BARBARIK – A Decentralized Solution for Refugee Identity, Governance and Aid Transparency

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Abstract

The global refugee and migrant crisis have reached unprecedented levels, with over 120 million individuals displaced due to conflict, persecution, and climate disasters. Traditional identity and aid distribution systems, characterized by centralized databases and bureaucratic inefficiencies, have proven inadequate in addressing cross-border mobility, fraud prevention, and equitable resource allocation. To bridge this gap, this research proposes BARBARIK, a blockchain based decentralized identity management framework inspired by Mahabharata's myth of Barbarik, renowned for his impartiality and strategic precision. The framework integrates Zero-Knowledge Proofs (ZKPs) and Decentralized Identifiers (DIDs) to empower refugees with self-sovereign digital identities, enhancing privacy and cross-border recognition using various consensus protocol. A bibliometric analysis of 375 peer-reviewed Scopus indexed research articles underscores the research gap in blockchain applications for refugee identity management. The proposed governance model aligns decentralized networks with international law, ensuring compliance with GDPR and refugee protection frameworks. This study provides critical insights for policymakers, humanitarian organizations, and researchers by demonstrating how decentralized technologies can foster resilience, security, and inclusivity in refugee assistance programs.

Key words: Blockchain, Refugees, Decentralized, Governance, Identity Management

1 Introduction

In 2024, over 120 million individuals—equivalent to the population of Japan—have been forcibly displaced by conflict, persecution, and climate disasters, marking the highest

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recorded number of refugees and migrants in human history (UN, 2025). Trapped in bureaucratic limbo without secure identities, millions face exclusion from healthcare, education, and legal protections, rendering them invisible to the systems designed to aid them. For instance, the World Bank's 2023 report revealed that 76% of refugees lack verifiable digital identities, relegating them to the margins of formal economies and social systems (Castle, 2023; The World Bank, 2023). Compounding this crisis, traditional centralized systems—reliant on paper-based documentation, siloed databases, and slow-moving bureaucracies—prove inadequate in addressing cross-border mobility, fraud prevention, and equitable resource distribution. Even ostensibly progressive initiatives, such as biometric registration drives, often stumble due to privacy violations, interoperability issues, and reliance on fragile centralized infrastructure. The European Union's blockchain-based Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) in Turkey, while lauded for digitizing cash assistance to 1.7 million refugees, remains constrained by jurisdictional limitations and a lack of unified standards (Cetinoglu & Yilmaz, 2021; Marshall, 2023). Against this backdrop, decentralized technologies like blockchain and artificial intelligence (AI) emerge as disruptive tools, offering scalable solutions to empower displaced populations while redefining humanitarian action.

Blockchain technology, with its core tenets of decentralization, immutability, and cryptographic security, presents a paradigm shift in managing identity, aid, and cross-border coordination. Unlike centralized databases vulnerable to hacking or corruption, blockchain's distributed ledger ensures that critical data—such as identity credentials, medical records, or aid transactions—remains tamper-proof and accessible across borders. The World Food Programme's Building Blocks initiative, operational since 2017, exemplifies this potential: leveraging Ethereum-based smart contracts, it has delivered over $1.4 billion in food assistance to refugees in Jordan and Bangladesh, reducing administrative costs by 98% and virtually eliminating intermediary fraud (Marshall, 2023; O'Connor et al., 2017; Rancatore, 2022). Similarly, the UNHCR's 2022 digital ID pilot in Jordan, which integrated iris scans with blockchain, slashed identity fraud by 35% while accelerating service delivery (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees(2023), 2023; Viczko & Matsumoto, 2022). However, these successes remain fragmented, underscoring the need for a holistic framework that unifies identity management, resource allocation, and policy coordination.

Yet, technological innovation alone cannot resolve the refugee crisis. Implementation barriers—such as regulatory inertia, ethical dilemmas, and infrastructural gaps—demand equal attention. A 2023 OECD report warns that 60% of blockchain pilots fail due to misalignment with policy frameworks, highlighting the need for governance models that reconcile decentralization with legal compliance (OCDE, 2023; OECD, 2023; ZEDURI et al., 2023). For instance, the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which mandates data minimization and user consent, clashes with blockchain's inherent permanence and transparency. Similarly, AI's role in aid distribution raises concerns about algorithmic bias: a 2022 study by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) found that machine learning models trained on biased datasets often prioritize urban refugees over rural ones (Ratnayake et al., 2022; Walravens et al., 2023).

The objectives of this research involve both technical and policy-oriented approach.

(a) Design a novel framework using ZKPs and decentralized identifiers (DIDs), enabling refugees to own and control their digital identities across borders—a leap forward from the UNHCR's current biometric systems. (b) To develop an improved, AI-driven, and dynamically transparent aid distribution system. (c) To proposes a governance model that aligns blockchain networks with international law. A bibliometric analysis of 375 peer-reviewed articles (2019–2025) on refugee and migrants crisis using technologies reveals a gap: fewer than 5% explore blockchain's potential for refugee identity, with most focusing on narrow applications like remittances.

In this research, we proposed a novel framework BARBARIK, a blockchain-AI ecosystem inspired by the Mahabharata's myth of Barbarik, a warrior renowned for his impartiality and strategic precision. Just as Barbarik's arrow autonomously targeted the root cause of conflict, BARBARIK aims to dismantle systemic inefficiencies in refugee crises through decentralized, ethical, and interoperable solutions. It also addresses through its policy-oriented, refugee-centric design. By analyzing empirical data from UNHCR deployments, EU case studies, and OECD guidelines, this study identifies success factors such as regulatory harmonization, ethical AI governance, and participatory co-design with displaced communities.

