



**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 minority students in public schools navigate everyday relationships within institutional cultures shaped by majority religious practices. This study examines how Christian students at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan, Aceh Singkil, adapt socially while maintaining their religious identities. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the study draws on interviews with nine Christian students and one teacher, supported by observation and school documentation, and interprets the findings through Michael Rutter's resilience framework. The findings identify three interrelated practices: maintaining friendships across religious boundaries, respecting Islamic activities without participating in their religious rituals, and adjusting behavior to everyday cultural sensitivities. Students described attending Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons while receiving adjustments to particular assignments, illustrating both practical accommodation and a curricular challenge. One student described choosing not to bring pork-based food to school, while another reported difficulty accessing food when the school canteen closed during Ramadan. Religious identity was maintained through personal commitment, church attendance, and parental guidance. Students' accounts further indicate that supportive relationships with peers and teachers provided important resources for navigating social uncertainty. The study demonstrates that social participation and religious identity maintenance can coexist through boundary negotiation, although adaptation also involves practical constraints within a school environment shaped by majority religious practices.

Keywords: *Social Adaptation; Identity Maintenance; Resilience; Christian Students; Aceh Singkil.*

A. Introduction

Religious diversity in educational settings is a social reality that shapes the dynamics of interaction among students from different religious backgrounds. In multicultural societies, schools function not merely as institutions for the transmission of cognitive knowledge but also as social microcosms in which identity negotiation, cultural accommodation, the formation of social cohesion, and the development of interreligious tolerance take place. For students from religious minority groups, integrating into a majority-dominated environment often gives rise to tensions between the demands of social conformity to the dominant culture and the commitment to preserving their distinct theological identities.

This situation can be observed in Aceh Singkil Regency, Aceh Province, which is recognized as one of the regions with a more diverse population composition than other areas of the province. This religious diversity is also reflected in the educational environment, including at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan, where Muslim and Christian students study together. Such diversity creates opportunities for intensive interaction between majority and minority groups across various academic and social activities. At the same time, Christian students face the challenge of adapting to a school culture predominantly shaped by Islamic values while maintaining their own religious identities.

According to school enrollment records, SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan has 492 students, of whom 194 are Christian, comprising 93 male and 101 female students (SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan, 2025, unpublished internal document). Christian students therefore account for approximately 39.4% of the student population while remaining a religious minority within a school culture shaped by Islamic practices. This combination of substantial minority representation and distinctive institutional routines makes SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan an important setting for examining how religious minority students develop social relationships and maintain their religious identities.

Christian students at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan share classrooms and everyday activities with their Muslim peers while encountering school routines associated with Islamic religious practices. One example is the weekly recitation of Surah Yasin, during which the interviewed Christian students described remaining respectful without participating in the recitation. Their responses illustrate a distinction between participation in shared school life and participation in religious rituals. This distinction provides an important point of departure for understanding how students maintain interreligious relationships while preserving their religious boundaries.

Studies of religious minority students in Indonesia have examined adaptation, everyday interaction, and identity negotiation across different educational settings. Sulanam (2021) discusses minority-majority interaction and identity formation in schools, while Ilham et al. (2025) examine the social and academic adaptation of Christian teachers and students in a madrasah environment. Nur Ashrofiah and Hafil (2023) explore interactions between Christian and Muslim students in developing interreligious tolerance. These studies indicate that religious minority adaptation involves both interpersonal relationships and institutional arrangements, although the particular strategies and boundaries vary across educational contexts.

Research on religious tolerance in Indonesian schools highlights the contributions of teachers, educational practices, and everyday communication. Alfianur et al. (2024) and Gunawan (2023) examine how school environments support religious moderation and tolerance, while Hamsyah et al. (2025), Maarif et al. (2023), and Mulyana (2023) demonstrate the significance of Islamic Religious Education teachers and instructional practices in fostering respect for religious differences. Nurhaliza and Gaffar (2026) further emphasize communication and social relationships between Muslim and non-Muslim students. These studies indicate that interreligious tolerance develops through interactions between educational practices and everyday social relationships. The present

study builds on this literature by examining how Christian students themselves interpret and negotiate religious differences within the routines of a Muslim-majority public school.

