



# Exploring the relationship between distinct identity formation and urban climate displacees in a post-migration context

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## Abstract

Human displacement—be it of any type, is an ancient phenomenon. It is well-known that the causes of migration are interwoven. The process is complex and holistic. Environmental degradation significantly contributes to this process. The necessity of a distinctive identity-tag for climate migrants is crucial for the proper conceptualisation of such migrants as a part of the entire migratory process. Failing to do so will leave the population in a vulnerable place to receive appropriate and adequate help. Climate-induced migration is a reality. In such a case, this paper investigates the identity formation among the displacees in an urban context. This research is mainly qualitative and adopted the in-depth interview method to understand the context of climate migrants or displacees living in the slums and squatter settlements of Khulna city. Using coding and categories, we have reviewed the information several times and have noted quotations from the interviews. We have studied the data to identify themes and concepts from the literature. This research inquires into the identity formation of the displacees and suggests that proper identification for such migrants is inevitable to ensure their entitlement to various human rights.

**Keywords** Climate change · Displacees · Migration · Unique identity · Urban · Bangladesh

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## Introduction

This research investigates the climate change-induced migration and the development of identity among the urban displacees in the post-migration context. Human mobility is an ancient phenomenon. Some 80,000 years ago, humans had left African Homelands to spread over the world (Gugliotta 2008). The conventional discourse of migration suggests ‘relatively permanent movement’ (Shaw 1975) over a distance, though it can be of other types too (Human Migration Guide 2005). A study suggests that the definition is not as straightforward for internal migration (Kok 1999), yet it involves peoples’ movement across a distance. Migration is a complex process. Many factors act on the process concurrently. Climate change has been one of the key contributing factors to it. Studies show that climate change has been a solid driving force that can cause human mobility (Ullah 2013; Brown 2008). Scholars have recognised the necessity of exploring climate change-migration link to better comprehend the process (Dun 2011; Kartiki 2011; McLeman 2018; Praag and Timmerman 2019; Warner 2010a). When climate displacees (Stojanov et al. 2016) relocate because of climatic extremities, they often receive inadequate and inappropriate (Mukaddim et al. 2020) treatment. It is not easy to separate the climate change-induced migration from the economic one since both are integrally intertwined. Hence, different policy formations for these two poses difficulty (Adamo 2003; Henry 2006).

This study also inquires into the need for the identity base for climate change-induced migrants. Due to the absence of categorisation (Ullah 2012), most host countries consider them economic refugees. As Berchin et al. (2017) suggested, once this type of migrant is entitled to some refuge, the ‘climate’ tag becomes redundant. They receive protection and assistance similar to those of political or other kinds of refugees. The absence of a standard term for such migrants raises difficulty assessing their actual situation (Keane 2004; Berchin et al. 2017). Also, policy support provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is insufficient. Myers (2005) argues that it is also ineffective for such migrants. Rights and safety for climate displacees are essential. Identity is the knitting force for the rights and safety of climate migrants. These displacees will be dependent on and unproductive (Ullah 2012, 2013) in the community and society. The gist of the literature pieces invites a study into exploring the link between climate-induced migration and the formation of a collected awareness among the displacees in a post-displacement setting. This research explores and analyses displacees’ connection with place and people and points to the necessity of acknowledging the sense that the displacees grow over time.

## Climate-induced migrants: an identity in the making

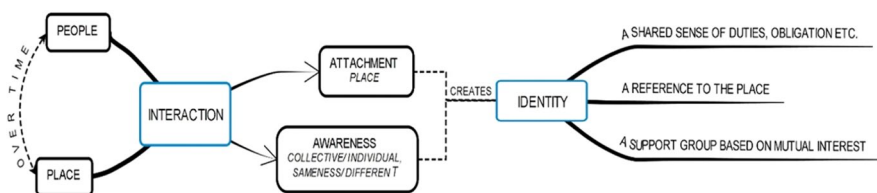
### A generic definition of identity

The scholarly literature defines identity from different perspectives. It is a term that describes who one is in a socio-cultural context, what their roles are, and the social

traits and norms they must abide by (Oyserman et al. 2003). This definition emphasises the functional aspect of the term more than the psychological aspect. Another meaning of the term leans towards how one perceives themselves among ‘others’. Moreover, constructing one’s perception of the self to their context can be coined as identity (Oyserman 2001). According to Lewis (1990), identity is a significant consciousness of the self as a human being for their role as members, their functions, and relations with other social groups or members in the society. Since it governs the services that members avail from the referenced community, İnaç and Ünal (2013) define the term as a social phenomenon of interaction with or against the ‘other’. Most definitions of the term somewhat resemble the mentioned ones, illustrating it from perception or the functions. Often, the meaning comes from combining both the referential points. In combination, the aspects of each standpoint make a more practical sense of the term. Once it receives an acknowledgment from the context it is being developed in, its influence becomes apparent. The individuals or groups it encompasses exercise its traits. So, seeking a functional definition is the initial step to comprehend the emergence of identity better. Figure 1 shows the identity-making process for urban migrants.

