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To:

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Thank you for submitting your manuscript to *SINTHOP: Media Kajian Pendidikan, Agama, Sosial dan Budaya*, titled:

“Adaptation Strategies and Christian Identity Preservation Among Students in a Muslim-Majority School at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan, Aceh Singkil Regency”

Based on the results of the peer review process, we are pleased to inform you that your article has been **ACCEPTED** for publication in *SINTHOP: Media Kajian Pendidikan, Agama, Sosial dan Budaya*, Volume 5, Number 2, July-December 2026.

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We hope this letter serves your needs accordingly.

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Editor in Chief



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Adaptation Strategies and Christian Identity Preservation Among Students in a Muslim-Majority School at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan, Aceh Singkil Regency

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Abstract

Religious diversity within educational settings creates complex dynamics of social adaptation, particularly for students from religious minority groups who attend schools characterized by a majority religious culture. This study aims to analyze the adaptive strategies employed by Christian students in developing social relationships while maintaining their religious identity in a school where the majority of students are Muslim. A qualitative approach with a descriptive research design was employed at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan, Aceh. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with nine Christian students as the primary informants and analyzed using Michael Rutter's Social Resilience Theory. The findings indicate that Christian students adopt various adaptive strategies, including fostering mutual respect, demonstrating respect for Islamic religious practices and activities within the school, and building inclusive social relationships with peers regardless of religious background. Simultaneously, they preserve their religious identity through consistent engagement in religious worship, active participation in church activities, adherence to Christian values, and the support of family and religious communities as protective factors. The findings further reveal that an inclusive school environment—reflected in teacher support and school policies that respect religious diversity—contributes to strengthening the social resilience of minority students. Conceptually, this study extends the application of Social Resilience Theory by demonstrating that social adaptation and the preservation of religious identity are not mutually exclusive processes; rather, they can occur simultaneously through the interaction between individual capacities and the protective factors available within the school environment.

Keywords: *Social adaptation; social resilience; religious identity; Christian students; Muslim-majority school.*

A. Introduction

Religious diversity within educational settings represents a social reality that shapes the dynamics of interaction among students from different religious backgrounds. In multicultural societies, schools function not only as institutions for academic learning but also as important arenas for social adaptation, identity formation, and the cultivation of interreligious tolerance. For students belonging to religious minority groups, studying in a school where the majority of students adhere to a different faith requires the ability to establish harmonious social relationships while preserving their own religious identity.

This phenomenon is evident in Aceh Singkil Regency, Aceh Province, one of the most religiously diverse regions in the province. Such diversity is reflected in its educational institutions, including SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan, where Muslim and Christian students study together. This pluralistic environment fosters intensive interactions between majority and minority groups through a wide range of academic and social activities. At the same time, Christian students are required to adapt to a school culture predominantly shaped by Islamic values while maintaining their own religious identity.

School records indicate that SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan has a total enrollment of 492 students, including 194 Christian students, comprising 93 males and 101 females (a teacher at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan, 2025). Although the number of Christian students is relatively substantial, the school remains institutionally situated within an educational environment predominantly characterized by Islamic culture and religious practices. Furthermore, the limited availability of senior high schools accessible to non-Muslim communities in Simpang Kanan District has led most parents to enroll their children at this school. Consequently, SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan provides a particularly relevant social setting for examining the dynamics of adaptation among religious minority students within a Muslim-majority educational environment.

In their daily school life, Christian students, as a religious minority at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan, actively participate in a wide range of academic and social activities alongside their Muslim peers. Nevertheless, certain religious activities are exclusively intended for Muslim students, including the weekly recitation of Surah Yasin every Friday and the commemoration of Islamic religious observances, such as the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday (Mawlid al-Nabi). Christian students do not participate in these activities because of their religious beliefs; however, they consistently demonstrate respect for these practices as an integral part of the school's culture. This situation illustrates the existence of functional boundaries of participation that do not hinder the development of harmonious social relationships among students.

Previous studies have extensively examined the adaptation of minority groups within educational settings. Sulanam's research on majority-minority interactions in schools found that minority students develop various adaptive strategies to maintain their presence in majority environments through classroom interactions, extracurricular activities, and processes of identification as a distinct social group (Sulanam, 2021). The study emphasizes that adaptation serves as a strategy enabling minority students to gain and sustain social acceptance within the school community. Similarly, Abrari Ilham's study on the socio-academic adaptation of Christian teachers and students in Islamic madrasah schools demonstrates that school policies allowing Christian students to practice their religious beliefs contribute to the creation of a

more inclusive educational environment (Ilham et al., n.d.). Nevertheless, the study also identifies certain academic constraints, indicating that educational equality has not yet been fully realized. In addition, the research conducted by Putri Nur Asrhofiah and Ach. Shodiqil Hafil on interaction patterns between Christian and Muslim students reveals that tolerance, mutual respect, and a supportive school environment are key factors in fostering harmonious social relationships within religiously diverse educational contexts (Nur Ashrofiah & Hafil, 2023).

