

Conflict Style of Rohingya Refugee Rejection in Aceh from Face Negotiation Approach

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Abstract

Rohingya refugees in Indonesia were previously welcomed with open arms. However, recently there has been a rejection of the presence of Rohingya refugees in Aceh, both those already in refugee camps and those who just want to dock on the coast of Aceh. This transnational cultural conflict indicates the failure of the communication and interaction process between the two cultures. By applying and extending the face-negotiation theory (FNT) that explains the management style of intercultural conflict, this study explores the case of Rohingya refugee rejection in Aceh with FNT using the content analysis method of media coverage in Indonesia. The purpose of this research is to assess and identify the conflict management styles of the stakeholders in the case. As a result, the government and parliament at the central level tend to display an integrating style, while the government in Aceh and DPRA tend to show an avoiding style, while community leaders and Acehese citizens who are directly dealing with Rohingya refugees tend to dominate.

Introduction

Rohingya refugees are one of the largest ethnic groups who have received bad treatment and live in statelessness in the world in recent decades. This ethnic group mostly inhabits the western part of Myanmar's Rakhine State and the majority are Muslim, but are not recognized by the state as their residents. Anti-Rohingya sentiment occurred after the independence of the country of Myanmar and after there was a lot of Buddhist extremism in the country as the majority spread hatred against the Rohingya ethnic group. In 1982, Myanmar declared 800 thousand Rohingya people in Rakhine stateless and identified them as Bengali (Indian) immigrants, which caused a wave of Rohingya refugees throughout the world (Milton et al., 2017).

While most resource-rich countries have taken an anti-refugee stance, Bangladesh has set a unique example by granting entry and residence permits to persecuted Rohingya from Myanmar. However, there is a national consensus that denies them the opportunity to settle in Bangladesh (Rashid, 2020). As a country that upholds human rights, Indonesia takes a stance to accept refugees regardless of their status as legal or illegal refugees. The Acehese people showed an even more accommodative attitude by accepting them and fulfilling the basic needs of the refugees (Ichsan, 2021).

Indonesia, as a Muslim-majority country, accepts Rohingya ethnic refugees because it feels obliged to help as a Muslim brotherhood. The government has even issued policies several times to accommodate Rohingya ethnic refugees, one of which is providing assistance to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh (Hidayatullah, 2023). However, recently the Acehese people who initially accepted them, now reject their existence, both those already in Aceh and

those who have just landed. As happened in Pidie Regency, Aceh, as many as 180 Rohingya ethnic refugees were refused entry to the grounds of the Pidie DPRK office until they were finally transferred to the Pidie Regent's office. A wave of rejection of Rohingya ethnic refugees also occurred in several other areas where refugees were being evacuated. The treatment of the people of Aceh is very different, when arriving in Aceh in 2015 and 2020, according to Acehnese maritime customary law, fishermen are obliged to help anyone who experiences difficulties at sea (Herawati, 2023) .

Rejection and conflict between refugees and the community can occur due to differences in language and culture. According to Ting Toomey (1982) in Steele (2020) first postulated the ideas of conflict and culture theory by comparing the attitudinal and behavioral characteristics of low-context cultures and high-context cultures in relation to conflict, and he argued that it can be seen as a process. communication and culture are not working well. Meanwhile, Cappiali (2022) explained that the conflict that occurred between local communities and immigrants was due to the absence of persuasive efforts being made to integrate the dynamics of local culture with immigrants who brought a new culture.

According to Avruch (2009), conflicts involving cultural differences occur between individuals and wider social groups because there are cultural boundaries that cannot be violated but are ultimately violated. These boundaries can vary between cultures, social characteristics that are formed in society depending on geography, religion, ethnicity and nationality where the culture develops. Meanwhile, according to Dharmawan (2006), social conflict occurs within a very broad framework, such as agrarian conflict, natural resources, ideology, group identity, territorial boundaries and so on. From the level of depth, conflict can be *latent (covered) or manifest (real or realized)* conflict.

Sirkeci (2009) states that transnational migration can influence conflict because there is a movement from insecurity to human security on the one hand. But on the other hand, there are also those who feel safe and have become insecure. Meanwhile, increasingly rapid interactions in the exchange of information in an increasingly developing era can make conflict and violence against ethnic groups between countries increasingly predictable (Weidmann, 2015) .