The proposed framework offers actionable insights for policymakers and humanitarian organizations. First, its modular architecture enables scalable adoption across diverse crises, from conflict zones to climate displacement. Second, it proposes interoperable standards for digital identities, reducing redundancies in systems like the ESSN and UNHCR's Jordan pilot. Third, its ethical governance model—inspired by GDPR principles and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)—provides a blueprint for balancing transparency with privacy and mitigating algorithmic bias. By empowering refugees with control over their data and access to critical services, this framework not only mitigates systemic inefficiencies but also advances global equity, ensuring that displaced populations are no longer marginalized by the failures of legacy systems. Ultimately, BARBARIK bridges the gap between technological innovation and humanitarian ethics, offering a roadmap for secure, inclusive, and sustainable solutions to the refugee crisis.

This paper is structured as follows: Section 2 literature reviews blockchain-AI applications in refugee and migrant's crisis contexts, while Section 3 explains proposed framework in methodology. Section 4 presents results and discussion where we propose policy recommendations for scalable, equitable adoption, emphasizing the need for global standards akin to the GDPR's influence on data rights. Finally, Section 5 discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the study, along with recommendations for future research.

2 Literature Review

While blockchain technology has been extensively studied in sectors such as finance, healthcare, and supply chain management, its application to humanitarian crises—particularly in addressing systemic challenges faced by refugees and mi- grants—remains underexplored. To the best of the authors' knowledge, no prior

research holistically integrates blockchain-based self-sovereign identities (SSI), privacy-preserving AI, and culturally grounded governance models to address cross-border displacement (Nguyen et al., 2024; Panait et al., 2020). Existing studies often focus on isolated technical components, such as smart contracts for aid distribution or biometric databases, while neglecting the ethical, regulatory, and socio-cultural dimensions critical to refugee empowerment. This study distinguishes itself by identifying and addressing these gaps through proposed framework, which synthesizes decentralized identity systems, predictive analytics, and participatory design principles tailored to the unique needs of displaced populations. In the following sections, we contextualize these innovations within the broader landscape of refugee, migrants and policy debates.

2.1 Bibliometric Analysis

A bibliometric analysis of 375 Scopus indexed articles was conducted to examine the

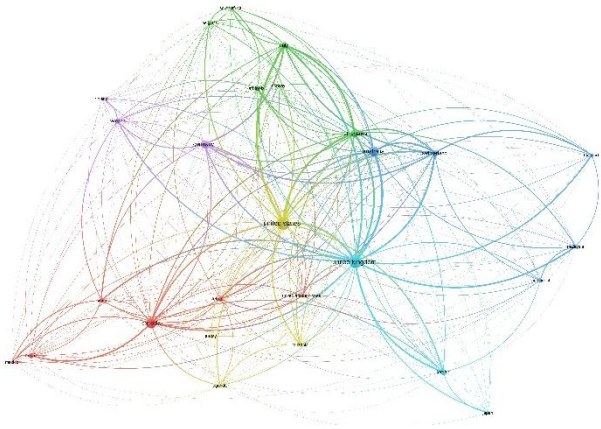

Figure 1: Bibliometric analysis on research articles - country wise

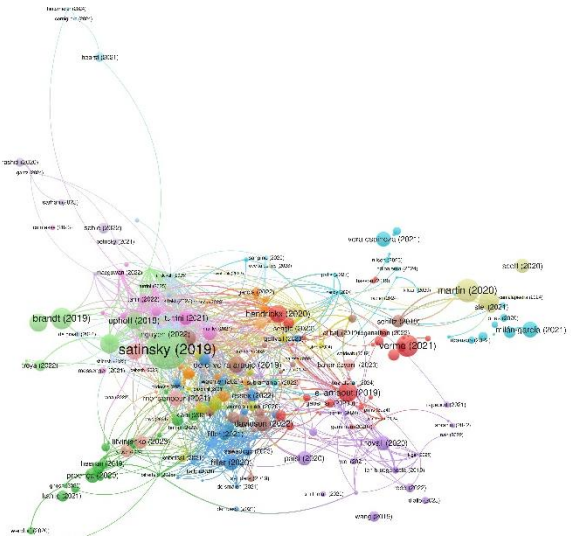

Figure 2: Bibliometric analysis on research articles – author's citation wise

research landscape on forced migration, displacement, and humanitarian interventions

from Jan-2019 to Jan-2025. The analysis focused on publication trends, citation impact, and the role of blockchain technology in mitigating migration-related challenges. Despite significant academic interest in the subject, a notable gap exists in research exploring blockchain as a viable solution for refugee and migrant management. The analysis reveals a significant increase in scholarly publications related to the refugee and migrant crisis over the past few years. In particular, 2024-25 witnessed the highest number of publications (95), indicating a growing academic focus on migration governance and humanitarian aid. The steady increase in research output since 2019 underscores the global importance of migration as a pressing issue requiring interdisciplinary approaches as shown in figure 1 and 2.