### Emergence of identity in the post-migration urban context

The definition of identity manifests the perceived awareness of an individual or a group. The sense of awareness comes from the migrants’ prolonged temporal interaction with the place and the people. They grow a connection to both. Hauge (2007) argues that the principal purpose of such attachment is to construct self-awareness. This consciousness can develop in a collective whole. Solid group awareness is also politically significant for that group (Stivachtis 2008). The sense of sameness or difference comes into play with attachment to place. Migrants from different parts staying together are found to have a sense of closeness. Such a collective notion of wholeness constructs a more robust group identity (Pruitt 2001). It also enhances the functionality of the group as a whole. As the identifying traits and characteristics are a part of the common consent, group identity plays a vital role in resolving various issues among groups with unique identities (Pruitt 2001). In contrast, Brewer (1991) claims that the bigger the group’s size, the weaker its identity. However, since we cannot one’s identity in isolation (İnaç and Ünal 2013), likewise the group identity



Source: Authors’ own draft, based on secondary literature survey.

**Fig. 1** Identity making through interactions of people and place over time

can only be circumscribed concerning its aspects linked to other dimensions, such as place (Hauge 2007).

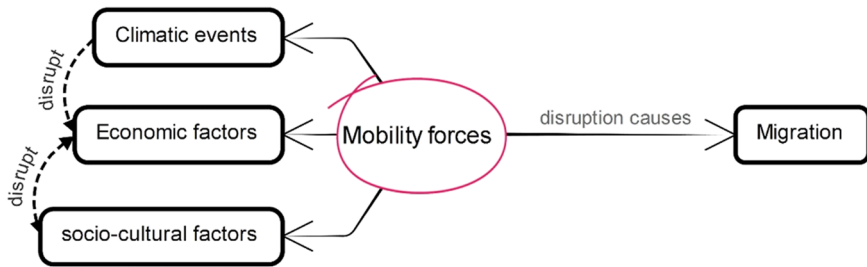
To summarise, migrants' attempt to connect to both the place and the natives forms the foundation for an identity-base. Over time, urban migrants develop a collective sense of belonging to the land and connect to the people they 'feel' alike. They adhere to the referenced area and the community, function as a group member, and shared values of similar religion, language, ethnicity, and symbols, which are, by some, the objective elements of identity (Smith 1991, p. 27). To what extent members carry out these shared values defines subjective aspects of identity, as İnaç and Ünal (2013) argued. Moreover, the duo's temporal interaction—people and place, is the focal component for the migrants to perceive themselves as relative to the native inhabitants. Martinussen et al. (2013) believe it is the core of identity.

### Climate change-induced migration

Climate-induced displacements have already gained the researchers' attention (Warner 2011; Stojanov et al. 2016; Ullah 2012). Warner (2010a) suggests that the displacement processes are responsive mechanisms to climate change. While environmental factors heavily influence displacements, studies (Mayer 2014; Warner 2010a, b; Black 2001; Boano et al. 2008) find it difficult to attribute those as sole drivers for migration. Even though the link is absent, climate-induced mobility is a reality (Berchin et al. 2017; Baldwin et al. 2014; Islam and Hasan 2015). Some studies argue that climate change and climate extremes act as accelerating forces for both pull and push factors of population displacements (Brown 2008; Dun 2011; Kartiki 2011; McLeman 2018; Praag and Timmerman 2019).

Moreover, studies show that rapid- and slow-onset events set other driving factors in motion that lead to population migration (Islam and Hasan 2015; Martin 2013; Warner 2010b). These displacements can be a direct or indirect outcome of climatic events (Stojanov et al. 2016; Ullah 2012; Black et al. 2008). Sponsored by the European Union, the Environmental Change for Forced Migration (EACH-FOR) project finds out that environmental degradation can be a crucial cause of human mobility. Warner (2010b) shows the links between the global environmental changes and migration after analysing selected case studies from that project report. Ullah (2012) presented a similar finding from Egypt, where droughts and sea-level rise are significant concerns for intra- and international displacements. Figure 2 shows the effect of climatic events on the migration decision.