Although these studies have advanced the understanding of social adaptation, tolerance, and interactions between majority and minority groups in educational settings, most conceptualize adaptation primarily as a means of achieving social acceptance within the majority environment. Previous research has not comprehensively examined how adaptation unfolds concurrently with efforts to preserve the religious identity of minority students in their everyday school experiences. Yet, maintaining one's religious identity constitutes an integral aspect of the lived experiences of minority students as they interact within environments dominated by members of another religious community. Accordingly, a significant research gap remains in understanding how strategies of social adaptation and the preservation of religious identity are simultaneously enacted in schools where the majority of students are Muslim.

Based on this research gap, the present study aims to analyze the adaptive strategies employed by Christian students to establish social relationships within a school where the majority of students are Muslim. In addition, the study seeks to identify the challenges encountered by Christian students throughout the adaptation process and to examine the strategies they employ to preserve their religious identity within an educational environment dominated by the majority religious group. By adopting the perspective of social resilience, this study is expected to make an empirical contribution to the understanding of the relationship between social adaptation and the preservation of religious identity in multicultural educational settings.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to explore the experiences of social adaptation and the preservation of religious identity among Christian students in a school where the majority of students are Muslim. The research was conducted at SMAN 1 Lipat Kajang Atas, Simpang Kanan District, Aceh Singkil Regency. The study involved nine Christian students selected through purposive sampling in accordance with the research objectives. The participants comprised five male and four female students aged between 15 and 17 years.

Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observation was conducted to examine directly the interactions between Christian students and other members of the school community, as well as the adaptive practices they employed. In-depth interviews were used to obtain detailed accounts of the students' experiences, the challenges they encountered, and the strategies they adopted to preserve their religious identity within the school environment. Document analysis served as a complementary source of evidence to support the findings derived from observation and interviews. Following data collection, all interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and

systematically reviewed. The transcripts were then organized into thematic categories, including forms of social adaptation, challenges encountered, and strategies for preserving religious identity. The data were subsequently analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to generate a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences.

C. Result and Discussion

The Emergence of Christianity in Aceh Singkil

Aceh Singkil is one of the most socio-culturally diverse regions in Aceh, characterized by its ethnic, linguistic, and religious plurality. According to 2021 population data, Aceh Singkil had a population of 129,333, of whom the majority identified as Muslim (87.89%). Christianity constitutes the second-largest religious community, accounting for 10.95% of the population and distributed across nearly all subdistricts of Aceh Singkil. Other religious affiliations include Catholicism (0.94%), Hinduism (0.004%), Buddhism (0.001%), and other religions (0.19%) (Badan Pusat Statistik Aceh Singkil, 2022).

The growth of the Christian community in Aceh Singkil Regency has paralleled population expansion and the development of new residential areas. Initially, the Christian population was relatively small and concentrated in specific localities. However, continued demographic growth led to the establishment of new settlements situated alongside Muslim communities, which constitute the majority population (Miswardin, 2019). This demographic transformation has shaped a pattern of social life characterized by sustained interactions among religious groups across various domains, including education, economic activities, and community life. Nevertheless, relations between Muslim and Christian communities in Aceh Singkil have not always been harmonious. Previous studies indicate that interreligious relations in the region have experienced periods of tension influenced by historical, political, and institutional developments related to religious affairs.

This historical background provides an important context for the present study. The long-standing interactions between the Muslim and Christian communities in Aceh Singkil have shaped the broader social environment in which Christian students conduct their daily lives, including within the school setting. Consequently, the adaptive strategies and approaches to preserving religious identity developed by Christian students at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan cannot be understood in isolation from the historical dynamics of interreligious relations that have evolved within the wider Aceh Singkil community.

Interreligious Conflicts

Aceh Singkil, a small regency located at the westernmost tip of Indonesia, has repeatedly attracted national attention due to disputes surrounding houses of worship. The conflict that escalated in 2015 was not merely an episode of interreligious confrontation; rather, it reflected deeper structural issues, including discriminatory regulations, the state's failure to effectively manage religious diversity, and inadequate protection for minority communities. Two podcast discussions produced by the El Bukhari Institute (EBI), with support from the Indonesian Justice and Peace Foundation (Yayasan Keadilan dan Perdamaian Indonesia, YKPI), highlight important narratives concerning the role of interfaith youth, shortcomings in the existing legal framework, and aspirations for more equitable and inclusive public policies.

The roots of the conflict can be traced to regulatory frameworks that failed to ensure justice. In October 2015, violence erupted in Aceh Singkil following objections to the presence of churches that were alleged to lack official Building Construction Permits (Izin Mendirikan Bangunan [IMB]). The incident resulted in one fatality and the burning of several houses of worship. Beneath these events, however, lay a long-standing accumulation of structural inequalities and unresolved grievances.

One of the issues that has consistently served as a source of interreligious tension in Aceh Singkil Regency is the construction of houses of worship (Febriyandi, 2019). This issue extends beyond the freedom to practice religion and encompasses broader social, legal, and public governance dimensions. Differing interpretations of the right to religious worship and the procedures governing the establishment of places of worship have frequently given rise to divergent perceptions among religious communities. In this context, the construction of houses of worship is regarded not only as an individual or collective religious right but also as a social issue closely associated with community acceptance, government regulation, and the maintenance of interreligious harmony (Supriatna & Abimayu, n.d.).