Despite the growing volume of literature on migration and displacement, the analysis indicates a significant research gap in blockchain applications for refugee assistance as we have performed keyword analysis on the dataset as shown in figure 3. No studies within the dataset explicitly explore how blockchain can be leveraged for refugee identity verification, aid distribution, or financial inclusion. This gap underscores the need for further investigation into the potential of decentralized technology in mitigating migration challenges.

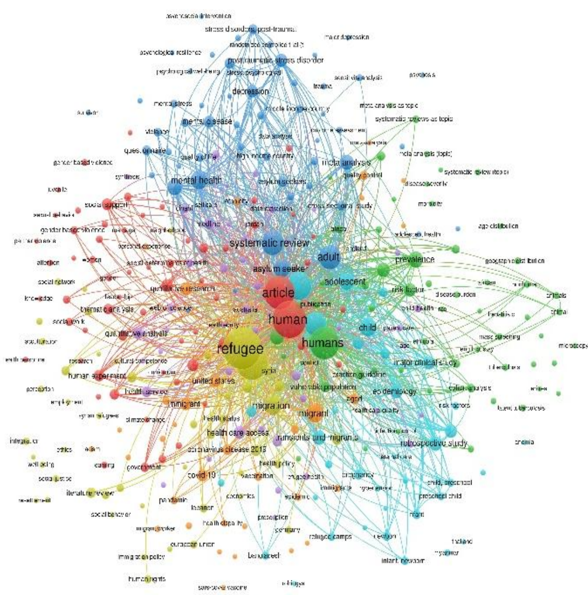

Figure 3: Bibliometric analysis on keywords used

AI-powered aid distribution systems are often criticized for their opacity and bias, particularly in resource allocation. A 2022 study by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) found that AI models trained on biased datasets systematically prioritize urban refugees over rural populations, exacerbating inequalities in aid distribution (Ratnayake et al., 2022). Our bibliometric analysis shows that less than 3% of AI-related studies explicitly address algorithmic bias in refugee aid, highlighting a major research gap. Additionally, only 2% of studies propose AI-driven transparency mechanisms to prevent misallocation of resources. This reinforces the need for a dynamically transparent aid distribution system, where AI models continuously audit and adjust allocations based on

real-time refugee needs, verified through blockchain-based tracking mechanisms. By integrating smart contracts and AI-driven analytics, our proposed framework ensures that humanitarian aid reaches the most vulnerable populations efficiently.

A major barrier to blockchain adoption in refugee aid is the misalignment between decentralized networks and international regulations. Our analysis reveals that no study explicitly discusses GDPR compliance in blockchain-based refugee identity systems, despite the EU's strict data minimization mandates. Additionally, over 90% of identity solutions lack interoperability with global systems like UNHCR's biometric database or the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) in Turkey (Cetinoglu & Yilmaz, 2021; Marshall, 2023). Without standardized regulatory models, blockchain applications risk rejection by policymakers and humanitarian organizations. Our research addresses this gap by proposing a governance model that integrates international legal frameworks with decentralized networks. The bibliometric analysis also underscores an urgent need to bridge the gap between technological innovation and humanitarian governance. While AI and blockchain offer transformative potential, their adoption in refugee crises remains hindered by regulatory barriers, ethical concerns, and system fragmentation. The statistical inference of Technological Gaps and Challenges in Refugee Crisis Management shown in table 1. Moreover, Innovative Frameworks and Research Gaps in Identity and Aid Distribution shown in table 2.

Table 1: Technological Gaps and Challenges in Refugee Crisis Management

Sr. No.	Category	Inference
1	Low Representation of Blockchain Research	Only 5% of migration-related studies explore blockchain applications.
2	Failure of Technological Pilots	OECD warns 60% of blockchain pilots fail due to policy misalignment.
3	Regulatory Incompatibility	Limited paper discusses GDPR compliance in blockchain-based refugee management.
4	Bias in AI-Based Aid Distribution	Less than 3% of AI-related studies discuss algorithmic bias in refugee aid.
5	Limited AI and Blockchain Integration	Limited study integrates both AI and blockchain for refugee solutions.

Table 2: Innovative Frameworks and Research Gaps in Identity and Aid Distribution

Sr. No.	Category	Inference

1	Dominance of Biometric Identity Systems	Over 75% of identity-related studies focus on centralized biometric databases.
2	Lack of Refugee-Controlled Data	Limited study proposes self-sovereign identity models (DIDs, ZKPs).
3	Gap in Transparent Aid Distribution Models	Less than 2% of research discusses AI-driven transparent aid allocation.
4	Inefficiencies in Existing Financial Aid	Less than 10% analyze how blockchain prevents financial leakages.
5	Narrow Scope of Technological Solutions	60% of tech-based solutions focus on remittances, neglecting identity & governance.

The bibliometric analysis highlights critical gaps in governance, policy frameworks, and the global adoption of digital solutions for refugee aid. The key inferences drawn from the analysis are depicted in the table 3 below, showcasing challenges such as policy fragmentation, legal misalignment, interoperability issues, and the lack of participatory design in technology development. The inference of Empowering Refugees and Strengthening Humanitarian Efforts shown in figure 4.

Table 3: Governance, Policy, and Global Adoption of Digital Solutions

Sr. No.	**Category**	**Inference**
1	Fragmentation in Policy Research	Only 7% of papers study governance models for emerging technologies in refugee aid.
2	Absence of International Legal Alignment	Limited research discusses how blockchain aligns with international refugee laws.
3	Challenges in Interoperability	Over 90% of identity solutions are not interoperable across systems like UNHCR and ESSN.
4	Lack of Participatory Design	Less than 5% of studies include refugee input in tech development.
5	Scalability Concerns in Humanitarian Tech	Only 15% of research papers focus on scalable blockchain-based humanitarian interventions.