Migration decision depends on the types of climatic events and the severity of the aftermaths. Besides the event and its associated consequences, coping with the post-event situation also influences the decision. In the diagram above, when a climatic event occurs, its intensity disrupts economic activities, contributes to the scarcity of resources, triggering conflicts that can lead to migration decisions (Ullah 2012). It also raises the concern for social security. Victims of the event immediately seek to recover from losses and restore their economic activities. It may or may not trigger an immediate decision on mobility (Stojanov et al. 2016), but a search for an alternative place and livelihood ensues. When a better option of living and



Source: Authors' own draft, based on secondary literature survey.

**Fig. 2** Climate change-induced factors and their influence on mobility

livelihood is found elsewhere, migration seems highly likely. For example, Mozambique and Vietnam are affected by rapid-onset events like flooding, where people faced force relocation for their livelihood. Similarly, Egypt is prone to slow-onset hazards such as desertification and sea-level rise, contributing to permanent migration and displacement of those living around the seaside localities (Warner 2010a, b). The empirical evidence to construct a viable relationship between climate change and human mobility is progress (Adri and Simon 2017; Islam and Hasan 2015; Piguet 2010). The findings of these groundworks will add valuable insights to the knowledge base of the issue at hand, exploring various types and patterns of climate-induced migration. Considering the aforementioned theoretical understanding of two related concepts—identity and climate change-induced migration, the following section will focus on the results and discuss the identity formation for climate displaces in an urban post-migration context.