Existing Indonesian research has examined minority adaptation and religious identity negotiation in educational environments shaped by different majority religious cultures. Ashadi (2017), for example, documented how Christian students in public schools in Padang interpreted participation in Islamic school practices as social adjustment rather than necessarily as religious identification. In a contrasting setting, Ashadi (2020) demonstrated that Muslim students attending a predominantly Christian school could maintain strong religious commitments while developing tolerance toward religious differences. Studies by Raihani (2015), Utami (2022), and Harjatanaya (2025) further indicate that minority students' experiences are shaped not only by interpersonal relationships but also by institutional arrangements for religious education. More specifically, Suharman et al. (2026) identified variations in religious education provision for non-Muslim students in Aceh. Building on these studies, the present research examines how Christian students at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan negotiate everyday relationships, majority religious routines, curricular challenges, and the maintenance of their religious identities within a single public school setting. Its contribution lies in interpreting these interconnected experiences through Rutter's resilience framework, particularly the relationship between individual adaptive practices, social support, and contextual constraints.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the strategies through which Christian students at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan establish social relationships in a Muslim-majority school environment, identify the challenges they encounter in negotiating school routines and religious differences, and explain how they maintain their religious identities. Drawing on Michael Rutter's resilience framework, the study interprets these experiences through the relationship between contextual challenges, individual adaptive practices, and support from the students' social environment.

B. Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to examine the social adaptation experiences of Christian students and the ways they maintain their religious identities at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan, Aceh Singkil Regency. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to explore students' accounts of everyday interactions, religious practices, and school-related challenges within a social environment predominantly shaped by Islamic religious routines (Sugiyono, 2021).

The study was conducted at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan, Aceh Singkil Regency, Aceh Province. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on three criteria: (1) being an active Christian student enrolled at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan; (2) having studied at the school for at least one year, thereby providing sufficient experience of adaptation and social interaction; and (3) being willing to participate in the study. Ten informants participated, consisting of nine Christian students and one supporting teacher.

The student informants comprised five male and four female students aged 15–17 years. The supporting informant was an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) teacher who provided additional information regarding the school environment and classroom learning processes.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. First, face-to-face interviews explored students' initial adaptation, social and academic challenges, experiences in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) classes, school routines during Ramadan, and practices for maintaining Christian religious identities. Each interview lasted approximately 25 minutes and was audio-recorded with the informant's consent before being transcribed verbatim. Second, observations focused on students' interactions with peers and teachers in classrooms, the school canteen, and other school spaces, including activities associated with the weekly recitation of Surah Yasin. Third, school documentation provided contextual information concerning student enrollment, religious composition, and school activities. These sources supported the examination of students' adaptation experiences, with particular emphasis on the accounts provided by the interviewed students.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During data condensation, interview transcripts and field notes were reviewed and coded according to issues relevant to the research objectives. Related codes were organized into categories concerning social relationships, boundaries during religious activities, academic adjustment, everyday cultural sensitivities, and the maintenance of religious identity through family and religious practices. During data display, the categorized information was organized into thematic narratives supported by selected interview excerpts. Conclusions were developed by examining patterns across the findings and interpreting the relationships between adaptation strategies, contextual challenges, and protective resources through Michael Rutter's resilience framework.

Data credibility was addressed through source and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing students' accounts with information provided by the supporting ICT teacher, particularly regarding the school environment and classroom experiences. Methodological triangulation involved considering interview findings alongside observations of school interactions and available school documentation. Enrollment records provided demographic context, while interviews constituted the principal source for interpreting students' adaptation strategies and religious identity maintenance. This approach allowed the findings to be examined across different forms of evidence while distinguishing students' experiences from broader institutional practices.

Ethical considerations were incorporated into the research process. Before the interviews, participants were informed about the study's objectives, interview procedures, and the intended academic use of the information. Student participation was voluntary, and assent was obtained from the participating students. Access to the research setting was coordinated through a teacher at the school. Participants' identities were protected in

the presentation of findings through coded identifiers, while only relevant demographic information was retained to contextualize their accounts.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Religious Demography and Interreligious Relations in Aceh Singkil

Aceh Singkil is characterized by religious and social diversity. According to population administration data from the Aceh Singkil Population and Civil Registration Office for the second semester of 2021, the regency had 129,333 residents, comprising 113,682 Muslims (87.90%), 14,167 Christians (10.95%), 1,219 Catholics (0.94%), six Hindus, two Buddhists, and 257 residents registered under the category of belief in God Almighty (Dinas Kependudukan dan Pencatatan Sipil Kabupaten Aceh Singkil, 2022). These figures illustrate the demographic context of Muslim–Christian relations in Aceh Singkil, while the school examined in this study has a considerably higher proportion of Christian students than the regency as a whole.