In (Griffin et al., 2019) , Stella Ting-Toomey developed a *face-negotiation approach* by referring to verbal and non-verbal messages that help maintain, restore and uphold goals in interactions (*facework*). In describing the conflict that occurs, culture and the type of facial concern determine how the conflict management style is carried out. Using a *face-negotiation approach*, this research seeks to reveal how conflict management towards Rohingya refugees in Aceh is relevant to the context in Indonesia, which basically has characteristics of collectivism. Apart from that, this research also seeks to explain the conflict management carried out by stakeholders *in* dealing with Rohingya immigrants seeking asylum in Indonesia, especially in Aceh. In this way, it is hoped that this research can predict conflict management and similar problem patterns so that they do not happen again.

Literature Review

Face-negotiation theory

In Griffin et al. (2019) , Ting-Toomey revealed that there are three concepts in *face-negotiation* , namely cultural type, facial concern type, and conflict style type. The emphasis on conflict styles is faced with individual independence and group solidarity will mutually refer to the extent to which people are relatively autonomous or connected to other people. This is like what happens in America, even though individualist culture is the majority, there are people there who are interdependent with each other with their collectivist culture. In terms of concept development, Ting-Toomey continues to develop concepts that continue to expand the reach

of the theory. Since its inception, the theory was developed in countries with an individualist concept (Western countries) and spread to countries with a more collectivist concept (Asian countries). In the next stage, the concept of collectivism also has new concepts that cannot be ignored to be included in the framework of conflict management.

Based on M. Afzalur Rahim from the University of Kentucky, Ting-Toomey developed five styles of response types to facial concerns in conflict management, namely *avoiding*, *compromising*, and *obliging* (accommodating) as part of a collectivist culture, while *integrating* (integrating) and *dominating* (dominating/competing) are part of an individualist culture. However, for some time, research conducted by Ting Toomey, Oetzel, and many other cross-cultural researchers has identified three main conflict styles based on the results of research on the four cultures of China, Japan, America and Germany, namely: dominance, avoidance, and integration.

Initially, Ting-Toomey also explained that collectivist and individualist cultures were the background in determining the conflict style that would be taken. The relatively collectivist culture possessed by countries in Asia tends to adopt a style of avoiding conflict. In contrast, countries in America and Europe that have relatively individualistic cultures tend to face conflicts with a domination style. However, after several studies were conducted, a cluster emerged that prioritized integration in dealing with conflict. In this way, he refined the theory based on face concern:

Ting-Toomey and Etzel use this as an umbrella term to refer to three groups of 11 *facework strategies* (Griffin et al., 2019) . The following table illustrates these differences:

Table 1. *Facework* and clusters in conflict management

Domination	
Endure	Defend your opinion and try to convince others.
Expression of Feelings	Express feelings and emotions verbally
Aggression	Making direct or indirect actions to harm
Avoidance	
Give up	Accommodate other people's requests
Pretend	Act as if the conflict never happened
Third party	Seek third party assistance to resolve conflicts
Integration	
Apology	Say sorry for what you did
Private discussion	Avoid confrontation in open spaces
Stay calm	Be calm during conflict
Problem solving	Commit to integrating common goals
Respect	Show appreciation and respect by listening

Source: Griffin et al. (2019)

Conflict Style

Conflict is a disagreement or difference of opinion between group members regarding personal or group issues due to disagreement about ideas, preferences and views (Jehn et al., 2008) . According to Wilmot & Hocker (2017), conflict style provides a comprehensive picture of the direction and goals of a person's communication in dealing with conflict. Although individuals have a dominant conflict style, conflict styles can be changed in relation to certain situations.

Facing conflict is a combination of internal factors, namely cultural background, personality, and so on, with external factors, namely certain circumstances and conditions.