## Research methods

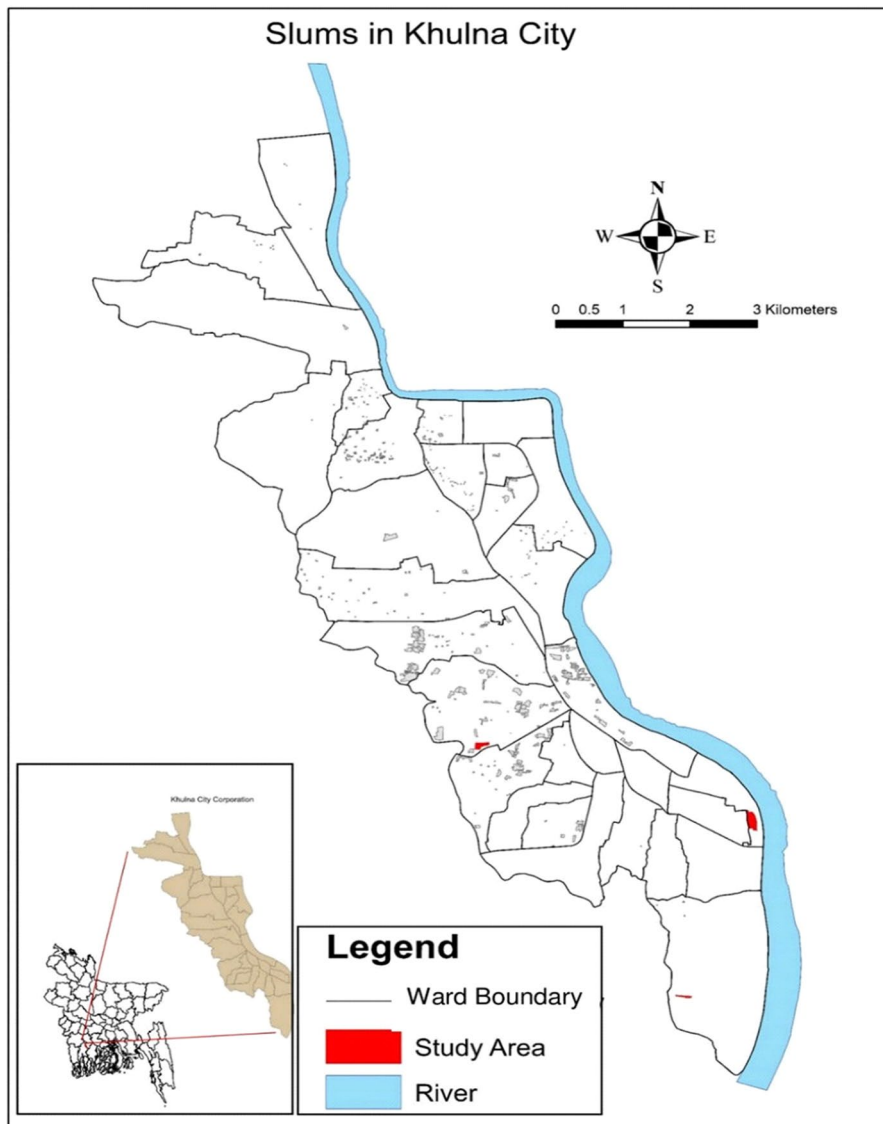
### Study area

We have considered Khulna, the third-largest metropolitan city of Bangladesh, as the study area. The Khulna city is located between 22° 47' 16" to 22° 52' north latitude and 89° 31' 36" to 89° 34' 35" east latitude (BBS 2014). It is on the west bank of the river Rupsha and Bhairab in Khulna district and southwestern Bangladesh (Fig. 2). It is a coastal city and serves as a divisional headquarter, the economic hub of the region. Khulna is a linear-shaped city with 45.65 sq. km and a 1.5 million population (KCC 2020). The city is in one of Bangladesh's most vulnerable locations, where the adverse effects of climate change and climate variability are likely to be severe. The city population has already felt the negative impact of climate change-induced shocks and stresses are. In the past ten years, around 81% of the total city population faced over one severe cyclone event, whereas 11 percent of the entire city population are affected by river floods. And others are affected by waterlogging and salinity (IWM 2010; Roy et al. 2012). Poor urban households suffer most from these

climate change-induced events as they live in poor quality dwellings or shacks in cramped conditions in vulnerable locations. According to the Census of Slum Areas and Floating Population 2014, Khulna city has 1134 slum and squatter settlements (8.14% of total urban slums and squatter settlements in Bangladesh) in 2014, which was 202 (6.75%) in 1997 (BBS 2014). A study explains that the Khulna city became home to many climate change-induced migrants as the city population increased by 1.2% after the devastating cyclones of SIDR in 2007 and AILA in 2009, and coastal floods in 2010 (Ahsan 2013). GIZ (2020) reveals that climate migrants move into cities because of the loss of assets and livelihoods and desire to improve their livelihood to refuge in the cities after a disaster. Khulna is one of the major recipients of climate migrants. A study found five cities such as Barishal, Khulna, Rajshahi, Satkhira, and Sirajganj, where 57% of the total urban poor population are climate migrants (GIZ 2020).

We decided to study three settlements to ensure that we identified actual climate change-induced migrants and also captured the characteristics of diverse urban poor settlements in the city. Their selection was based on a reconnaissance survey of eight potential case study settlements selected from a prior study on climate migrants in Khulna city. During the reconnaissance survey, we had dialogues with community people to explore climate migrants' exact locations. Then, we conducted a small survey to ensure their validity as climate migrants. During reconnaissance survey, we did not find all eight slums. Some were found to have merged with nearby ones, whereas some faced extinction into concrete establishments. It posed difficulties to find dwellers from those slums, since they had shifted to other localities. Therefore, we have selected three slums and squatter settlements.

We finally chose Rupsha Nutan Bazar slum, Hafiz Nagar, and Cement Factory of Labanchara as the three case study settlements (see Fig. 3 for details). They represent two common poor urban settlement types in Khulna city, including a public slum such as Rupsha slum and two private slums such as Hafiz Nagar and Labanchara. The Hafiz Nagar has grown over the past decade on the privately-owned land-holdings where landowners have developed a common type of houses for renting out urban poor households. At present, 500 households live in the Hafiz Nagar slum, where 16% of total households are found, climate migrants. However, the Cement Factory of Labanchara slum has formed recently in the privately-owned lands, although few local political brokers (*Mastaans*) controlled the land at present and built temporary shelters for renting out low-income households. In this slum, most households are rural migrants who move either permanently or temporarily into cities, and 54% of total households (i.e., 134 households) are climate migrants. Rupsha Nutan Bazar slum, on the other hand, evolved over the past 20–30 years on the government land. Residents in this settlement live with de facto (i.e., unauthorized) ownership, either by being the original settlers who particularly built this informal settlement on the government land or purchasing the land's possession informally from the unauthorised owners of the land (Roy et al. 2012). The concentration of climate migrants is comparatively lower in Rupsha slum than two private slums, such as Hafiz Nagar and Labanchara. The climate-induced migrants mostly live in the rental accommodations. At present, there are 255 households in the selected sections of Rupsha slum, with 42 climate change-induced migrants.



Source: authors (2020)

**Fig. 3** Locations of the selected slums in Khulna city

## Data collection

This research adopted case study research approach to comprehend identity-making process in the post-migration situation. Data collection methods for this study include in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and personal communication. This study's nature dictates the interviews and communications to be informal

since the focus is to grasp how people interpret their identity in the post-migration situation. Following Yeboah (2008), we first execute a non-participant observation method combined with personal communication in the selected slums to get familiar with the context within which climate-induced migrants live and work. We define non-participant observation as “.... a term that is used to describe a situation the observer observes but does not take part in what is going on in the social setting” (Bryman 2008, p. 257). This non-participant observation allows us to observe and analyse the body language of the informants and hence leads to getting a complete picture of the situation, more so when the interview lies at the heart of the basic data collection technique (Alder and Alder 1994). It permits the researcher to observe from staying aloof. In addition, we also have had informal dialogues with slum dwellers of different age groups for—(1) including broad age-range perception, (2) shorting out potential in-depth interviewees. Moreover, it allowed room for grabbing climate migrants’ different interpretations regarding their identity in the post migration context. After knowing the purpose of the interviews, the respondents agreed without many disputes to provide details of the scenario, as much as they can, behind their primary causes of displacements.