Interreligious relations in Aceh Singkil have been shaped by disputes over the establishment and regulation of houses of worship, including the conflict of October 2015. Ahmad (2016) and Hartani and Nulhaqim (2020) document the historical and social dimensions of these tensions, while Rahmah et al. (2023), Mardayanti et al. (2025), and Zain and Maturidi (2024) situate disputes over worship facilities within broader patterns of Muslim–Christian relations, administrative regulation, and local negotiations. However, the history of religious conflict does not encompass the full range of interreligious experiences in the region. Mawardi et al. (2023), studying Muslim and Christian communities in Pertabas Village, Simpang Kanan District, identified cooperation in education, economic activities, and social affairs as important features of peaceful coexistence. These studies demonstrate that interreligious relations in Aceh Singkil involve both historical tensions and everyday practices of cooperation. This broader context provides a foundation for examining how Christian students at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan develop social relationships, negotiate religious boundaries, and experience interreligious coexistence within the school environment.

2. Adaptation Strategies of Christian Students in a Muslim-Majority School

a. *Mutual Respect and the Establishment of Relational Boundaries*

The findings indicate that a fundamental adaptation strategy employed by Christian students at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan is the cultivation of mutual respect in everyday interactions. This attitude is manifested through voluntary respect for the implementation of Islamic religious activities within the school environment, accompanied by efforts to maintain peer interactions without segregation based on religious affiliation. As one informant explained:

“For me, in order to feel comfortable at school, I have to respect friends who have different religions, Ma'am. We study at the same school, so we should not think that only our own religion is right. When there are Islamic religious activities, I

respect them because they are part of their faith, and they also respect me and my religion.” (S, Female, 17 years old).

S’s account places mutual respect at the center of social comfort within a shared school environment. Her emphasis on studying together and respecting religious differences illustrates that interpersonal acceptance does not require students to abandon their religious commitments. This finding corresponds with Nur Ashrofiah and Hafil’s (2023) study of Christian and Muslim students at SMAN 8 Kediri, where everyday interaction contributes to the development of religious tolerance. Gunawan (2023) similarly identifies shared student identity and institutional practices as important elements of tolerance at Sekolah Kharisma Bangsa Tangerang. A complementary perspective emerges from Ashadi’s (2020) study of Muslim students in a predominantly Christian school environment in Padang, which demonstrates that openness toward religious differences can coexist with a continuing commitment to one’s own religious identity. These comparisons suggest that tolerance and religious identity maintenance are not necessarily competing orientations. In the present study, their relationship is expressed through students’ emphasis on shared school membership, mutual respect, and the preservation of religious boundaries.

This pattern of adaptation becomes more evident in the experiences of other informants, as articulated through the management of social boundaries:

“My way of adapting is simply not to discriminate against anyone, Ma’am. Even though we have different religions, we still have to be mindful of our behavior and respect one another so that no one feels uncomfortable at school. The main thing is to maintain appropriate boundaries.” (R, Female, 15 years old).

R’s emphasis on maintaining appropriate boundaries demonstrates that openness in social relationships can coexist with awareness of religious differences. Boundary maintenance in this context does not involve withdrawal from interaction but the distinction between shared academic and social activities and personal religious commitments. Sulanam’s (2021) study similarly identifies accommodation and identity negotiation as important elements of minority students’ experiences in Indonesian secondary schools. Larson (2022), through ethnographic research among Christian and Muslim youth in Manado, further demonstrates how moral expectations and interreligious boundaries shape social relationships across religious differences. Interpreted through Rutter’s (1987) framework, the ability to recognize and negotiate such boundaries constitutes an individual adaptive resource. The present findings illustrate this capacity through students’ efforts to maintain interreligious friendships without treating religious participation and social participation as equivalent obligations.

Longstanding interpersonal relationships also contributed to students’ sense of familiarity and belonging, particularly when friendships had been established before entering senior high school:

“At school, I can be friends with anyone, Ma’am, including my Muslim friends. In fact, I feel more comfortable being friends with Muslim students because I have been going to school with them since I was little. We often play together, talk, and

sometimes go to the canteen together. I don't think there is any need to distance ourselves from one another just because we have different religions. What matters is that we respect each other and continue to respect one another's beliefs. As long as we treat each other well as friends, everything feels comfortable.” (RR, Male, 16 years old).