As a region inhabited by communities with diverse religious backgrounds, particularly Muslims and Christians, Aceh Singkil exhibits complex patterns of intergroup relations. Previous studies indicate that conflicts in the region have generally centered on controversies surrounding the construction of houses of worship, particularly the implementation of agreements regulating the number of churches permitted within the area. The increasing number of Christian houses of worship has been perceived by some segments of the Muslim community as a violation of previously established agreements, thereby giving rise to various forms of opposition (Muhajir, 2016).

Tensions escalated again in 1979 following controversies surrounding the construction of churches in several areas, including a Catholic church in Mandumpang and the Gereja Tuhan Indonesia (GTI, Church of God Indonesia) in Gunung Meriah. Divergent views regarding the need for additional houses of worship triggered a series of conflicts that culminated in the burning of several churches and the suspension of church construction projects (Hatta et al., 2023). The conflict subsequently intensified into violent confrontations that resulted in casualties and damage to residential areas, prompting the government, together with religious and community leaders, to initiate mediation efforts. These negotiations culminated in the signing of the Joint Pledge (Ikrar Bersama) on 13 October 1979, which became the foundation for restoring public security and promoting interreligious harmony in Aceh Singkil (Hartani & Nulhaqim, 2020).

Following the adoption of the Joint Pledge, relations between the Muslim and Christian communities in Aceh Singkil gradually improved. Social life evolved within a more conducive environment, characterized by increasing interreligious interaction and the expansion of Christian settlements and communities across the region. This development is also reflected in the establishment of various religious institutions, including the GKPPD Church in Kuta Kerangan, Simpang Kanan District. The presence of this church constitutes an important part of the historical development of the Christian community in Aceh Singkil and demonstrates that Christians have long been an integral component of the region's social fabric (Rahmah et al., 2023).

The tensions reached their peak in October 2015 when a demonstration organized by Pemuda Pecinta Islam (PPI, Youth Lovers of Islam) called on the local government to take action against houses of worship that were alleged to have failed to comply with the licensing requirements stipulated by existing regulations (Rahmah et al., 2023).

The situation subsequently escalated into violence, culminating in the burning of the Huria Kristen Indonesia (HKI, Indonesian Christian Church) in Suka Makmur Village, Gunung Meriah District (Mardayanti et al., 2025). The incident was followed by clashes in Dangguran Village that resulted in one fatality and several injuries. The conflict also forced thousands of Christian residents to seek refuge in several areas of North Sumatra to avoid further escalation (Hendirman & Mustafa, interview). Although the conflict caused substantial material losses, casualties, and large-scale population displacement, the escalation of violence was ultimately contained through the intervention of security authorities and legal proceedings against those responsible for the criminal acts. Consequently, the conflict did not develop into prolonged violence, despite leaving significant social repercussions for interreligious relations in Aceh Singkil.

In the aftermath of the conflict, the local government, together with various stakeholders, sought to restore interreligious relations through dialogue, mediation, and strengthened regulatory frameworks. One notable initiative was the enactment of Aceh Qanun No. 4 of 2016 on Guidelines for the Maintenance of Interreligious Harmony and the Establishment of Houses of Worship (Rizka et al., 2025), which was intended to reinforce religious harmony while providing legal certainty regarding the procedures for constructing places of worship. Nevertheless, the implementation of this regulation continues to face various challenges at the local level. Research by Mardayanti, Fajarni, and Majid (2025) demonstrates that non-Muslim communities in Sanggaberu, Aceh Singkil, continue to encounter multiple forms of resistance in the process of establishing houses of worship. These findings suggest that the implementation of the regulation is shaped not only by the prevailing legal framework but also by local social dynamics, majority–minority relations, and ongoing processes of negotiation within the community.

These conditions constitute an important social context for understanding the experiences of minority groups in Aceh Singkil, including Christian students attending schools in Muslim-majority environments. Although the school context differs from disputes concerning the construction of houses of worship, the broader dynamics of majority–minority relations within the community provide valuable insight into the social environment that shapes Christian students' processes of social adaptation and their efforts to preserve their religious identity in everyday school life.

Adaptive Strategies of Christian Students in a Muslim-Majority School

a. Practicing Mutual Respect

The findings indicate that one of the primary adaptive strategies employed by Christian students in a school where the majority of students are Muslim is the cultivation of mutual respect in their everyday interactions. Of the nine participants interviewed, seven reported that they adapted to the school environment by respecting peers from different religious backgrounds, including showing respect for Islamic religious activities that constitute an integral part of school life. This attitude was reflected in their willingness to respect the

observance of Islamic religious practices while fostering positive social relationships with all members of the school community, regardless of religious affiliation. As one participant explained (S, Female, 17 years old):

“For me to feel comfortable at school, I have to respect friends who have different religious beliefs. We all study in the same school, so no one should think that their own religion is the only right one. Whenever there are Islamic religious activities, I show my respect because they are part of their beliefs, and they also respect me and my religion.”