We consider in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method. A total of 40 respondents have been surveyed. We have selected the interviewees who were forced to move into these selected slums after the devastating cyclones of *SIDR* in 2007 and *AILA* in 2009, and coastal flooding in 2010. The percentage of concentration of internal migrants due to climatic events in the selected slums was the priority for choosing the number of respondents from each slum (see Table 1 for details). We have chosen the highest number of respondents (59%) from the Labanchara, whereas around 28% of total respondents have been selected from the Hafiz Nagar slum. We have chosen the rest of the respondents from the Rupsha slum. Regardless of gender, age, educational qualification, or professional standings, forty respondents from three slums were selected. Among the respondents, 59% of the total respondents are female, whereas 41% of male respondents are selected for interviews. Approximately 38% of total respondents are illiterate, but 62% of respondents have formal education. The respondents’ average is 32 years. They are involved in diverse occupations after moving into Khulna city, including easybike driving, rickshaw pulling, factory workers, small business, housemaids, private tuitions barber, small enterprises, and livestock rearing.

**Table 1** Concentration of internal migrants and samples in the selected slums

Location	Name of slums (old name)	No. of house-holds	Percentage of ‘migrants’	Sample house-holds
Ward no. 22	Rupsha Nutan Bazar Slum (Bablu Molla Gali)	255	12% (31)	5
Ward no. 17	Hafiz Nagar (Khora Bastee)	500	16% (80)	11
Ward no. 31	Cement Factory, Labanchara (Tajul’s Bari, Labanchara Old Road)	134	54% (72)	24

Source: Field survey, 2017



## Data analysis

This research has developed an interview schedule with the migrants explaining the topics of the study. From a theoretical understanding of the relationship between identity formation and post migration situation for the climate change-induced migrants, this research has developed some specific open-ended questions related to the contribution of migration and how identity of migrant people form in the urban context before interviews with migrants. However, this research has kept the interview process flexible as to ask further questions depending on significant responses from the migrants. It has accelerated our understanding of the context—‘climate migrants’ and causes for which climate change-induced migration should be considered as a distinct branch of human resettlement method. During the data collection, both notes taking and audio recording devices were used to establish greater trustworthiness in data analysis and conformability in interpretation (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Data collection and data analysis have been conducted concurrently since separate execution of each is difficult in qualitative inquiry (Gibbs 2002; Maxwell 2009; Saldana 2011). While analysing the interview data, at first, this research has translated the interviews from Bengali (original form) to English, followed by the ‘edited transcription’ approach to making sense of the data (Taylor and Gibbs 2010; Globalme 2018). The keywords/topics of each section of the interviews have been identified in the data analysis. Interviews’ data has been analysed by coding and categories. We have reviewed the information with the coded data several times while we have noted quotations from the interviews. We have studied the coded-data and make some clusters and patterns to generate themes. Later, we relate themes to research question and literature for interpreting research findings in the wider context.

## Result

### Climate change-induced migration in Khulna city

This study finds that two devastating climatic events—*Sidr* and *Aila*, had played an influential role in the households’ migration decision. Studies suggest that the climatic events are not direct, yet an essential factor that exerts heavy pressure on the economic driver of migration. (Brown 2008; Dun 2011; El-Hinnawi 1985; Kartiki 2011; McLeman 2018; Praag and Timmerman 2019). Studied households present similar findings. Table 2 below summarises the result on climate displacees and displacement patterns.

For convenience, we have termed our study slums as A, B, and C, respectively, for Rupsha Veribaadh slum, Labanchara cement factory slum, and Hafiz Nagar Khora ‘*bastee*’ (i.e., slum). Slum A consists of the least number of climate displacees comparing to the other two slums. Compared to slum C, slum B had the most number of households that migrated due to loss of livelihood to either *one* or both. Migrants in slum A mostly faced displacement due to *Sidr*. No one claimed to have migrated after *Aila* here. Slum B and C both accommodate displacees who endured

either one or both the cyclonic aftermath. This study further finds out that the principal cause of displacement was damage of livelihood or total abolishment, mainly due to catastrophic cyclones. Some households migrated before *Aila* permanently, while other families stayed and tried to cope with the loss even after *Aila*. We hardly found any family that had made its way back after receiving hits from the cyclones above. This finding echoes similarity with Hugo (2011) claim that emphasises frequent intra-national environmental displacement.