RR's experience illustrates how longstanding friendships provide a foundation for social belonging across religious boundaries. Having studied and interacted with Muslim peers since childhood, he describes everyday activities such as conversations, recreation, and visits to the school canteen as familiar forms of social engagement. These interactions can be understood as environmental resources that support a sense of belonging and reduce the perceived distance between religious groups. This interpretation is consistent with the significance of interpersonal communication discussed by Nurhaliza and Gaffar (2026) and the broader discussion of school belonging presented by Ardini et al. (2020).

Despite these positive experiences of interreligious friendship, adaptation was not equally comfortable for every student from the beginning. AS described uncertainty during the school orientation period, particularly because she had few established friendships and feared possible rejection by Muslim peers because of religious differences:

“I felt hesitant during the school orientation period, Ma'am, because I did not know anyone at all. Most of my friends were Muslim, and I only knew one person. I was afraid to become close to Muslim students because I worried that they would reject me because of our different religions.” (AS, Female, 15 years old).

AS's experience illustrates the uncertainty that can accompany entry into a new social environment. Alongside these challenges, other students described supportive responses from teachers that affirmed their religious identities. KT, for example, recounted encouragement from her Muslim homeroom teacher to remain confident in her Christian faith:

“There is a teacher, my homeroom teacher, who is Muslim and often advises me to remain confident in my own religion because I am not very confident in myself, Ma'am.” (KT, Female, 16 years old).

S similarly described her experience of equitable treatment by teachers, stating, “There is no different treatment from the teachers; everyone is treated equally” (S, Female, 17 years old). Together with KT's account, this finding highlights the importance of perceived fairness and religious affirmation in strengthening students' sense of acceptance. Within Rutter's resilience framework, supportive teacher-student relationships can be understood as environmental protective resources that help minority students navigate social uncertainty while maintaining their religious identities.

The relationship between interreligious friendship and religious boundary maintenance can be further understood through previous studies in Indonesia. Mawardi et al. (2019), examining identity negotiation between Christian and Muslim university students in Langsa, identified functional biculturalism as a pattern through which individuals participate in shared social environments while respecting religious

differences. Although their study concerns university students, this pattern offers a useful comparison with the experiences of RR and R, who describe openness to friendship alongside the maintenance of appropriate religious boundaries. Similarly, Kristina and Muttaqien (2023) emphasize the importance of Muslim–Christian dialogue in developing religious tolerance among Indonesian youth. The present findings extend these discussions by illustrating how religious boundaries are negotiated through ordinary school interactions, including friendships formed during childhood, respectful participation in shared activities, and the deliberate separation of social relationships from religious rituals. These practices indicate that boundary maintenance can facilitate interreligious relationships rather than necessarily producing social separation.

b. Respect for Islamic Religious Practices and Curricular Negotiation in the Classroom

During the weekly recitation of Surah Yasin, the Christian students interviewed described a form of respectful presence without participation in the religious ritual. Their adjustment involved remaining quiet and avoiding interruptions while Muslim students performed the recitation. This practice illustrates how students negotiate participation in a shared school environment while maintaining distinct religious boundaries. KT described the arrangement as follows:

“It is good, Ma’am. As non-Muslim students, we respect the activity and remain quiet in the classroom while the recitation of Surah Yasin is taking place. As for Islamic Religious Education classes, we are already accustomed to them because we have studied alongside Muslim students since childhood, so we feel comfortable.” (KT, Female, 16 years old).

The need to maintain relational harmony is also intertwined with minority students’ concerns about potential social friction arising from misunderstandings. This concern was emphasized by another informant:

“In my opinion, it is perfectly fine because it is intended to increase the Muslim students’ knowledge. Actually, we are the ones who are afraid of causing problems because, as non-Muslims, we do not participate in the Yasin recitation. We are worried that we might disturb the activity if we were to talk or behave playfully.” (RR, Male, 16 years old).

RR’s account further reveals that remaining quiet during the recitation reflects not only respect for Muslim peers but also concern about unintentionally disturbing their religious activities. This anticipatory self-restraint illustrates a form of boundary negotiation in which students distinguish respectful social conduct from religious participation. Through Rutter’s resilience framework, such behavior can be interpreted as an adaptive response to the expectations of a shared social environment (Rutter, 2006). Rather than indicating religious assimilation, the practice allows students to maintain their own religious commitments while respecting those of others.