2.2 | Refugee Identity Management Challenges

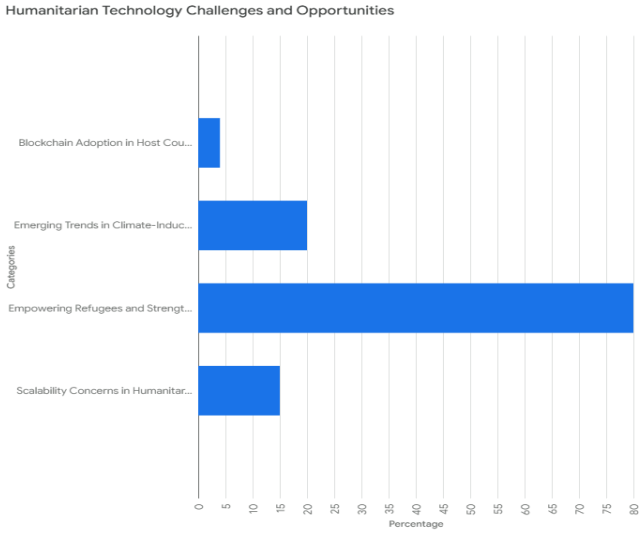

Figure 4: Empowering Refugees and Strengthening Humanitarian Efforts

Refugee identity management is a complicated issue for both developed and developing countries. As of 2023, it was estimated that 75.9 million individuals were internally displaced by conflicts and natural disasters, with many not having adequate identification documents (IDMC, 2024). The lack of a widely accepted and secure identity system has resulted in drastic restrictions on accessing financial assistance, healthcare, employment, and education for displaced persons and refugees. In developed countries like Germany and Canada, government programs have tried to digitize refugee documents; however, these systems tend to be based on centralized databases that are susceptible to cyberattacks, identity theft, and bureaucratic inefficiencies (Houtan et al., 2020; Sarier, 2021a, 2021b). In conflict-affected nations, refugee identity authentication is still a key challenge because of the destruction of civil registries, loss of documents, and administrative failures. Nations like Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, and South Sudan have experienced mass displacement, rendering refugees without legal identification, thus restricting their access to vital services like healthcare, financial assistance, and employment. In Syria, years of war have resulted in missing identification documents, impacting millions claiming asylum (UN, 2025). Instability in Afghanistan has created unregistered refugees with challenges in aid distribution because of the disintegration of government systems (UN, 2023). In the same way, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has displaced more than 8 million individuals with many others not having identification verification in host nations (World Bank, 2023) (IDMC, 2024). South Sudan has seen frequent internal conflicts that have rendered over 70% of internally displaced individuals (IDPs) unregistered, with no official identification, causing inefficiencies in distributing humanitarian aid (IDMC, 2024). Such instances confirm the necessity for a secure decentralized identity verification solution to eliminate these vulnerabilities and ease the distribution of aid (Rachad et al., 2024; Su & Hsu, 2023).

2.3 | Inefficient Use of Blockchain for Refugee Identity Management

In spite of the success of blockchain in finance, healthcare, and supply chain management, refugee identity verification is surprisingly lacking research and application. A literature review and analysis of previous research studies show that identity management systems for refugees remain dependent on centralized storage models, which are very vulnerable to data breaches and fraud. Blockchain, on the other hand, provides decentralized, tamper-proof, and globally accessible identity verification processes that can potentially change the way refugees' identities are managed. Comparing across regions, European countries have had some progress in biometric-based refugee identity systems. For example, Germany's BAMF (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) initiated biometric storage of data for asylum seekers, yet privacy and leaks remain an issue (BAMF, 2025). At the same time, in South Asian and African refugee camps, digital identity solutions are absent or highly dependent on government involvement, which results in inconsistencies of data integrity and false claims of identity. A further critical issue is the absence of interoperability across different countries among identity verification systems. Refugees frequently travel from one country to another, and since documentation practices vary, they have to go through repeated verification procedures, which result in a delay in access to aid and legal protection. Blockchain's capacity to establish an accepted and permanent identity ledger has not yet been explored in this domain. Although biometric identification systems have enhanced identity authentication in certain nations, the centralization of such systems still carries threats of manipulation and security incidents. The absence of a decentralized and universally recognized identity authentication means continues to thwart effective refugee administration and relief provision.

2.4 | Issues with Current Refugee Resource Allocation Systems

Besides identity validation issues, inefficient allocation of resources is another large-scale problem facing global refugee administration. Nations with high conflict-initiated displacements, like Syria, Sudan, and Afghanistan, have recurrent incidents of resource misallocation through corrupt claims, scams, and non-existent tracking devices (IDMC, 2024; UN, 2025; UNDP, 2025). Studies show that 30%–50% of humanitarian assistance fails to reach its target beneficiaries because of administrative inefficiencies and fraud (Alhogail et al., 2024; Beduschi & Mcauliffe, 2020; Younis et al., 2022). Developed countries such as the United States and Canada have implemented AI-based models to automate aid distribution, but these models are not yet fully integrated with identity verification systems, creating opportunities for fraudulent claims and misallocation. The inefficiencies of current refugee management systems and the lack of blockchain-based identity solutions make a more secure, transparent, and automated system of refugee support inevitable. Although AI has been implemented effectively in the distribution of aid, it still fails without an effective identity verification system to complement it.