In addition, we have found that almost all the households migrated permanently. Some even migrated out of the city to another. We have found few homes that relocated temporarily to slum B, only to move further away. Results also reveal that they lived in their respective locations for an extended period, indicating permanent residency. One notable finding is that the households are victims of rapid onset climatic events. As Ullah (2012) claims, climate change-induced mobility may be gradual rather than instant; we have found the absence of such a claim. Nonetheless, mobility towards urban areas after a climatic shock is evident. Next, we will present the findings on identity formation among these displacees relative to the place they migrate and the people they move in.

### **Migrants' identity formation relative to place and people**

This part of the result presents the findings on the identity formation process. This process, found in fieldwork, reveals a temporal interaction among the trio—migrants, migrating places, and natives. By natives, we refer to non-migrants in the slums, living there for significantly longer with or without landownership. Of landownership, we have found chiefly a mixture of natives.

### **The place and its influence**

The finding indicates that migrants connect to the living land—both pre-and post-displacement ones, about time. This study also finds that the place sense is age-dependent. The place has an enormous amount of emotional values with elderlies, whereas this is not always the case in other age groups, such as with the youth or middle-aged displacees. Table 3 shows a comparative strength of place consciousness according to age-specific groups.

While the older adults possess the most robust sense of their native place, referring to most, the middle-aged group significantly centres their belongingness around the migrating land. For the young, it is a mixture with an inclination to belong to the displaced location. The result shows an absence of place sense among children. Consciousness among the youth is mixed, although the group primarily connects their homeness feelings to the migrated area. This group-based place awareness resembles Canter's (1996) claim of place being a product of human perceptions and activities. The study, thus, finds that the feeling-around-place, which Hauge (2007) considers as rootedness, is present across all age groups. Like Proshansky et al. (1983), this study discovers that the place functions as a 'cognitive database' for the displacees, leading to a construction of place-identity over time. This result also

**Table 2** Climate displacees, displacement patterns and duration of living

Slum	Migrants' density	Migration pattern	Climatic event	Post-migration living duration
A	Comparatively fewer displacees	Mostly permanent, rarely seasonal	Mostly Sidr	Long, permanent
B	The highest number of displacees found	Temporary to permanent migrants	Sidr, Aila	Long, permanent
C	A moderate number of displacees found	Semi-permanent to permanent	Sidr, Aila	Long, permanent

Source: Authors' own draft based on interview findings

**Table 3** Place attachment among different age groups

Age group	Place attachment (pre-and post-migration context)	
	Native place	Migrating place
Children	Specific place sense seems absent	Specific place sense seems absent
Youth	Moderate to low awareness, can connect to the place as their homes	Moderately strong understanding, most refers to as home, while some hesitate to admit
Middle-aged	Moderately strong awareness; easily connects with native places	Most refers to the place as a home without hesitation
Elderly	Strongly connects to the place; remembers and explains land characteristics, associated festivals, etc.; refers to as their homes	A majority connects to it as an alternate home

Source: Authors' own draft based on interview findings

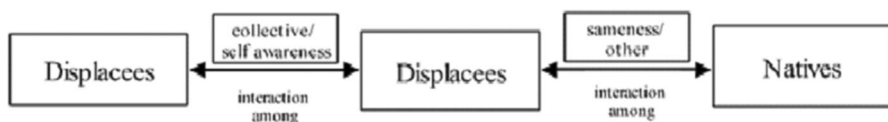
reveals that the place-identity is not an exclusive element to facilitate a distinctive group awareness; instead, it is significantly conducive to the cause when paired with other socio-cultural aspects.

### Interactions among displaced groups and with natives

We have found out that the displacees interact with the natives in a rather usual way as if they lived there like natives. Yet, the distinction becomes visible when migrant households reveal how land ownership differentiates their social status within the locality. Interaction is time-sensitive. Respondents from different slums have expressed mixed feelings about the natives with who they dwell. Figure 4 shows the interaction cycle for the displacees.

We have noticed that displacees interact with other migrants and the natives slightly differently. This difference is not evident daily, yet interviewees revealed that they feel differently during their communication. Figure 4 demonstrates the interactive phases that the migrants maintain. On the one hand, communication among displacees gives rise to a sense that is either collective or individual in type. Inversely, the interaction between the displacees and the non-migrants results in constructing an understanding of ‘we-ness’ or ‘other’. The study also finds that the development of the sense takes shape mostly among adults and elderly adults. Formation of awareness out of daily interactions is absent among migrant children. The youth have displayed similar characteristics across all the slums, having a mixture of understanding of who they are relative to young natives and other young migrants. Table 4 demonstrates the strength of the sense that develops among displacees from interactions:

While the young migrants have a mixture of feelings about understanding who they are relative to other young migrants and young natives, the children significantly deviate from this trait. The middle-aged and adult elders have a clear notion of collective awareness, and this type of development is dominant across all study slums. The personal sense of the self is present with minimal impact on the migrants’ understanding of their belongings. We have not found any migrant youth in Slum A; hence the intensity of the sense for this particular age group remains unobserved. Later, the discussion section focuses on the development of a collective awareness among the displacees. The section’s significance will be on how the findings come into play in forming a collective consciousness among the displacees. The link between climate change-induced migration and identity development among the migrants will have a critical explanation.