A more complex form of adaptation emerges in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) classes. The interview-based findings indicate that Christian students remain in the classroom during PAI instruction while experiencing adjustments to particular learning

assignments, including those involving Arabic-language religious texts. These adjustments are described as allowing students to engage with selected learning materials in Indonesian while continuing their participation in classroom activities. A relevant comparison is provided by Ashadi (2017), who found that Christian students in public schools in Padang distinguished their participation in Islamic school practices from their personal religious commitments. The present findings extend this comparison by illustrating how Christian students negotiate academic participation and religious commitment through adjustments to classroom activities, while maintaining the distinction between educational involvement and religious identification.

The academic adjustments described by the informants illustrate how religious differences are negotiated within classroom practices. These findings can be situated within Indonesian research on minority students' access to religious education. Raihani (2015) identifies the provision of religious instruction corresponding to students' beliefs as an important educational right, while Utami (2022) demonstrates how religious education arrangements in multireligious public schools are shaped by institutional and interpersonal conditions. Harjatanaya (2025) further shows that the implementation of religious education in Indonesia involves negotiations among school policies, educational actors, and local contexts. More specifically, Suharman et al. (2026) document variations in the provision of religious education for non-Muslim students in Aceh. A contrasting case is provided by Wahyuni (2017), who examines the curricular and sociocultural challenges of Islamic Religious Education for Muslim students in non-Muslim schools. Together, these studies highlight the relationship between classroom-level accommodation and the broader institutional provision of religious education. At SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan, students' accounts demonstrate how adjustments to learning activities facilitate their participation in PAI classes while bringing questions of educational inclusion and religious diversity into focus.

From Rutter's (2006) resilience perspective, flexibility in learning assignments can be understood as an environmental resource that helps students navigate academic expectations in a religiously differentiated classroom. Maarif et al. (2023) demonstrate how the planning, implementation, and evaluation of PAI instruction can contribute to religious tolerance in public high schools, while Mulyana (2023) highlights the significance of moderation values and their implementation in Islamic Religious Education. The present study extends these discussions by examining classroom accommodation from the standpoint of Christian students' adaptation rather than primarily from instructional design or teacher perspectives. The findings show that classroom flexibility provides an important contextual resource for students' adaptation. From Rutter's perspective, resilience is shaped through the interaction between individual strategies and the educational conditions that support or constrain their implementation.

3. Adaptation Challenges Faced by Christian Students at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan

The adaptation experiences of Christian students at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan involve challenges alongside opportunities for positive social interaction. The interviews identify several interconnected difficulties, including uncertainty about peer acceptance during school orientation, participation in Islamic Religious Education classes, sensitivity toward differences in food practices, and limited access to food during Ramadan. These experiences illustrate how adaptation involves negotiating both interpersonal relationships and the institutional routines of a school shaped by majority religious practices.

The first challenge concerns uncertainty during the transition into senior high school. As illustrated by AS's account in the previous subsection, unfamiliarity with classmates and concern about possible rejection created hesitation in approaching Muslim peers. This experience demonstrates that adaptation can begin with anticipated social difficulties even before an actual conflict occurs. Establishing relationships across religious boundaries therefore involves developing familiarity and interpersonal trust within the new school environment.

The curricular dimension of adaptation becomes particularly evident in RR's experience of PAI instruction. While classroom adjustments provided some flexibility, encountering unfamiliar religious learning materials still required students to negotiate the relationship between academic participation and personal religious commitments. RR's account illustrates how this challenge could also be approached as an opportunity for learning:

“For me, the challenge is in Islamic Religious Education classes, Ma'am. Some parts are difficult, but it does not really become a problem because personally, I want to learn more about them, as they also involve language skills that may be useful in the future.” (RR, Male, 16 years old).

RR's account illustrates an individual strategy of cognitively reframing an unfamiliar learning experience. Although he acknowledges difficulties in PAI classes, he identifies aspects of the material, particularly language-related knowledge, that he considers useful for the future. This reinterpretation allows him to approach a curricular challenge as an opportunity for learning while maintaining his own religious commitments. Within Rutter's resilience framework, such cognitive flexibility can be interpreted as an adaptive resource that helps students respond constructively to challenges arising from differences between their religious identities and school learning experiences.

