Religious Identity and Coping Mechanisms: A Case Study of a Muslim Living Across Singapore and Myanmar

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Abstract

This study explores the development of religious identity and the use of religious coping mechanisms in a Muslim individual who has lived across two contrasting sociocultural contexts: Singapore and Myanmar. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through semi-structured online interviews complemented with non-verbal observations and triangulated with notes and verbatim transcripts. The findings show that religious identity is internalized from early childhood and continuously evolves through personal reflection, education, and social experiences. The participant uses both behavioral and cognitive forms of Positive Religious Coping (such as prayer, supplication, dhikr, and trust in divine plans) as primary strategies to manage emotional distress and hardship. Sleep also emerges as an adaptive, restorative coping strategy. Differences in sociopolitical environments significantly shape how religious identity is expressed: Singapore offers structural support and multicultural acceptance, enabling open religious practice, while Myanmar presents challenges rooted in minority status, discrimination, and limited religious facilities, prompting stronger communal solidarity and internalized spirituality. Despite these differences, religious identity consistently acts as a source of meaning, resilience, and psychological well-being. This study concludes that religious coping and identity development are deeply shaped by structural conditions, cultural environments, and personal spiritual maturation across contexts.

Keywords : Religious Identity, Religious Coping, Muslim Minority, Singapore, Myanmar.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji perkembangan identitas keagamaan dan penggunaan mekanisme coping religius pada seorang Muslim yang tinggal di dua konteks sosial-budaya yang sangat kontras: Singapura dan Myanmar. Dengan metode kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur yang dilengkapi observasi non-verbal, kemudian ditriangulasi dengan catatan dan transkrip verbatim. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa identitas keagamaan terbentuk sejak kecil dan terus berkembang melalui refleksi personal, pendidikan, serta pengalaman sosial. Partisipan mengandalkan Positive Religious Coping berupa salat, doa, dzikir, dan tawakkal sebagai strategi utama untuk menghadapi tekanan emosional. Tidur juga muncul sebagai mekanisme koping adaptif yang restoratif. Perbedaan konteks sosial-politik secara signifikan memengaruhi ekspresi identitas keagamaan: Singapura menyediakan dukungan struktural dan penerimaan multikultural, sedangkan

Myanmar menghadirkan tantangan berupa status minoritas, diskriminasi, dan minimnya fasilitas ibadah yang mendorong solidaritas komunal dan pendalaman spiritual internal. Terlepas dari kondisi yang berbeda, identitas keagamaan tetap menjadi sumber makna, ketangguhan, dan kesejahteraan psikologis. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa mekanisme coping dan perkembangan identitas religius sangat dipengaruhi oleh kondisi struktural, lingkungan budaya, serta kematangan spiritual individu.

Kata Kunci: *Identitas Keagamaan, Religious Coping (Coping Religius) , Muslim Minoritas, Singapura, Myanmar.*

Introduction

Religious identity is one of the most fundamental concepts, reflecting not only the participant's beliefs and spiritual values but also how those beliefs are maintained, expressed, and shaped within the larger community (Yucel & Whyte, 2023). Theoretically, identity has been studied from various perspectives. Early theories, such as those of Freud (1923), viewed identity as a way for individuals to internalize the moral and social values of his environment. This idea was later expanded by scholars such as Allport (1954), who linked identity to the basic human need to feel part of a group, while Foote (1951) and Merton (1957) emphasized the role of social and reference groups in shaping self-awareness.

Within the symbolic interactionism approach, Strauss (1959) highlights identity as a dynamic product of ongoing social interaction, a perspective consistent with Goffman (1959) and Berger (1967), who argue that identity is formed through subjective interpretation and a continuous process of meaning-making. In modern psychology of religion, religious identity is understood as a combination of spiritual values, beliefs, and moral perspectives integrated within the self, providing a comprehensive framework for individuals to understand life (Paloutzian & Park, 2021; Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2018). Recent research on Muslim minorities shows that identity serves as a roadmap that guides actions (Karim, 2016), shapes a deep sense of self (Mirza, 2013), and becomes a form of social categorization used in negotiating with the wider community (Pinto, 2015).