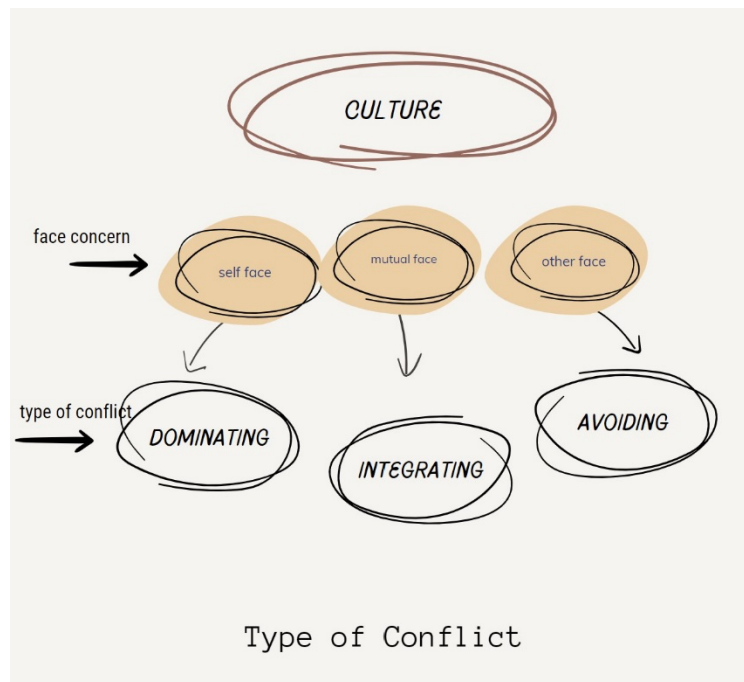


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Face Negotiation Conflict Management

Source: Griffin et al. (2019).

Methods

This research is qualitative research with a content analysis method by collecting data in the form of comments, opinions and opinions obtained from online news and videos (both news and opinions on social media) on various online news platforms and video news obtained online related to with the conflict and rejection of Rohingya refugees in Indonesia, especially in Aceh. This data will be the unit of analysis, and is obtained by using an online search engine (*google.com*) and video platform (*youtube.com*) using the keywords *Aceh and Rohingya, Rohingya Rejection, Government and Rohingya*. Data in the form of news was collected between November and December 2023 after the rejection of Rohingya refugees became an important issue in Indonesia.

The data used comes from 7 (seven) news stories and 4 (four) videos which can describe conflict management carried out by the central government, regional government and the community in dealing with conflicts with Rohingya refugees. The data obtained was then grouped into 4 (four) stakeholder categories, namely, central government, regional government, Aceh residents and communities outside Aceh. From this data, researchers analyzed the categories of face concern. based on comments submitted by stakeholders. After that, the analysis continues by interpreting the comments to be clustered according to the conflict management style that is in accordance with the theory.

Results and Discussion

The rejection of Rohingya refugees in Aceh has become an issue that has been widely discussed both in the news media and on social media in the period November-December 2023. Various news portals and social media have featured news regarding Rohingya refugees whose arrival

in Aceh has been refused. Like a 'time bomb', the rejection of the Rohingya was a turning point in the open attitude of the Acehnese people towards this largest stateless ethnic group from the start.

From the search results, several responses or statements from stakeholders were obtained and grouped as follows:

Comments/Responses from the Central Government and DPR RI

Table 2. Statement of Stakeholders at the Central Level

Communication Actor	Statement	Statement Code
Indonesian President Joko Widodo (Yanwardhana, 2023)	<i>“Temporary humanitarian assistance to refugees will be provided by prioritizing the interests of local communities”</i>	Statement 01
	<i>"I received reports about Rohingya refugees increasingly entering Indonesian territory, especially Aceh province. There are strong suspicions that the TPPO network is involved in this flow of refugees."</i>	Statement 02
Member of Commission III DPR-RI M Nasir Djamil (Fajri, 2023)	<i>"The problem of Rohingya refugees who continue to arrive at several points on the coast of Aceh such as Sigli, North Aceh, Bireuen. The government must be serious in dealing with this Rohingya problem,"</i>	Statement 03
	<i>"Hopefully the rejection of the arrival of Rohingya in Aceh can find a better solution such as moving the refugees to a place that is possible and safe,"</i>	Statement 04

Comments/Responses from the Regional Government and the Aceh People's Representative Council

Table 3. Statement of Stakeholders in the Province

Communication Actor	Statement	Statement Code
Acting Governor of Aceh, Achmad Marzuki	<i>"We will immediately look for a solution regarding the increasingly turbulent society expelling Rohingya refugees from Aceh. Indeed, there is not an area specifically for Rohingya refugees, especially if there are thousands of them and having to fulfill their basic needs is quite difficult. Maybe that's the reason society rejects it like that."</i>	Statement 05
Chairman of Commission I DPR Aceh, Iskandar Usman Al-Farlaky	<i>"This condition occurs due to the unclear attitude of the Central Government in dealing with international refugees, which should have a definite attitude regarding the Rohingya because they are continuously landing in Aceh."</i>	Statement 06