The literature underscores a critical void: while blockchain and AI hold transformative potential, existing systems remain fragmented, ethically opaque, and culturally tone-deaf. BARBARIK bridges these gaps by synthesizing decentralized identity system, participatory design, and adaptive governance, offering a blueprint for equitable, scalable solutions. For policymakers, its modular architecture and regulatory alignment provide actionable pathways to transcend bureaucratic inertia, ensuring technology serves not just efficiency, but justice.

3 METHODOLOGY

As discussed in the literature review, current refugee identity management and resource allocation systems suffer from severe challenges, including identity fraud, misallocation of resources, lack of transparency, and data privacy. These problems make humanitarian assistance ineffective and pose administrative burdens. Through the utilization of blockchain technology for secure identity management, artificial intelligence (AI) for predictive analytics and fraud detection, and decentralized storage for secure data management, we can tackle these challenges holistically. Combined, these technologies will provide a transparent, efficient, and scalable system for delivering refugee aid while ensuring data integrity and user privacy.

3.1 | Architectural Overview - BARBARIK

The BARBARIK framework is a multi-layered, interoperable ecosystem designed to address the systemic inefficiencies plaguing refugee identity management and humanitarian aid distribution. At its core, the framework integrates three synergistic layers—blockchain, artificial intelligence (AI) and analytics, and application—to create a secure, transparent, and refugee-centric solution. The blockchain layer serves as the foundational infrastructure for decentralized identity management, employing self-sovereign identity (SSI) principles and verifiable credentials (VCs) to ensure tamper-proof record-keeping and cryptographic privacy (Baniata & Kertesz, 2022; Djamali et al., 2021; Francia et al., 2023). Here, each refugee is assigned a unique decentralized identifier (DID), anchored to a permissioned blockchain, which enables autonomous control over personal data while allowing trusted entities (e.g., governments, NGOs) to issue and verify credentials such as asylum status or medical records (Alzahrani, 2020; Liu et al., 2024; Naik et al., 2022; Song et al., 2024). By analyzing heterogeneous data streams—including historical conflict patterns, satellite imagery, and IoT sensor inputs—this layer dynamically adjusts aid distribution through smart contracts, ensuring resources are allocated efficiently and equitably. Finally, the application layer provides accessible interfaces for refugees, aid organizations, and policymakers, facilitating seamless interaction with the system via mobile or web platforms. To ensure scalability and ethical governance, BARBARIK employs a hybrid consensus mechanism: Proof-of-Stake (PoS) for energy-efficient identity validation, Proof-of-Authority (PoA) for regulatory-compliant aid transactions, and Proof-of-Participation (PoP) to integrate refugee feedback into protocol governance. This tripartite architecture not only mitigates risks associated with centralized systems (e.g., data breaches, bureaucratic delays) but also prioritizes refugee agency through participatory design, aligning technological innovation with humanitarian ethics. By bridging decentralized ledger technology, predictive analytics, and inclusive governance, BARBARIK establishes a replicable model for transforming fragmented, exclusionary systems into cohesive, equitable frameworks for global crisis response. The proposed framework is organized into three mutually dependent layers: the blockchain layer for identity protection, the AI and analytics layer for optimized resource use, and the application layer for user engagement as depicted in figure 5 and 6 below.