Source: Authors’ own draft, based on interviews’ findings

**Fig. 4** Displacees’ interaction cycle and associated awareness formation

**Table 4** Awareness intensity among displacees according to age groups

Age group	Awareness intensity		
	Slum A	Slum B	Slum C
Children	Distinctive awareness absent mostly	Distinctive awareness absent mostly	Distinctive awareness absent mostly
Youth	–	Both individual and collective; inclination towards group-sense	Moderate collective sense; self-awareness exists too
Middle-aged	Moderate individual awareness	Moderate to a solid collective sense	Strong collective sense
Elderly	Moderate to a strong collective sense	Moderate collective sense	Strong collective sense

Source: Authors' own draft based on interview findings

## Discussion

The displacees' sense differs in a post-migration context, as the difference in situation influences individuals' thought process about space (Canter 1996). How they connect to the place they once lived, and the place they presently live on gives a sense of consciousness development. Respondents' responses about how they lost their connection to the pre-migration land demonstrate place-sense emergence around the post-displacement land and locality.

The storm took it all; we have lost everything. Now we live here. This (the slum) is our home.

A prolonged stay (*"ekhon ekhanei thaki"*), a lost link to the native place (*"jhorey amager sob naei gaeilo, okhaney aar kichu naei"*), and the emotional attachment (*"edai amager bari"*) to the present living area all come into play for the migrants to understand who they are relative to that place. The displacees find the meanings of their lives surrounding their homes and locality. The senses are constructed through continuous interactions among various place aspects, such as membership to groups that belong to the locality, built-environments, land ownerships, etc., which, as studies suggest, contribute to forming one's self-identity (Krupat 1983; Sarbin 1983; Shumaker and Taylor 1983; Proshansky et al. 1983; Rivlin 1987). The place is salient in people's lives. Migrating to a new neighbourhood means dealing with a new home and new people. In climate change-induced migration, the place is salient to the displacees since they have to construct a social and psychological meaning of their connectedness. Studies (Valera 1997; Valera and Pol 1994) emphasised that physical properties tied with an urban place's social significance carry a sense of a 'social category' (Bernardo and Palma 2005). The displacees' attempt to build up such a category reveals the crying need for an identity. The migrants' understanding of their daily lives, such as who they are, how they relate to other migrants and locals, also reflects their place attachment (Brown and Perkins 1992).

In addition, the native place for the migrants has solid emotional value. It acts as a part of their identity which, most if not all migrants want to uphold. One such example is Ershadul's (pseudonym) case, who did not migrate to Khulna right after *Sidr*; instead, he relocated in stages. He first relocated to his father's with the hope to resettle in his native land. After Aila, he stayed and worked in the temporary shelters on the barrier with the same expectation. He just could not easily cut the emotional tie with his native land, as he described during an informal conversation.

Interestingly, he used to come and work in the city, but only temporarily. So he had an attachment with the place from even before his permanent migration. This tie-up has helped grow a sense of being in the area. As Brun (2001) and Massey (1993, 1994) claim, Ershadul's prior communication with the locals generates a social process that constructs self-awareness among the displacees. While migrating to that area, he finds himself in a 'known' place. In Ashura's (pseudonym, Ershadul's wife) words:

We are known here, and we have been living here for long. The village is no more; Aila sank everything. We can not go back to the village.

The lost link to the native land (“*jaoar jaiga naei*”) and an emerging link to a new ‘known’ (“*ekhon ei jaigai amager apon, nijir*”) area in the city helped him and his family grow a sense of home around it. Their identity is now based around the place they live in now.

For the migrants, the area works as a symbol of hope, a shared sense of collective-awareness common around a place (Hauge 2007). The site can symbolise the group ideology (Speller et al. 2002) for the migrants to be alike and different from non-migrants. An intrinsic idea of sameness and difference grows among the displacees. They feel more connected to other migrants, and distant from the local non-migrants. A consciousness of the same root usually forms the group-identity among most young migrants. One of such young displacees is Nitu Akter (pseudonym). She migrated along with her family. Nitu feels more connected to the group that settled here from or around her native place Morolgonj. She said,

This place seems quite foreign to us. I easily get along with those of my same age who had to migrate from Morolgonj and around. Even though I mix up with all the people here, I feel more commonality (“*aamra to ekie*”) with those from around my village.