The practice of mutual respect among Christian students is reflected in various aspects of their daily school life. They refrain from differentiating their peers on the basis of religion, respect Islamic religious activities by avoiding any actions that might disrupt them, and maintain friendships with all students regardless of religious affiliation. One participant also explained that they deliberately avoid bringing food containing pork to school as a gesture of respect for their Muslim classmates.

These accounts suggest that the adaptation process is grounded in the recognition of religious diversity as a social reality within the school environment. The participants acknowledged that individuals hold different religious beliefs and that harmonious social relationships require mutual respect and appreciation. The findings further indicate that the adaptation of Christian students is not achieved by abandoning their own religious identity or conforming to the religious practices of the majority group. Rather, it is manifested through the development of tolerance and respect for the religious practices of others. In this sense, adaptation is better understood as a process of fostering harmonious coexistence within a religiously diverse environment rather than as a process of assimilation into the dominant culture. A similar perspective was expressed by another participant (R, Female, 15 years old):

“The way I adapt is by not treating people differently. Even though we have different religions, we should always be respectful and considerate of one another so that everyone feels comfortable at school. The most important thing is to respect each other’s boundaries.”

This statement illustrates that adaptation is understood as the ability to develop interpersonal relationships grounded in openness, respect for differences, and an awareness of maintaining appropriate social boundaries in everyday interactions. Religious diversity is not perceived as an obstacle to building social relationships; rather, it is viewed as a condition that requires mutual respect in order to foster a harmonious school environment.

These findings suggest that the practice of mutual respect constitutes a form of social acceptance that enables minority students to feel accepted as members of the school community without compromising their religious identity. In this context, a school environment that promotes the values of tolerance and respect for diversity plays a crucial role in fostering minority students' sense of security, psychological comfort, and sense of belonging.

According to Hurlock, social acceptance refers to a condition in which an individual feels needed and accepted within close relationships in a social group (Aziz, 2019). The present findings indicate that the practice of mutual respect represents a form of social acceptance that enables Christian students to feel accepted within the school community without sacrificing their religious identity. This finding is consistent with Hurlock's conception of social acceptance as a state in which individuals are accepted and recognized as members of a social group. In this context, sense of belonging refers to a positive emotional environment that enables students to feel comfortable and perceive themselves as integral members of the school

community (Ardini, Setyowati, & Fauziah, 2020). The findings demonstrate that the culture of mutual respect within the school fosters a sense of safety and psychological comfort among Christian students throughout the learning process. These results further suggest that a positive school environment promotes students' well-being and strengthens their sense of belonging within the school community (Ardini et al., 2020).

Similar perspectives were expressed by three other participants—RT (Male, 16 years old), B (Male, 16 years old), and S (Male, 15 years old)—all of whom shared comparable views regarding the adaptive strategies they employed within the school environment. As S (Male, 15 years old) explained:

“In our opinion, preventing problems at school requires tolerance among friends. We realize that we are different, so we should not force our beliefs on one another. What matters is respecting our friends and maintaining good relationships with everyone here.”

These statements indicate that the participants perceive tolerance as a fundamental principle for building social relationships within a religiously diverse environment. Their awareness of religious differences is not viewed as a source of division but rather as a condition that should be addressed through respect for the rights and beliefs of every individual. Accordingly, the adaptation process is not achieved by eliminating differences but by embracing diversity as an inherent aspect of social life within the school community. Mutual respect facilitates positive social interactions, minimizes the potential for intergroup conflict, and fosters a supportive social climate for all members of the school community. In this context, tolerance functions as an adaptive strategy that enables minority students to establish harmonious social relationships without compromising their religious identity.

A similar perspective was expressed by participant RR (Male, 16 years old), who explained that adaptation within the school environment is realized through naturally occurring social interactions with peers from different religious backgrounds. RR stated:

“At school, I can be friends with anyone, including my Muslim classmates. In fact, I feel more comfortable being friends with them because we have attended the same schools since childhood. We often spend time together, chat, and sometimes go to the cafeteria together. I don't think there's any reason to distance ourselves from one another simply because we have different religions. What matters is that we respect each other and honor one another's beliefs. As long as we treat each other well, everything feels comfortable.”

This statement indicates that the participant's adaptive strategy is manifested not only through acceptance of religious diversity but also through active engagement in everyday social interactions. Shared activities—such as spending time together, conversing, and socializing with Muslim peers—reflect the development of inclusive interpersonal relationships. These findings suggest that religious differences are not perceived as barriers to the formation of social relationships but rather as an accepted dimension of diversity within the school environment.

A different experience was described by participant KT (Female, 16 years old), who explained that her adaptation to the school environment occurred gradually. KT stated:

“At first, I found it difficult to socialize because I'm naturally shy, especially when I had just started at the school. Over time, however, I gradually became more comfortable. Now I can make friends and talk with my Muslim classmates just like anyone else. At school, we play together, study together, and sit together. In my opinion, religious differences are not an

obstacle to forming close friendships; what matters is respecting one another and not treating people differently.”