Comments/Responses from Aceh Community Leaders and Village Heads

Table 4. Stakeholder Statements at Regional and Village Levels

Communication Actor	Statement	Statement Code
Head of Blang Raya Village, Aceh, Rijalul Fitri (Ramadhan, 2023) .	<i>"We stayed up all night to not allow them to dock (and land)"</i>	Statement 07
	<i>"We want them to be moved as soon as possible. We don't want to catch the diseases they carry."</i>	Statement 08
West Aceh Laot Commander Amiruddin (Bahri, 2023) .	<i>"So far, no Rohingya boats have entered the sea waters of West Aceh. However, precautions need to be taken."</i>	Statement 09
	<i>"If we look at the existing conditions, there is no comfort for the surrounding community, due to the behavior of the Rohingya."</i>	Statement 10
Laot Pidie Commander, Hasan Basri (Wahyuma, 2023)	<i>"The behavior of the Rohingya refugees is very disturbing, ranging from sexual abuse, theft, running away to a living system that is considered dirty. Some of them directly throw feces in the ablution area, and this is what we really don't like."</i>	Statement 11
	<i>"We appeal to the public if they see Rohingya refugees at sea to stay away from the coast of Pidie, because later this will be detrimental to the people of Pidie themselves."</i>	Statement 12

Comments/Statements from Acehese Citizens

Table 5. Statements and Reactions in Acehese Society

Communication Actor	Statement	Statement Code
Resident of Sabang City, Aceh, Eni	<i>"We ask that he (Rohingya) immediately move from Sabang City. Bringing their disease here... destroying the people of Sabang. "</i>	Response (Video) 13
Resident of Pidie Regency, Kis	<i>"We don't accept them here because it is very disturbing"</i>	Response (Video) 14
Acehnese (Rohingya Ethnic Language Teacher) Cut Anggi	<i>The Rohingya were ungrateful because they threw away the clothes given by residents. "This happened because it did not match the daily clothing worn by the Rohingya ethnic group."</i>	Response (Video) 15
The actions of Acehese students were reported by tvOne journalist Nofri Affandi	Hundreds of BEM Nusantara Aceh students visited Rohingya ethnic shelters to forcibly relocate them as a form of unrest. The Rohingya were scared and crying due to the actions of students who threw things at them.	Response (Video) 16

Conflict Management between the Central Government and the DPR

From the data above, the response of the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, regarding the rejection that occurred to Rohingya refugees, was addressed by prioritizing an integrated conflict management style (statement 01) by displaying a calm *face and solving problems*. The public's request for the central government to immediately take firm action by expelling Rohingya refugees was also responded to calmly and without being provoked. Statement 01 displays an attitude of not wanting a wider conflict by trying to provide assistance to Rohingya refugees. From statement 02 the government also displays *the facework* of paying respect by listening. The government listens to the complaints of the people of Aceh while still prioritizing humanity and also does not forget about providing assistance to the local people of Aceh.

Statement 02 delivered by the president was also interpreted as a *facework* for solving the problem. In the statement, it was stated that there were indications of criminal acts of human trafficking (TPPO) which had caused many Rohingya refugees to head to Indonesia. Resolving TIP problems can be an entry point to resolving these problems and reducing the possibility of wider conflict.

Slightly different, the Indonesian House of Representatives also adopts a conflict management style of avoidance with facework asking third parties as explained in statement 03, which asks the government to resolve the Rohingya refugee problem with the aim of preventing the conflict from spreading further. The DPR also proposed that the government relocate the Rohingya refugees to a safer place through statement 04. Statement 04, the DPR presented a facework asking for help from third parties for the common goal of not spreading the conflict (between the people of Aceh and the Rohingya refugees).

The conflict management style based on *face negotiation theory* adopted by the government is integration. The government is a representation of the country which must prioritize integration in every step and action when horizontal conflict occurs in society. Moreover, the Rohingya problem is a humanitarian problem that has become the concern of many countries in the world and has not yet found a concrete solution. Therefore, the government's steps are an integration step as a *win-win solution* for the interests of the Rohingya and the people of Aceh.

The DPR is taking more avoidance steps *by* asking the government to resolve the problem. This is done because the government has executive authority and has the resources to solve the problem. The DPR as a legislative institution only supervises the running of the government, therefore the DPR can only propose that the government intervene in the conflict.

Conflict Style between Regional Government and DPRA

The Aceh Government, in this case Acting. The Governor of Aceh through statement 05 presented a problem-solving face by seeking a solution for the Rohingya refugees. In this statement, a *face* of respect was also shown by listening to the reasons of the citizens who rejected the Rohingya refugees so that they understood the rejection that had occurred. However, unlike the Acting Governor of Aceh, the Aceh DPRA took conflict management steps through avoidance. As illustrated in statement 06, the DPRA emphasized the responsibility of the central government as the reason the conflict occurred. It is considered that the central government has not provided clear policy direction so that Rohingya refugees continue to land in Aceh. *The facework* shown in this statement is handing over to a third party, in this case the central government.