For Nitu, the feeling of sameness gives her an identity to similar youngs with similar social conditions. Nitu’s family migrated due to a loss of their social identity. They borrowed from moneylenders that they could not repay once *Sidr* took out their livelihood. To escape social humiliation as well as to gain a new identification, they migrated to Khulna. The slum now they live in is their reference place for day-to-day life. Hence, Nitu and her family think of the place as their own even though they still recall their native land with memories and events. Like Nitu, Sajib (pseudonym) describes him as part of a group he feels a membership. Yet, he easily distinguishes himself from native children based on his father’s land ownership. He thinks the difference comes from land purchasing power; other than that, and he feels that he belongs to the same group (“*hera aar amra ekoi. kunu parthkko nai*”) as the natives.

We are same. We go to school together, play together. The only problem is his (native children) father owns land, mine does not.

The place and interactions among other displacees and locals contribute to constructing a collective sameness and otherness. This process of identity formation is place-and people-centric. The findings strongly indicate that the post-migration identity emerges through changes in the people–place relationship, similar to Bernardo and Palma’s (2005) claim. The migrants develop a strong sense of connectedness with the ‘home’, which, as Hummon (1992) states, brings about the understanding of distinctiveness and thus creates a unique identity. Interaction among people, place, and time gives rise to a consciousness of ‘we-ness’. As time passes by, the migrants create a referential point around the area they migrate. It functions as a ‘cognitive database’ among the displacees (Proshansky et al. 1983). When the place becomes a part of their existence, groups or individuals process awareness of ‘sameness’ or ‘otherness’. This sense works through their daily communication. The result section provides a detailed narration of such events.



Identity formation among urban displacees is the exploration area that this study ‘uniquely’ offers. By ‘uniquely’, we meant the scarcity of research interest in the post-migration identity-making process. Studies on climate change-induced migration are frequently conducted, but rarely have the migrants received any attention to psychological changes (Brown and Perkins 1992). Other studies, such as Hull IV et al. (1994), recognises that ‘urban fabrics’ are a part of one’s self-identity; yet, no claim is made about how the displacees form such an identity post-migration urban context. Black et al. (2011) suggested a framework for the forced migration (such as migration due to climatic pressure), but none for the forced displacees. By exploring and analysing the identity formation among the urban displacees in a post-migration context, this research puts forward an original addition to migration literature.

Drawing examples of sea-level rise in the Maldives and associated human displacements, Arnall and Kothari (2015) pinpoint that unless there is a clear understanding of the non-elites’ situation, it is difficult to plan any policies to provide them adequately and aids. Islam and Rashid (2011) demanded policy support for the erosion-hit displacees in Bangladesh. Ullah (2012) urges for a systematic categorisation of the migrants to avoid generalisation, hence protecting them from exploitation that comes from such generalisation. A link to identity formation among the climate displacees, we believe, will help devise better policy support for them, providing a solid base for their right to land and resettlement.

## Conclusion

This article investigates the process of climate change-induced migration and the development of a post-migration collective sense of awareness. Predominantly, the intricate relationship between climate change and migration exists. Even though an exclusive attribution of climatic events to human mobility is improbable, it is undoubtedly a powerful driver, among others. In contrast, we commonly treat the migrants as economic or other types, whereas the respondents’ obvious concerns for receiving inadequate support strengthen the need for a distinctive identity-tag. Besides, integration into a community can nurture a consciousness among the migrants. This psychological construction of ‘we-ness’ has scarcely been studied. Although the literature shows the lack of appropriate terminology, we barely acknowledge the collective sense’s emergence. Therefore, this study is more comprehensive in context. An identity-tag is of utmost significance regarding policy-making and devising an adequate and appropriate support base. Acknowledging the development of identity among the displacees may protect them from generalisation and exploitation.

Our conclusion includes that the climate change-induced migration creates a collective sense among the displacees. Scholarly attempts to explore such awareness are absent. We also believe that the time-sensitive interaction among the displacees, place, and natives shapes group identity’s psychological formation in a post-migration urban context. We acknowledge that given the paper’s limitation in (1) sample size, (2) scarcity of research locations, and (3) scarcity of transboundary study areas, any generalisation is very unlikely. Yet, we argue that this study’s empirical

evidence serves as the foundation for exploring a unique identity base for the climate-change-induced displacees.

**Data availability** All data analysed or generated are included in the article.

**Declarations**

**Conflict of interest** None declared.

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