Everyday food practices also reveal how religious differences are negotiated within the shared school environment. KT described a personal adjustment involving the food she brought from home:

“One issue is food. For example, when I bring food to school and the only side dish available at home is pork, I bring only rice and buy a side dish at school.” (KT, Female, 16 years old).

KT's account illustrates a form of anticipatory accommodation in everyday school life. When the food available at home contains pork, she chooses to bring rice and purchase another side dish at school. This decision reflects her effort to adjust personal food practices to a shared environment in which Muslim dietary norms are culturally significant. Rather than withdrawing from interaction, she manages a potentially sensitive difference through an individual behavioral adjustment. The example demonstrates how religious minority adaptation may involve practical choices beyond formal classroom activities.

Access to food also became a practical challenge during Ramadan. CT described the closure of the school canteen as follows:

"The challenge is during Ramadan because the canteen is closed and there is no food available, Ma'am." (CT, Male, 16 years old).

CT's experience highlights a practical challenge arising from school routines during Ramadan. When the canteen was closed, access to food at school became difficult for students who were not observing the fast. Unlike KT's individual decision concerning food brought from home, this situation involved an institutional arrangement that affected students' everyday needs. This distinction is significant because accommodation does not occur exclusively through individual behavioral adjustments. Harjatanaya (2025) demonstrates that Indonesian schools interpret and implement religious diversity through context-specific arrangements involving educational policies, institutional routines, and local cultural expectations. This perspective helps explain how school routines shaped by majority religious practices can generate different practical experiences for students from minority religious backgrounds, as illustrated by CT's account of food access during Ramadan. The present finding therefore illustrates an institutional dimension of adaptation that cannot be reduced to interpersonal tolerance alone.

These findings illustrate the interaction between contextual challenges and adaptive resources in the experiences of Christian students. RR demonstrates cognitive flexibility in approaching unfamiliar religious learning materials, KT employs anticipatory behavioral adjustment in navigating food-related sensitivities, and CT identifies a practical constraint arising from Ramadan school routines. Through Rutter's (2006) resilience framework, these experiences reveal how individual adaptation operates within specific environmental conditions. Importantly, the findings distinguish between challenges that students manage through personal strategies and those arising from institutional routines. This distinction shows that adaptation involves both individual agency and the social conditions within which students participate in school life.

4. Forms of Religious Identity Maintenance among Christian Students at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan

The interviews indicate that participation in everyday school relationships can coexist with the maintenance of Christian religious identity. RR and S explicitly described openness about their religious beliefs while maintaining friendships with Muslim peers. Their accounts demonstrate that social adaptation does not necessarily involve concealing

religious differences or abandoning personal convictions. Instead, religious identity maintenance forms part of how students negotiate their relationships within a shared school environment.

Religious identity maintenance is also reflected in students' engagement with Christian religious practices and family guidance. Activities such as church attendance, prayer, and the observance of religious commitments provide continuity between students' experiences at home, within their religious communities, and at school. Purba et al. (2026), in their study of Christian students at SMA Advent 1 Medan, emphasize the role of worship in sustaining religious identity and responding to identity-related challenges. A related but broader finding is presented by Zuhdiyah et al. (2024), whose research on religious minority students highlights the significance of personal belief, religious knowledge, and social environments in shaping students' experiences of religious education. These studies support an interpretation of religious identity maintenance as a process sustained through personal commitment and social relationships rather than through withdrawal from religiously diverse environments. Within Rutter's resilience framework, family guidance and participation in religious communities can be understood as environmental protective resources that support students in negotiating everyday school challenges. RR illustrated the relationship between personal conviction and religious openness in the following account:

"I have never restricted myself, Ma'am, and I remain open with others. In fact, I have shared aspects of my religion here; for example, when there is a song from my religion, I sometimes play it for my Muslim friends. I also have a principle: 'Once a Christian, a Christian until death.'" (RR, Male, 16 years old).

RR's account combines an explicit commitment to his Christian identity with openness in relationships with Muslim peers. Sharing Christian religious songs with friends illustrates a form of religious self-expression that does not require separation from everyday social interaction. His statement, "Once a Christian, a Christian until death," further expresses the personal boundary through which he defines his religious commitment. This experience demonstrates that maintaining religious identity can be compatible with interreligious friendship. Beyond individual conviction, family guidance also contributes to the continuation of religious practices, as reflected in S's account:

"In front of my Muslim friends, I openly acknowledge my religion. The important thing is to remember my faith, regularly practice my religion, and go to church every Sunday. My parents have also taught me to remain committed to religious worship and to attend church every week." (S, Female, 17 years old).