This statement demonstrates that adaptation is a dynamic process that develops progressively rather than occurring instantaneously. During the initial stage, the participant experienced difficulties in establishing social relationships, primarily due to personal characteristics, such as shyness, rather than religious differences. As the frequency of interactions increased through everyday school activities—including studying, socializing, and communicating with peers—the participant gradually developed closer relationships with Muslim classmates. These findings suggest that sustained social interaction plays a crucial role in fostering interpersonal closeness and enhancing the sense of comfort experienced by minority students within a school environment dominated by the majority group.

Although most participants emphasized the importance of mutual respect as their primary adaptive strategy, one participant offered a different perspective. This difference does not indicate a rejection of the value of tolerance; rather, it highlights another dimension of adaptation that places greater emphasis on accepting and adjusting to the school environment itself.

As described by participant AS (Female, 15 years old), the experience of adaptation can also be understood from a different perspective. Unlike the other participants, who emphasized the importance of mutual respect or acceptance of the school environment, AS highlighted the psychological challenges she encountered during the initial stage of entering the school community. AS stated:

“During the student orientation period (MPLS), I felt uncertain because I didn't know anyone. Most of the students were Muslim, and I only knew one person. I was afraid of becoming close to Muslim classmates because I worried that I might be rejected due to our different religious backgrounds.”

This statement demonstrates that the adaptation process is not always straightforward but may initially be characterized by feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and concern about the possibility of being excluded by the majority group. In this context, the participant perceived religious differences as a factor that could potentially influence social acceptance, particularly during the initial stage when interpersonal relationships had not yet been established. These findings suggest that the challenges of adaptation extend beyond adjusting to the norms and culture of the school; they also encompass psychological dimensions, including a sense of security, self-confidence, and the belief that one will be accepted within a new social environment, as reflected in the participant's experience.

The findings further indicate that Christian students' adaptive strategies are supported by the role of teachers at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan, who facilitate the adaptation process by fostering respect for the Muslim community and promoting an inclusive school environment. As explained by participant KT (Female, 16 years old):

“My homeroom teacher, who is Muslim, often encourages me to remain confident in my own faith because I used to lack self-confidence.”

The participant's statement indicates that teachers play a role extending beyond academic instruction by also providing emotional support to their students. In this case, the teacher helped strengthen the participant's self-confidence, enabling her to feel more comfortable within a predominantly Muslim school environment. These findings suggest that

teachers' supportive attitudes contribute significantly to fostering an inclusive school climate in which minority students feel accepted, valued, and secure despite being part of a different religious community.

A similar view was expressed by another participant, S (Female, 17 years old), who stated:

"The teachers do not treat us differently; everyone is treated the same."

The participant's statement suggests that teachers at the school do not differentiate among students on the basis of their religious background. Equal treatment enables minority students to perceive themselves as integral members of the school community and prevents them from feeling marginalized because of their religious identity. These findings indicate that teachers' impartial and inclusive attitudes constitute an important factor in facilitating successful adaptation. When students feel respected and treated equitably, they are more likely to develop positive social relationships and integrate successfully into the school environment. The other participants expressed similar views. They consistently reported that teachers played a significant role in supporting their adaptation by providing encouragement and fostering an inclusive atmosphere. Such support enabled the students to feel comfortable, accepted, and valued within the school community despite religious differences.

b. Respecting Islamic Religious Activities at School

In addition to fostering social relationships through the practice of mutual respect, this study found that another adaptive strategy employed by Christian students was demonstrating respect for Islamic religious activities conducted within the school, such as the recitation of Surah Yasin, the commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday (Mawlid al-Nabi), and other religious observances. Of the nine participants, two explicitly stated that respecting Islamic religious activities constituted an important aspect of their adaptation to a school environment where the majority of students are Muslim.

This perspective was expressed by participant KT (Female, 16 years old), who stated:

"I think it's a good practice. As non-Muslim students, we show our respect by remaining quiet in the classroom while the Surah Yasin recitation is taking place. As for Islamic Religious Education classes, we've been accustomed to them since childhood because we've always studied alongside Muslim students, so we feel comfortable with the situation."

The participant's statement indicates that the adaptation process is expressed through respect for the religious practices that constitute part of the school's cultural environment. Remaining quiet during the recitation of Surah Yasin reflects the participant's awareness of religious differences while demonstrating respect for the right of Muslim students to practice their faith. Furthermore, the participant's acceptance of Islamic Religious Education as an integral component of the school's educational system suggests an ability to adapt to the institutional context without perceiving it as a threat to their own religious identity. A similar experience was described by participant RR (Male, 16 years old):

"I think it's perfectly fine because those activities help Muslim students deepen their religious knowledge. In fact, we are the ones who worry about causing problems because, as non-Muslims, we do not participate in the Yasinan recitation. We are concerned that we might disturb the activity if we were to joke around or make noise."

The participant's statement reflects a strong sense of social awareness regarding the importance of maintaining order during religious activities. The participant not only accepts the presence of Islamic religious observances but also demonstrates social responsibility by avoiding behaviors that could disrupt these activities. Accordingly, respect for religious practices is manifested through conduct that contributes to a harmonious and conducive school environment for all members of the school community.