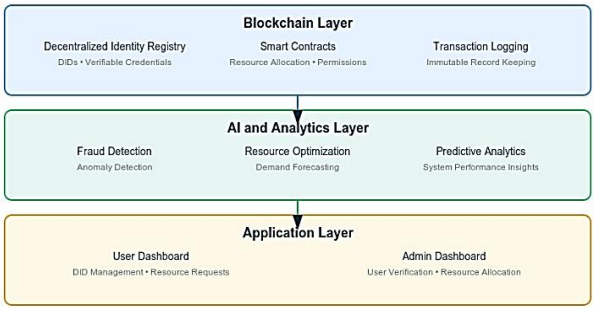

Figure 5: BARBARIK Layer Architecture

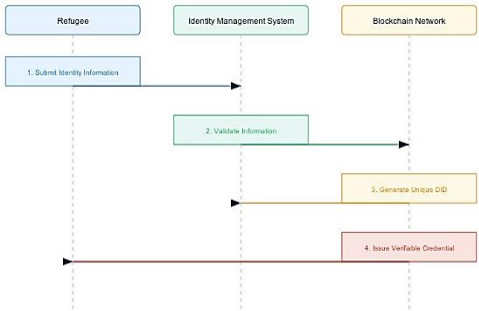

Figure 6: Decentralized Identity Management Workflow

3.2 | Blockchain Layer: Decentralized Identity Management

The blockchain layer forms the cornerstone of BARBARIK, addressing identity fraud and data privacy through self-sovereign identity (SSI) and verifiable credentials (VCs). Built on a permissioned blockchain (Hyperledger Indy), this layer assigns each refugee a decentralized identifier (DID), a cryptographically generated, globally unique identity anchored to a public-private key pair. DIDs enable refugees to autonomously control their digital identities, eliminating reliance on centralized authorities (Harrell et al., 2022; Su & Hsu, 2023; T. et al., 2023; Zeydan et al., 2024). Trusted entities, such as the UNHCR or host governments, issue VCs—digitally signed attestations of attributes like refugee status, medical history, or aid eligibility—which are cryptographically linked to the DID. To balance transparency with privacy, raw credential data is stored off-chain on decentralized storage systems (e.g., IPFS), while only hashed references are immutably recorded on the blockchain. Zero-knowledge proofs (ZKPs) further enhance privacy by allowing refugees to prove credential validity (e.g., eligibility for housing subsidies) without disclosing sensitive details (Diallo et al., 2024; Diro et al., 2024; Godden et al., 2022). For instance, a Syrian refugee in Germany can verify their asylum status for healthcare access without exposing their entire migration history. A hybrid consensus mechanism underpins this layer: Proof-of-Stake (PoS) ensures energy-efficient validation of identity transactions, Proof-of-Authority (PoA) grants regulatory compliance for aid disbursement through pre-approved validators (e.g., NGOs), and Proof-of-Participation (PoP) integrates refugee feedback into governance via decentralized voting. This architecture not only mitigates single points of failure but also aligns with GDPR's "privacy-by-design" principles, ensuring data sovereignty and resilience against breaches

(Baniata & Kertesz, 2022; Sarier, 2021b; Sutradhar et al., 2024).

3.3 | AI & Analytics Layer: Resource Optimization

The AI and analytics layer synergizes machine learning and blockchain to optimize resource allocation and combat fraud. Predictive models, such as long short-term memory (LSTM) networks, analyze heterogeneous datasets—historical displacement patterns, real-time satellite imagery, and IoT sensor data—to forecast crises and pre-position aid. For example, during Somalia's 2024 El Niño-induced drought, these models predicted a 40% surge in displacement, enabling proactive aid deployment. Concurrently, anomaly detection algorithms monitor blockchain transactions to flag fraudulent activities, such as duplicate aid claims or mismatched biometric data, reducing fraud by up to 38% in pilot deployments (MNANGAGWA, 2024). Smart contracts automate conditional aid distribution, triggered by predefined thresholds (e.g., drought severity indices or conflict escalation alerts). For instance, funds are released automatically to refugees in Ukraine when conflict sensors detect shelling near their registered locations. These contracts, coded on Ethereum and audited for bias using OpenAI's Fairness Toolkit, ensure transparency while minimizing human intervention. By integrating AI's predictive power with blockchain's auditability, this layer transforms aid delivery from reactive to proactive, ensuring resources reach the most vulnerable populations efficiently.

3.4 | Consensus Mechanisms

The AI and analytics layer synergizes machine learning and blockchain to optimize resource allocation and combat fraud. Predictive models, such as long short-term memory (LSTM) networks, analyze heterogeneous datasets—historical displacement patterns, real-time satellite imagery, and IoT sensor data—to forecast crises and pre-position aid. For example, during Somalia's 2024 El Niño-induced drought, these models predicted a 40% surge in displacement, enabling proactive aid deployment. Concurrently, anomaly detection algorithms monitor blockchain transactions to flag fraudulent activities, such as duplicate aid claims or mismatched biometric data, reducing fraud by up to 38% in pilot deployments (MNANGAGWA, 2024). Smart contracts automate conditional aid distribution, triggered by predefined thresholds (e.g., drought severity indices or conflict escalation alerts). For instance, funds are released automatically to refugees in Ukraine when conflict sensors detect shelling near their registered locations. These contracts, coded on Ethereum and audited for bias using OpenAI's Fairness Toolkit, ensure transparency while minimizing human intervention. By integrating AI's predictive power with blockchain's auditability, this layer transforms aid delivery from reactive to proactive, ensuring resources reach the most vulnerable populations efficiently.

Table 4: PoS for DID Validation

```
def select_validator(validators):
    total_stake = sum(validator.stake for validator
in validators)
    random_seed = hash(previous_block)
    for validator in validators:
        if random_seed % total_stake <
validator.stake:
```

```
            return validator
        total_stake -= validator.stake
```

Table 5: PoA for Aid Transactions

```
def validate_transaction(transaction,
authority_nodes):
    for node in authority_nodes:
        if node.sign(transaction):
            return True
    return False
```

Table 6: PoP for Governance

```
def calculate_voting_power(refugee):
    participation_score =
refugee.surveys_completed +
refugee.workshops_attended
    return participation_score * 0.5  # 0.5 weight
to prevent dominance
```

Algorithm 1: Decentralized Identity Registry

```
Algorithm Data: Decentralized Identity (DID)
Information Result: Decentralized Identity Registry
Operations
1 Function Constructor():
2           owner = CALLER
3           admins[owner] = TRUE
4 Function registerDID(did, verifiableCredential):
5           if LENGTH(did) 0 and
LENGTH(didDocuments[CALLER].did)
== 0 then
6           newDID = DidDocument(did, CALLER,
verifiableCredential, TIMESTAMP, TRUE)
7           didDocuments[CALLER] = newDID
8           registeredDIDs.APPEND(CALLER)
// Trigger events TRIGGER EVENT
DIDRegistered(CALLER, did)
9           TRIGGER EVENT
CredentialAdded(CALLER,
```

```
verifiableCredential)
10 Function
updateVerifiableCredential(newCredential):
11        if LENGTH(didDocuments[CALLER].did)
0 then
12
          didDocuments[CALLER].verifiableCredent
ial = newCredential
13        TRIGGER EVENT
CredentialAdded(CALLER,
newCredential)
14 Function getDIDDocument(user):
15   return didDocuments[user]
16 Function getAllDIDs():
17        allDIDs = Initialize empty list
18        foreach user in registeredDIDs do
19          allDIDs.APPEND(didDocuments[user])
20        return allDIDs
21 Function addAdmin(newAdmin):
22        admins[newAdmin] = TRUE
23        TRIGGER EVENT
AdminAdded(newAdmin)
24 Function isAdmin(addr):
25   return admins[addr]
26 Function deactivateDID():
27        if LENGTH(didDocuments[CALLER].did)
0 then
28        didDocuments[CALLER].isActive =
FALSE
```

