most gang networks were identifiable either by the founder's name or by the name of the area they dominate. The research findings indicate that gang members employ their own security and protection strategy to reduce potential threats from law enforcement agencies and rival groups. Most of the active Rohingya gangs were found to lack visible indicators of identification, such as clothing, badges, or trademarks to protect their identities.

The loyalty of members to different gang affiliations was found to be influenced by both background factors (childhood adversaries, traumatic memories of being victims of ethnic cleansing) and immediate factors (living as a refugee, undergoing an identity crisis, experiencing an uncertain future, discrimination on fundamental rights, living in a bad neighborhood, security concerns for the family, and outsider influence). Gang members frequently mentioned various factors such as broken families, bad neighborhoods, state denial of citizenship rights, and experiences of discrimination as well as hostility from the Burmese Buddhist community as significant contributors to their childhood adversaries. These problems might be described as racial, cultural, and political prejudice in their country of birth. However, in August 2017, the discrimination based on race evolved into an ethnic genocide backed by the Burmese military, which resulted in the deaths of many of their loved ones and forced them to seek refuge in a neighboring country. Thus, their tragic experiences in the past led many of them to actively seek vengeance.

Gang members mentioned the everyday difficulties they encountered as stateless individuals at refugee camps in Bangladesh, such as the struggle to provide three meals daily for their families, ensure their children's education, and rely entirely on others for survival. Furthermore, they expressed dissatisfaction with their liminality in refugee camps, including restrictions on movement and unfair treatment by members of the host community. As outsiders, they said they had been treated poorly, including being offered low-paying jobs, having their belongings stolen,

and being coerced into participating in illicit activities. Therefore, it was found that the lack of social citizenship rights in Myanmar and Bangladesh, together with concerns about the future, poverty, peer pressure to gain status and possessions, and the risk of violence in camps, were the main immediate factors that influenced many Rohingyas to join various criminal gang networks.

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate the existence of a criminal gang subculture among Rohingya refugees, where juvenile crime evolved into violent adult crime. Their criminalized social conduct was mostly defined by a mix of traumatic experiences, daily stressors as refugees, identity gain, need for survival, and resentment. Except for ARSA, most gang networks were found to have 10–20 members and to be operated in Rohingya refugee camps and surrounding areas. Based on this investigation, the most identified Rohingya gangs were found to have no clear connections to either international militancy or criminal networks.

This study addressed the second research question by examining the characteristics of gang criminality, including entry, preparation, reputation, loyalty, regret, and exit. Being a gang member requires both mental and physical toughness, according to the gang members interviewed. Given the risk that gang activity brings to their life, the gang members I spoke with all felt that comprehensive training and skill with firearms were crucial for their safety. Most senior gang members serve as mentors and assist them in developing this line of work. Early in their gang life, most were found hesitant to kill or harm victims, but with time, they became violent even at the risk of their own injury or death. Respondents who considered their gang mates as family members exhibited two particularly strong gang ethics: trust and brotherhood. With this gang identity, they claimed to be reborn with power and reputation they had never had before.

The research also shed light on how gang members justified violence because of their subculture membership throughout their criminal careers. Both Rohingya individuals and host community members share stories of victimization connected to Rohingya gang violence. Even if it meant violence, one gang member stressed the significance of using fear and rules to gain respect and power within the community. During research, the presence of emotion was found to have no value in gang life because most gang interviewees agreed that 'when the mind is strong, there is no place for emotion.' Furthermore, one gang member argued that punishing sinners is not crime. I found it interesting that younger gang members, in comparison to older gang members, tended to support violent actions.

Not all five gang members I questioned had prison memories. Whoever went to jail in Bangladesh for alleged crimes spoke about abusing Rohingya ethnicity and violating

general prisoner rights. Despite life threats from their prior gang networks, three out of five gang members left their gang identity due to fear of 'KARMA,' 'family commitment,' and 'feeling like sinners.'

The third research question revealed a fear of gang violence among host community members. During this research, host community members expressed worry about Rohingya gangs abducting family members, stealing property, doing illicit business, and posing trouble in their daily lives. The study also found that despite cultural and religious similarities, most host informants described Rohingyas as ungrateful, quick-tempered, and haughty. Initially, the host people helped refugees, but many of them now pose threats to this region's peace and stability. This was further clarified when two host participants spoke of moving from ancestral houses near Rohingya camps to other villages out of fear of Rohingya gang violence. During interviews, nearly all host participants agreed that since Rohingya refugees arrived, organized crimes such as illegal drugs, guns, and abductions in Cox's Bazar district have increased significantly. With my research, I found the controversy surrounding the media's role in reporting crimes committed by Rohingya. While most of the host participants who were Bengali did not challenge the accuracy of the media's news stories, including those from social media feeds. However, the security officers and the elected local government representative (Chairman) sought cross-referencing with official reports. During data collection, host informants largely cited social media's influential role in spreading fears of gang violence. As per field data, host community members were found to react with fear and hostility against the whole Rohingya community whenever news of local casualties is publicized in the media. Hence, the research identified a substantial influence of the media in disseminating fear.

This research examined the collaborative efforts of control agents in addressing media coverage of crimes at refugee camps. Agents in charge of maintaining law and order reported using new legal structures, such as setting up additional facilities at the local police station to receive, document, and investigate reports of criminal activity involving members of the Rohingya refugees. And following media reports on crimes at refugee camps, they increased their coordinated gang root-out operation in Rohingya camps. They agreed that the media fueled local's hostility toward Rohingya.

Most of the host informants I interviewed for this research blamed the Rohingya for the present state of security issues in the southeastern region of Bangladesh. However, only one host member, out of the group, stated how the Rohingya gang had victimized his family; the others were said to be concerned based on stories from their neighbors. Therefore, this study has

identified a significant manifestation of moral panic among the local community living in close proximity to the Rohingya refugee camps. Based on field data, social media in particular had been mostly highlighted by hosts as a key contributor to the spread of fear in this area.

My reflection on this study primarily centers on why I decided to investigate this specific issue, the validity of the samples used, and suggestions for future research. Previous studies and media reports have emphasized the increase in security concerns among host communities due to the influx of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh. This includes a wide range of criminal gang activity as well as associated violence and fear. Despite the growing interest in the subject, few studies have been recorded that examine the subculture of Rohingya gangs, including their origins, style, drivers, or perception of violence. By interviewing Rohingya gang members, security professionals, and members of the host community about the dynamics of the Rohingya gang subculture and the viewpoint of the hosts toward fear of gang violence, this study addressed the current knowledge gap. The reliability of this study may be questioned if generalizations based on five gang members are made. However, when the research is planned around hard-to-reach informants like gang members, larger study samples may not always be significant. In order to enhance the reliability of this research, I have employed a number of methods to evenly present the dynamics of the Rohingya gang subculture, including (1) recruiting gang members from different gang affiliations followed by an in-depth understanding of their gang life from entry to exit, common motivators, and their perception of shared criminality; and (2) examining host-refugee relationships through the security lens of violence and victimization while using data collected from various professional members of the host community, control agents, and elected community leaders.

Future research

In the course of this research, a particular area has been identified that necessitates more academic attention. Specifically, it pertains to the investigation of the host-refugee relationship dynamic in connection with the impact of social media on spreading moral panic by Rohingya gangs into members of the hosts.

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