Although not all participants explicitly identified respect for Islamic religious activities as an adaptive strategy, their responses revealed a broadly consistent pattern. Most participants regarded the school's Islamic regulations and religious activities as integral components of the school's culture that could be accepted without causing discomfort. They chose to adapt to these circumstances without perceiving any need to compromise or abandon their own religious beliefs.

According to a teacher at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan, no Christian religious activities have been organized on the school premises to date. Nevertheless, the school respects the religious rights of Christian students by granting permission for them to attend church services or participate in other religious activities when requested. This policy demonstrates the school's commitment to respecting students' freedom of religion by accommodating their religious needs, even though Christian religious activities are not formally conducted within the school environment.

These findings can be interpreted through the lens of Michael Rutter's Social Resilience Theory. According to Rutter (2012), resilience is a dynamic process that enables individuals to achieve positive adaptation despite exposure to adversity or challenging circumstances. Resilience is not regarded as an innate personal characteristic but rather as the outcome of interactions between individuals and their environment, mediated by supportive resources or protective factors that mitigate the adverse effects of potentially stressful situations. Such protective factors may include family support, positive peer relationships, an inclusive school environment, teachers who foster a sense of security, and supportive social communities that promote the development of social competence and self-confidence.

Within the context of this study, the position of Christian students as a religious minority in a school dominated by Muslim students can be understood as a circumstance that necessitates adaptive capacity. However, the findings indicate that the participants did not perceive this situation as a threat to their religious identity. Instead, they developed adaptive strategies by demonstrating respect for Islamic religious activities, such as the recitation of Surah Yasin and the commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday (Mawlid al-Nabi), without participating in these religious practices or diminishing their commitment to their own faith. This pattern suggests that adaptation occurs through respect for the religious practices of the majority while simultaneously maintaining clear boundaries around one's own religious identity.

These findings are consistent with Rutter's (2006) conceptualization of resilience as an individual's capacity to respond adaptively to challenging circumstances by drawing upon available environmental resources. In the present study, a school environment that promotes tolerance, positive peer relationships, teacher support, and acceptance of religious diversity functions as a set of protective factors that strengthen the adaptive capacity of Christian students. These forms of support enable them to establish harmonious social relationships

without experiencing pressure to assimilate their religious identity into the culture of the majority.

Accordingly, respect for Islamic religious activities can be understood as a manifestation of social resilience. In the context of this study, resilience is reflected not only in the ability of Christian students to function effectively within a religiously different environment but also in their capacity to cultivate positive social relationships, navigate religious differences constructively, and preserve their religious identity while interacting with the majority group.

Challenges Faced by Minority Students During the Adaptation Process

This study is grounded in the fact that Christian students at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan study in a school where the majority of students are Muslim, resulting in school activities and institutional culture being predominantly shaped by Islamic religious values. Although the school does not exhibit discrimination against or impose religious practices on non-Muslim students, this context nevertheless presents challenges for Christian students as a religious minority. They are required to adapt to a socially diverse environment, demonstrate respect for the Islamic religious practices observed within the school, and simultaneously preserve their Christian identity. Accordingly, the primary focus of this study is not the presence or absence of conflict but rather the dynamics of adaptation and the preservation of religious identity within a setting dominated by the majority religious group.

The findings indicate that, although Christian students generally adapt successfully to the Muslim-majority school environment, this process is not entirely free from challenges. However, the difficulties reported by the participants are not associated with discrimination, religious intolerance, or interreligious conflict. Instead, these challenges primarily arise as part of the process of adjusting to a new social and cultural environment within the school.

Several participants reported that, upon entering the school—particularly during the School Orientation Program (Masa Pengenalan Lingkungan Sekolah [MPLS])—they experienced feelings of shyness, low self-confidence, and awkwardness when interacting with classmates, the majority of whom were Muslim. These feelings did not arise from negative treatment within the school environment but rather from unfamiliarity with their peers and the need to understand the social norms and dynamics of a new educational setting.

In addition to the challenges associated with establishing social relationships, several participants also described the need to adjust to the academic activities and school culture shaped by Islamic values. These challenges included attending Islamic Religious Education classes, becoming familiar with Arabic terms and expressions used during instruction, and adapting to school practices during the month of Ramadan, such as the temporary closure of the school cafeteria at certain times of the day. Nevertheless, the participants did not perceive these circumstances as obstacles that interfered with either their academic learning or their social lives at school. Instead, they demonstrated the ability to adapt to these institutional practices without experiencing significant difficulty. This experience is illustrated by the following statement from participant RR (Male, 16 years old):

“The main challenge for me is Islamic Religious Education classes. They can be difficult at times, but I don't see them as a problem because I genuinely want to learn. It's also a language that could be useful for me in the future.”

This statement indicates that the participant's challenge was primarily related to understanding learning materials grounded in Islamic teachings, particularly the use of Arabic terminology and language, which were unfamiliar given the participant's religious background. Nevertheless, the participant did not perceive this challenge as an obstacle but rather as an opportunity to acquire new knowledge. This perspective reflects an open orientation toward learning and a willingness to adapt to the characteristics of an educational environment that differs from the participant's own religious experience.