As a stakeholder who has authority and is directly dealing with community aspirations regarding the rejection of the Rohingya ethnic group, the Aceh government also prioritizes

integrated conflict management. On the one hand, the Aceh government is obliged to protect its people because they feel uncomfortable with the presence of refugees, however, on the other hand there is a humanitarian aspect that must be maintained. Slightly different from the Aceh DPRA, instead of looking for solutions to problems (integration), the DPRA displays the face of imposing problem solving on the central government (avoidance).

Conflict Style of Community Leaders and Village Heads

Community leaders and village heads are the next stakeholders analyzed in this research. In statement 07 the village head said that they were on guard to anticipate the arrival of the next wave of refugees. *The facework* shown in this case is survival. In statement 08 the facework shown is self-expression, where he expresses his desire for refugees to immediately leave his area who are considered to be carrying disease.

Similar statements were conveyed by community figures in statements 09, 10, and 11 by displaying defensive *facework* and expressing their emotions towards Rohingya refugees. Even in statement 12, it displays an aggressive face that urges the public to keep away refugees who want to land and return them to the sea. This is considered aggression because it has the potential to cause physical conflict that causes injury. Apart from that, returning refugees to the open sea has the potential to result in the refugees not being able to survive at sea.

From the findings, village heads and local community leaders display a dominant conflict management style, because as parties who have direct closeness, they are expected to be an extension of residents who feel threatened or disadvantaged by the presence of refugees. The presence of refugees is considered a threat that can affect the condition of the people of Aceh. In this situation, the role of community leaders and village heads certainly prioritizes the interests of their citizens rather than the interests of refugees. Apart from that, village heads and community leaders also do not have sufficient resources to take solution steps as part of the integration style, because they do not have the authority and facilities.

Acehnese Conflict Management

Aceh residents are the ones who interact directly with Rohingya refugees every day. In video statement 13, a resident said that refugees must leave immediately because they are considered to be damaging residents and carrying disease. Likewise in video statement 14, where residents consider refugees to be disturbing. *The facework* in this statement is an expression of the residents' emotions towards Rohingya refugees.

In video statement 15, it was conveyed about the shortcomings of the Rohingya ethnic group, who refused to provide clothing provided by residents because it did not suit the refugee's clothing style, resulting in the residents ultimately refusing. This is considered a cultural clash that occurs between two different cultures. As local residents who have lived in the area for a long time, the self-image (*face*) displayed by Acehnese residents is that of owners and consider refugees as immigrants who must adapt to the local culture. The language differences between Acehnese and Rohingya resulted in limited understanding between the two and became one of the factors that supported this cultural clash. The facework displayed by the people of Aceh in this case is survival.

Video statement 16 shows how Acehnese students who demonstrated against refugees also did things that could hurt refugees by throwing things at refugees who were dominated by women and children. It can be seen in the video that they also forced the refugees to leave the shelter location to another place by cheering on the refugees. *The facework* shown by the video is aggression towards Rohingya refugees.

From the statements made and the actions taken by Acehese people, they consider *the face* displayed by Rohingya refugees to be a threat to their *face*, so this is what causes the conflict management style displayed to be domination. The findings and analysis are summarized in clusters in the following table:

Table 6. Summary of Conflict Management Style Analysis

Communication Actor	Statement Code	Key statement	Facework	Conflict Management
President Joko Widodo	01, 02	Providing humanitarian assistance. Prioritize the interests of local communities. Indications of human trafficking.	Stay calm Problem solving	Integration
Member of Commission III DPR-RI M Nasir Djamil	03, 04	The government must be serious. Proposing the government move the Rohingya to a safe location.	Request third party assistance	Avoidance
Acting Governor of Aceh, Achmad Marzuki	05	Looking for solutions to problems Maybe that's the reason they refused	Problem solving Pay respects	Integration
Chairman of Commission I DPR Aceh, Iskandar Usman Al-Farlaky	06	The central government is unclear about handling it	Request third party assistance	Avoidance
Head of Blang Raya Village, Aceh, Rijalul Fitri	07.08	<i>Not allowing them to dock We want them moved as soon as possible</i>	Endure Emotional expression	Domination
West Aceh Laot Commander Amiruddin.	09.10	<i>Anticipation needs to be done There is already no comfort for the people around</i>	Endure Emotional expression	Domination
Laot Pidie Commander, Hasan Basri	11, 12	<i>The behavior of refugees is very disturbing, starting from sexual abuse, theft, running away.</i> Urge to keep refugees away from the Pidie coast	Endure Emotional expression	Domination
Resident of Sabang City, Aceh, Eni	13	<i>Bringing their (Rohingya) disease here</i>	Emotional Expression	Domination