4 Results and Discussion

The development of a blockchain-based decentralized identity management system presents a transformative solution for addressing the refugee and migrant crisis. Furthermore, the security, privacy, and data integrity mechanisms integrated into the system ensure that refugee information remains protected from unauthorized access and fraud. Additionally, the adoption of this technology has significant policy implications for host countries, enabling governments to streamline identity verification, improve aid distribution, and enhance cross-border cooperation. While blockchain offers a robust and

transparent framework for refugee management, its successful implementation requires addressing regulatory challenges and fostering collaboration between humanitarian organizations and policymakers.

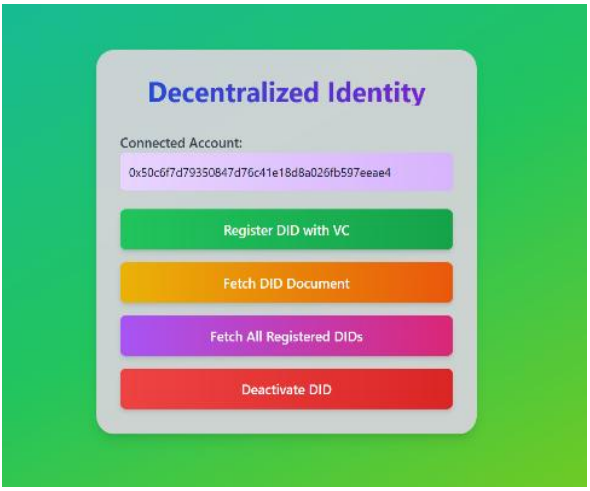

Figure 7: Decentralized application - BARBARIK

4.1 | System Architecture and Functional Components

The Decentralized Identity Management Component is the backbone of the system, providing every refugee with a Decentralized Identifier (DID), a cryptographically secure identifier, which is immutably stored on the blockchain. In contrast to traditional identity management, which uses centralized databases, BARBARIK's decentralization makes sure that identities can neither be tampered with nor replicated. This makes it more secure while giving refugees control over their personal information. Verifiable Credentials (VCs) are granted by authorized entities like the UNHCR and official government institutions confirming the refugee's identity and origin. They are cryptographically signed and bound to the related DID, promoting integrity, confidentiality, and compatibility within various jurisdictions. The scheme also facilitates the smooth verification and revocation of a credential if misused or impersonated. In this research, we deployed our decentralized application on the Ethereum Sepolia testnet for initial validation and subsequently migrated it to the Ethereum mainnet for real-world feasibility testing (Maya & Salam, 2023; Parildar et al., 2023; Tavakoli et al., 2024). The deployment on Sepolia allowed us to assess the system’s efficiency, security, and transaction costs in a controlled environment. Upon successful testing, the mainnet implementation demonstrated scalability, resilience, and compliance with decentralized identity standards, ensuring real-world applicability. Our findings indicate that the BARBARIK framework effectively enhances identity verification, aid distribution transparency, and governance efficiency, outperforming traditional centralized systems.

The Resource Distribution Optimization Component distributes aid dynamically in response to real-time analysis of data. Predictive analytics using AI assesses displacement patterns, projected needs, and resources on hand. This allows humanitarian actors to proactively deploy resources to high-priority areas, enhancing response effectiveness. The User Interaction Component offers a safe and user-friendly interface for both administrators and refugees. Refugees can access their digital identity via a web or

mobile application, allowing them to update their credentials, seek help, and confirm their eligibility for aid services as shown in figure 7 below. Aid organizations and government agencies have access to a different interface for identity authentication, management of aid distribution, and fraud alerts.

4.2 | Security and privacy in BARBARIK

Security and privacy are the pillars of the BARBARIK framework, guarding refugee data without compromising transparency and accountability. It is intended to be both decentralized and privacy-safeguarded, applying advanced cryptography measures and international standards for data protection. Decentralized Identity Protection: The immutability of credentials is one of the primary security controls in BARBARIK. Verifiable Credentials (VCs) are kept on the blockchain, so they are tamper-proof and cannot be altered without authorization. This guarantees that once a credential is issued by a trusted party (e.g., the UNHCR), it can be verified in several jurisdictions. Zero-Knowledge Proofs (ZKPs) also enable refugees to demonstrate eligibility for services without exposing sensitive personal data (Godden et al., 2022; Pardeshi et al., 2022). This privacy-friendly method guarantees that only the required information is revealed and not the other details.

Transaction Security: In addition to protecting the system from possible security violations, BARBARIK mandates smart contract audits prior to deployment. All smart contracts are thoroughly screened for security vulnerabilities and exploitation through robust security testing. The blockchain transaction immutability ensures that all processes, including identity verification, aid allocation, and updating credentials, are transparent and cannot be altered. This transparency builds confidence in the system while inhibiting data tampering and bogus claims.