These findings demonstrate that the adaptive challenges experienced by Christian students primarily involve adjusting to the norms, culture, and educational system of a majority-Muslim environment. From the perspective of Michael Rutter's Social Resilience Theory, such circumstances can be understood as situations that require individuals to develop adaptive capacities in order to respond positively to environmental demands and change. Resilience is not manifested through the avoidance of challenging situations but through the ability to develop adaptive strategies that enable individuals to maintain optimal social and academic functioning. Accordingly, the ability of Christian students to accept differences in the learning process and to perceive these challenges as opportunities for learning reflects the development of social resilience, which supports their successful adaptation within a Muslim-majority school environment.

In contrast to participant RR, who emphasized challenges related to academic activities, participant KT (Female, 16 years old) explained that the adaptation process also involved adjustments to everyday habits, particularly those related to food. KT stated:

"For example, when I bring lunch to school, if the only side dish available at home is pork, I just bring rice and buy the side dish at school instead."

The interview findings indicate that one of the challenges faced by Christian students as a religious minority relates to the practice of bringing lunch to school. Although the school does not prohibit students from bringing food containing pork, the participant deliberately chose not to do so, instead bringing only rice and purchasing a side dish from the school cafeteria, even though the meal was intended solely for personal consumption. This decision was not prompted by any school regulation but rather reflected a gesture of respect toward classmates who were predominantly Muslim. The participant recognized that the school is a shared social space and therefore sought to avoid causing discomfort to others while maintaining harmonious social relationships. These findings suggest that the challenges of adaptation arise not only within the academic context but also in everyday practices shaped by differences in religious norms and cultural habits.

Another experience was described by participant CT (Male, 16 years old), who associated the challenges of adaptation with changes in school routines during the month of Ramadan. CT stated:

"The main challenge is during Ramadan because the school cafeteria is closed, so there's no food available."

This statement indicates that school policies designed to accommodate the observance of Ramadan create practical challenges for non-Muslim students. Nevertheless, the participant did not perceive these circumstances as discriminatory. Rather, they were viewed as a natural consequence of accommodating the religious practices of the majority group, which the participant believed should be respected.

The participant's ability to adjust to the practices and routines of the school environment reflects an adaptive strategy grounded in respect for the religious practices of the majority while preserving their own religious identity. From the perspective of social resilience, this experience demonstrates the capacity of Christian students to manage emerging challenges through flexible behavioral adjustment, thereby enabling them to participate fully in school life without compromising their religious beliefs.

A different perspective was provided by participant AS (Female, 15 years old), who highlighted the challenges of adaptation during the initial stage of entering the school environment. AS explained:

“Yes, during the student orientation period (MPLS), because I did not know anyone at all. Most of the students were Muslim, and I only knew one person. I was afraid of becoming close to Muslim classmates because I worried that I would be rejected due to our different religions.”

This statement indicates that the challenges experienced by the participant during the initial stage of adaptation were primarily psychological and social rather than stemming from religious differences themselves. Her hesitation to establish close relationships with Muslim classmates arose from concerns about being rejected by the majority group before meaningful interpersonal relationships had been formed.

These findings indicate that the adaptation process among minority students begins with efforts to develop a sense of security, self-confidence, and the belief that they will be accepted within their social environment. As interactions with peers become more frequent and communication through school activities increases, these initial concerns gradually diminish. This suggests that social support provided by peers, teachers, and the broader school environment functions as a protective factor that strengthens the adaptive capacity of minority students.

From the perspective of Michael Rutter's social resilience theory, AS's experience illustrates that adaptation challenges do not necessarily arise from actual experiences of discrimination or rejection but may also stem from the anticipation or perceived possibility of being rejected. Resilience develops when individuals receive adequate social support that enables them to overcome such anxieties and establish positive interpersonal relationships. The findings of this study can be interpreted through the perspective of the resilience theory developed by Michael Rutter. Rutter conceptualizes resilience as a dynamic process that enables individuals to achieve positive adaptation despite being exposed to situations involving risk or adversity (Michael Rutter's Resilience, 2018). Resilience is not an innate personal trait but rather the outcome of interactions between individual capacities and the protective factors available within the surrounding environment. Individuals with resilience are able to cope effectively with challenges, maintain optimal psychological and social functioning, and develop constructive adaptive strategies in response to change and adversity (Rutter, 1985, 2006, 2012).

Within the context of this study, the challenges experienced by Christian students in a predominantly Muslim school were not primarily associated with discrimination or interreligious conflict. Instead, they were related to the process of adapting to a social and educational environment shaped predominantly by Islamic values. These challenges included establishing social relationships during the initial period of schooling, adjusting to classroom

learning that incorporated Islamic content, and adapting to various religious practices and school routines that form an integral part of everyday school life.

These findings are consistent with Rutter's concept of resilience, which emphasizes that an individual's ability to cope successfully with challenging situations is strongly influenced by the presence of protective factors. In the present study, these protective factors were reflected in family support, positive peer relationships, acceptance from teachers, and a school environment that provided Christian students with the opportunity to practice their faith freely. The availability of these protective factors enabled Christian students to develop adaptive capacities while preserving their religious identity.