Resident of Pidie Regency, Kis	14	They (Rohingya) are here because it is very disturbing	Emotional Expression	Domination
Acehnese (Rohingya Ethnic Language Teacher) Cut Anggi	15	<i>Rohingya were ungrateful because they threw away the clothes given by residents</i>	Endure	Domination
The actions of Acehnese students were reported by tvOne journalist Nofri Affandi	16	The Rohingya were scared and crying due to the actions of students who threw things at them	Aggression	Domination

The situation of rejection of Rohingya refugees in Aceh is a humanitarian dilemma resulting from a communication process that is not going well between Aceh residents and Rohingya refugees. According to *face negotiation* theory, all groups consisting of individuals have formed their social image when dealing with other groups. Therefore, the possibility of a cultural clash which is termed *face* is very large, especially since there are language limitations to be able to understand each other and understand and integrate *the faces* of both. The people of Aceh initially accepted it with open arms and this indicates that the culture of collectivism referred to by the *face negotiation approach* is still relevant. However, due to the fear of losing *their face*, they are encouraged to display dominant *facework* to save and protect that *face*. Village heads and community leaders have conflict management styles that are not much different because they are on the same *face* and *face as the people who refuse*.

This research also sees rejection as a result of the existence of a non-reciprocal *face (mutual relationship)* between Aceh residents and Rohingya refugees. The arrival of a large and continuous number of refugees means that the Acehnese must involve themselves in meeting their basic needs while they are in refugee camps. However, it was felt that this action did not provide a mutually beneficial relationship. This was confirmed by what was conveyed by the Acting Governor of Aceh who understood the rejection because the people of Aceh felt they continued to be obliged to help meet their basic needs.

From the research findings, the differences in conflict management styles carried out by stakeholders in government and legislative institutions, namely avoidance and integration, are different from the conflict management styles displayed by Aceh residents and community leaders and village heads in Aceh. The government and legislature have a more careful *face* in handling this problem, because on the one hand the Rohingya problem is a humanitarian problem that must be resolved by countries in the world, including Indonesia, but on the other hand the interests of the citizens are also the main thing.

In addition, this research supports the statement of Oetzel et al. (2001), who see the situational aspect, namely the relationship and power between the interacting parties. Aceh residents and community leaders and village heads have relatively equal relations with Rohingya refugees, namely relations between threat-threat, local residents-refugees, and so on. Meanwhile, the government and parliament have unequal relations and powers because they see the relations and powers as immigrant countries towards Rohingya refugees, who must also be protected. It is different if the Rohingya refugees as a group of entities have carried out anarchic actions that have the potential to disrupt state sovereignty and eliminate the people in Aceh, then the relationship becomes a state-threat, which allows the government to adopt a domination conflict management style.

The situation of rejection of the Rohingya ethnic group in Aceh could also be caused by the diffusion of inter-ethnic conflict that previously occurred. For years, the Rohingya have lived in endless conflict, as well as the conflicts that occurred in the countries where they fled, resulting in the diffusion of conflict in new areas, especially as the areas they were traveling to had also been in conflict situations.

Conclusion

Face negotiation assesses those countries in Asia, including Indonesia, are classified as having a collectivist *face* which tends to construct an interdependent *self-construal*. to respond to conflict so that conflict management tends to be accommodative, compromise, avoidance and integration. Collectivism is synonymous with larger goals and mutual relationships between individuals or groups. However, in practice, this label cannot always be applied when assessing conflict management and handling of conflicts that occur. The concept of *face* is the identity of a person or group that can be lost, strengthened, or protected so that in a process of interaction and communication that does not go well, the assumptions of collectivity or individuality can no longer be used as a reference. More depth is needed into *the face* and *facework* that is formed to assess conflict management.

The need to eliminate inhibiting factors in the communication process can be an alternative in making communication successful in all forms of culture, both collectivism and individualism. Apart from that, by looking at other variables such as situations, conditions, relationships, and strengths between interacting parties, reconstruction of self-image and facework in carrying out conflict management can be carried out, making it more useful for conflict mediators and academics in assessing and resolve conflicts.

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