S's account highlights the connection between parental guidance, regular church attendance, and openness about Christian identity. Her parents' encouragement to maintain religious worship provides continuity between family practices and personal religious commitments. This form of support can help explain how students sustain their religious identities while participating in everyday relationships with Muslim peers.

Within Rutter's (1987) resilience framework, family support, positive peer relationships, and affirming responses from teachers constitute potential protective

resources in students' adaptation processes. Religious identity maintenance and resilience represent interconnected dimensions of students' experiences. Church attendance and openness about Christian identity sustain their religious commitments, while personal and environmental resources support their capacity to navigate challenges within the school environment. Ashadi's (2020) research provides a relevant comparison by demonstrating that interreligious tolerance among Muslim students in a predominantly Christian school environment can coexist with strong religious commitments. Zuhdiyah et al. (2024) similarly highlight the importance of religious belief and supportive social environments in the experiences of minority students. In the present study, religious identity maintenance and social adaptation are therefore best understood as interconnected but analytically distinct processes. The contribution of the resilience framework lies in explaining how individual commitments, interpersonal support, and institutional conditions interact in shaping students' responses to religious differences.

These findings can be situated within recent Indonesian research on religious identity negotiation in educational settings. Ramadona et al. (2026), examining Muslim students' experiences in Catholic Religious Education, highlight how engagement with another religious tradition can coexist with the maintenance of personal religious commitments. Rachimi et al. (2026) similarly examine the negotiation of social tolerance and religious boundaries in Islamic Religious Education, while Bachtiar et al. (2026) emphasize the role of educational practices and institutional support in fostering interreligious tolerance. The present study contributes a complementary perspective by demonstrating how Christian students' religious identity maintenance is sustained through personal conviction, parental guidance, and church participation while they navigate everyday relationships and school routines shaped by majority religious practices. Interpreted through Rutter's resilience framework, these findings indicate that social adaptation and religious identity maintenance are interconnected but analytically distinct processes. Students' individual strategies operate alongside interpersonal support and institutional conditions, illustrating that positive interreligious relationships can coexist with continuing curricular and practical challenges.

D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Christian students at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan develop adaptation strategies through everyday social interaction, negotiation of religious boundaries, and the maintenance of personal religious commitments. Interreligious friendships, including relationships established since childhood, provide opportunities for social belonging, while respect for Islamic school activities enables students to participate in a shared educational environment without necessarily joining religious rituals. In Islamic Religious Education classes, students described academic adjustments that made participation more manageable while also revealing curricular challenges associated with differences in religious identity. Adaptation further involved practical responses to cultural sensitivities, as illustrated by individual choices concerning food and difficulties arising from the closure of the school canteen during Ramadan. At the same time,

personal conviction, church attendance, and parental guidance contributed to the maintenance of Christian identity. These findings establish that social adaptation does not necessarily require religious assimilation, but involves an ongoing negotiation between participation, accommodation, and identity maintenance.

Viewed through Michael Rutter's resilience framework, the findings highlight the interaction between individual adaptive resources and environmental protective factors. Students' ability to maintain religious boundaries, interpret unfamiliar learning experiences constructively, and adjust everyday behavior operates alongside support from family members, established friendships, and affirming interactions with teachers. Together, these resources help explain how the interviewed students navigate social, cultural, and academic challenges while maintaining their religious identities. The study therefore contributes to understanding resilience as a contextually situated process of adaptation rather than a condition defined by the absence of difficulties.

Drawing on the experiences of nine Christian students and one supporting teacher at SMAN 1 Simpang Kanan, this study provides a contextual understanding of how social relationships, classroom experiences, and religious commitments shape minority students' adaptation and identity maintenance. The findings contribute to understanding these processes within a public school environment characterized by religious diversity. As a single-site qualitative investigation, the study focuses on students' reported experiences and does not independently assess the school-wide consistency or formal institutional status of the PAI arrangements.

The findings underscore the importance of institutional arrangements that recognize the religious diversity of students in public schools. School administrators and education authorities should review existing practices concerning religious education, classroom participation, academic assessment, and access to basic facilities during religious observances. Clearer and more consistent arrangements can strengthen educational inclusion while reducing reliance on informal adjustments negotiated by individual students and teachers. Such improvements would complement the interpersonal tolerance already demonstrated in students' everyday school relationships.

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