Forms of Religious Identity Preservation Among Christian Students

The findings indicate that Christian students at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan were not only able to adapt successfully to a predominantly Muslim school environment but also to preserve their religious identity. All participants reported that they never felt hesitant or embarrassed to disclose their religious affiliation to either their peers or teachers. This openness suggests that the adaptation process did not lead to the erosion of their religious identity; rather, adaptation occurred concurrently with their efforts to maintain the beliefs they had held prior to entering the school.

The preservation of religious identity was manifested through various religious practices, including regular participation in worship, involvement in church activities, prayer, and the application of Christian values in everyday life. In addition, the participants demonstrated a strong commitment to maintaining the religious boundaries associated with their faith while engaging in social interactions within the school environment. This experience is reflected in the statement of participant RR (Male, 16 years old), who explained:

"I have never isolated myself and have always remained open. In fact, I once shared some aspects of my religion here. For example, I introduced a hymn from my faith to my Muslim friends. I also have a personal principle: 'Once a Christian, always a Christian even until death'."

This statement demonstrates the participant's strong self-confidence in expressing his religious identity within the school environment. His willingness to introduce an aspect of his religious practice to peers of different faiths indicates that preserving religious identity is not achieved through social withdrawal but through open, respectful, and mutually appreciative interactions. Furthermore, the principle he articulated reflects a deep commitment to his religious identity as a fundamental component of his personal identity.

Participant CT (Male, 16 years old) explained that he preserves his religious identity primarily through regular prayer. As he stated:

"In my opinion, the best way to remain steadfast in my faith is through prayer."

This statement indicates that prayer serves as the participant's primary means of maintaining his relationship with God. Beyond its spiritual significance, prayer also functions as a source of inner strength that enables him to preserve his religious identity within a religiously diverse school environment. This finding is consistent with Michael Rutter's concept of resilience, which emphasizes an individual's capacity to adapt positively to challenging circumstances by drawing upon personal and environmental resources.

A different experience was shared by participant AS (Female, 15 years old), who explained that she preserves her religious identity by practicing Christian values in her everyday life. As she stated:

"In my religion, I am taught that if someone needs help, we should help them. However, we should not be persuaded to join their religion."

This statement indicates that the preservation of Christian identity is not only expressed through religious practices and prayer but also through the implementation of Christian teachings in daily life. The participant emphasized the importance of maintaining a commitment to moral values, such as helping others, while simultaneously preserving personal religious boundaries and remaining committed to her own faith.

Participant S (Female, 17 years old) stated that her efforts to preserve her religious identity are manifested through regular worship activities at church. She explained:

"In front of my friends (Muslims), I openly acknowledge my religion. The important thing is to remember my faith, remain diligent in worship, and attend church every Sunday. My parents have also taught me to continue practicing my faith and that going to church every week is important."

This statement demonstrates that the preservation of religious identity is not solely derived from personal commitment but is also strengthened through the process of family socialization. Religious practices instilled from an early age, along with parental encouragement to consistently follow religious teachings, provide a foundation that reinforces the participant's commitment to maintaining her religious identity. Thus, the family functions as a primary agent of socialization that shapes the internalization of religious values while providing psychological support in navigating a different social environment.

These findings can be understood through the perspective of Michael Rutter's resilience theory. According to Rutter, an individual's ability to maintain psychological and social functioning when facing challenging situations is strongly influenced by the presence of protective factors. In this study, family support, church community, positive peer relationships, and a school environment that embraces diversity functioned as protective factors that strengthened the resilience of Christian students. These factors enabled them to preserve their religious identity without reducing their involvement in social life within the school environment.

D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Christian students as a religious minority group at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan are able to develop adaptive strategies that enable them to establish harmonious social relationships within a predominantly Muslim school environment. These adaptation strategies are manifested through mutual respect, acceptance of religious diversity, openness in building social relationships regardless of religious background, and respect for various Islamic religious activities that constitute part of the school culture, such as the recitation of Surah Yasin and other religious activities.

Throughout the adaptation process, Christian students encounter challenges in adjusting to a school culture shaped predominantly by Islamic values and religious practices. Nevertheless, they are able to preserve their Christian identity by continuing to practice their

faith, participating in religious activities aligned with their beliefs, and refraining from engaging in religious practices that contradict their own teachings. This study further reveals that schools play a strategic role in fostering the social resilience of minority students through the support provided by teachers and school policies that create space for Christian students to practice their faith. Such conditions enable them to participate actively in school life without having to modify their religious identity to conform to the culture of the majority group. Conceptually, these findings demonstrate that respect for the religious practices of the majority group does not necessarily lead to identity assimilation. Instead, it can function as an adaptive strategy that allows minority students to achieve social integration while simultaneously preserving their religious identity.

This study has several limitations, as it was conducted in only one school and focused primarily on the perspectives of Christian students. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the research sites and involve a wider range of participants, including teachers, parents, school administrators, and community leaders, in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of adaptation and religious identity preservation within more diverse social contexts.

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