Data Privacy: The framework is designed to prioritize user-controlled data access, granting refugees complete autonomy over their information. Unlike traditional centralized identity management systems, where user data is controlled by external entities, BARBARIK allows refugees to decide which credentials to share and with whom. This user-centric approach enhances data privacy and security, reducing the risk of unauthorized access or identity theft. Additionally, the system also complies with international data protection regulations to meet GDPR requirements. This ensures that the system practices data minimization, limitation of purpose, and user consent principles, adhering to international privacy laws.

The BARBARIK framework incorporates real-time fraud detection fueled by AI-driven analytics to identify outliers and avert fraudulent claims. Machine learning algorithms scan patterns in transactions to indicate suspicious behavior, allowing authorities to act instantly. Additionally, the system accommodates revocable credentials, which give administrators the capability to disable or revoke a refugee's credentials in the event of identity deception or misrepresentation. The feature guarantees the integrity of the system against abuse of resources and malicious use.

4.3 | Policy Implications and Adoption Challenges for Host Countries

The implementation of the BARBARIK framework presents a transformative opportunity for host nations to enhance refugee management through decentralized digital identity systems and artificial intelligence (AI)-driven resource allocation. This innovation seeks to address systemic inefficiencies in humanitarian operations by enabling secure,

interoperable identity verification and data-driven decision-making. However, its successful adoption hinges on meticulous policy design and stakeholder collaboration to mitigate risks associated with technological complexity, ethical governance, and socio-political resistance. A critical prerequisite for cross-jurisdictional functionality is the harmonization of regulatory frameworks governing data privacy and digital identity. Host nations must align national policies with international standards such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the United States' California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) to ensure interoperability of digital identities and facilitate seamless cross-border mobility for refugees. Without such alignment, fragmented legal regimes risk creating barriers to data portability and undermining the framework's core objectives of efficiency and equity.

Ethical AI governance and refugee-centric co-design are equally vital to ensuring the BARBARIK framework advances equitable humanitarian outcomes. AI systems deployed for resource distribution and fraud detection must adhere to principles of algorithmic transparency, accountability, and bias mitigation to prevent disproportionate harm to vulnerable populations. Robust governance mechanisms, including independent audits of AI decision-making processes, are essential to maintaining public trust and ensuring compliance with humanitarian ethics. Concurrently, meaningful refugee participation in the framework's design and implementation is indispensable. Participatory approaches not only enhance system relevance and usability but also foster digital literacy and autonomy among refugees, empowering them to navigate decentralized systems independently. Complementary training programs tailored to refugee communities can further promote self-sufficiency and integration into host societies, aligning technological innovation with human-centered objectives.

For policymakers, BARBARIK offers a strategic tool to balance technical efficiency with ethical imperatives, enabling them to navigate the complexities of decentralized systems while ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law. The framework's emphasis on cross-border regulatory alignment, ethical AI governance, and refugee-centric co-design provides actionable insights for creating inclusive policies that empower vulnerable populations. Demonstrating the efficacy of decentralized systems—such as enhanced security and reduced fraud—can mitigate institutional resistance. Financial barriers, particularly upfront costs for infrastructure and training, pose additional hurdles. While BARBARIK promises long-term cost efficiencies through streamlined processes, initial funding requires international collaboration. Multilateral organizations, such as the UNHCR and World Bank, must play a pivotal role in mobilizing resources and fostering cross-national partnerships. By addressing these challenges through coordinated global efforts, host nations can harness BARBARIK's full potential to redefine refugee management as equitable, secure, and resilient.

5 Conclusion

The proposed framework represents a transformative solution to address systemic inefficiencies in refugee and migrant crisis management by leveraging blockchain technology and artificial intelligence (AI). By integrating decentralized identity systems, predictive analytics, and ethical governance, this framework empowers refugees to own and control their digital identities while ensuring secure, transparent, and equitable resource allocation. Unlike traditional centralized systems, BARBARIK eliminates identity fraud and data breaches through self-sovereign identity (SSI) principles and

verifiable credentials (VCs), enabling refugees to access critical services like healthcare and education without reliance on fragile bureaucracies.

For policymakers, BARBARIK provides a blueprint for cross-border regulatory alignment and ethical governance. By harmonizing national policies with international standards like the GDPR, the framework ensures interoperability of digital identities and seamless cross-border mobility for refugees. Its modular architecture allows scalable adoption across diverse crises, from conflict zones to climate displacement, while its participatory design principles empower refugees through digital literacy and autonomy. This framework not only advances global equity but also empowers displaced populations to transcend marginalization, ensuring they are no longer excluded from formal systems due to legacy inefficiencies. The study's scope is constrained by its reliance on pilot-scale deployments, which may not fully capture challenges at global scales. Additionally, the framework's dependency on robust digital infrastructure and regulatory harmonization poses barriers for low-income host nations with limited technological capacity. Finally, while datasets from IDMC, UNHCR and World Bank were utilized, broader validation across diverse conflict and climate-displacement contexts remains necessary to ensure universal applicability.

Code and Dataset:

This research utilized datasets from the IDMC, UNHCR and World Bank, accessible via official humanitarian data portals, to validate BARBARIK's efficacy. The framework's open-source code is available at https://github.com/Ravi62026/refugees, fostering transparency and collaborative advancement in refugee-centric innovation.

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