When faced with difficulties or stress, individuals use coping mechanisms, which are mental and behavioral efforts to manage burdensome demands (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). To cope with such stress, Muslims widely rely on Religious Coping Mechanisms (RCMs). Positive RCMs include constructive religious practices (such as prayer, salat, and reading the Qur'an) which have been shown to increase mental resilience, as well as cognitive perspectives such as patience (*sabr*) and trust in God (tawakkal), which help individuals interpret difficulties as part of a divine plan (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2023; Brooks Holliday et al., 2020). Positive coping is essential for achieving post-traumatic growth, whereas negative RCMs, such as blaming God, can increase anxiety (Khan et al., 2016). Coping also occurs collectively, reflected in strong communal solidarity that provides vital social support and a sense of belonging in alienating environments (Fox & Akman, 2020; Abu-Raya & Fox, 2024).

This study compares the experiences of Muslims in two environments that are geopolitically and sociologically contrasting: Singapore and Myanmar, which represent two different models of minority life. In Myanmar, being Muslim is marked by intense pressure and the need to "hide one's

religious identity" (Hidayat et al., 2025). Muslims make up only about 4% of the population, and the pressure stems not only from their small numbers but also from structural constraints and negative social narratives. These conditions create an urgent need for communal resilience, making close-knit community networks their main defense (Hidayat et al., 2025). In contrast, Singapore presents a model of institutionalized pluralism that supports a stable and facilitated Muslim identity. Although a secular state, Singapore supports its significant Muslim community through legal frameworks such as the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA), which established MUIS (Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura) (Saifuddin Amin, 2018). MUIS plays an instrumental role in shaping the Singapore Muslim Identity (SMI), emphasizing inclusivity, adaptation to secularism, and loyalty to the state (Zalman Putra Ahmad Ali, 2020; Zulkifli et al., 2023). Religious identity is highly important for Singaporean Muslims (Mathew Mathews et al., 2025), though they must balance spirituality with intense economic demands that often shape more efficient worship patterns.

The daily life of the Muslim community in Myanmar over the past ten years has shown a cautious lifestyle, where religious practices are maintained even though public spaces for expressing religion are often limited. In many cases, religious activities are carried out quietly and consolidated within the community. The Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (Kofi Annan Commission, 2017) report notes that mosques and madrasas function not only as places of worship, but also as centers for social and educational activities. In a number of areas, these facilities provide a relatively safe space for activities such as Quranic education, humanitarian aid management, and community deliberations. However, the same report emphasizes that Muslim communities tend to avoid large-scale activities or public events that are considered to have the potential to attract outside attention, due to the sensitive social and security situation and the possibility of pressure from majority groups or local authorities.

The role of the community is an important pillar in maintaining the resilience of Muslim identity amid Myanmar's socio-political dynamics. In a study on anti-Muslim sentiment, Lee (2019) explains how the increase in hate speech, identity-based nationalist propaganda, and intolerance campaigns have encouraged the Muslim community to strengthen internal solidarity. These forms of solidarity are evident in small religious study groups held in homes, internal fundraising to help families in need, and informal networks for sharing information about the security situation. These practices illustrate how Muslim communities build social protection mechanisms that are small (micro) in nature and decentralized in decision-making, in order to cope with unfavorable external circumstances.

In the Advisory Commission (2017) report and ICJ (2019) document on religious freedom in Myanmar, it is emphasized that the experiences of Muslim communities vary greatly depending on the region. In some areas, Muslims face travel restrictions, strict surveillance by the authorities, administrative barriers in accessing public services, or difficulties in obtaining permits to renovate mosques. However, in other areas, especially urban areas with different social dynamics, some communities are still able to carry out limited but functional community activities. This diversity of experiences shows that the lives of Muslims in Myanmar are not a single picture, but are influenced by a combination of factors such as geographical location, local dynamics, and the relationship between the Muslim community and the majority community in the region.

International media publications such as AFP in 2019 highlighted moments of positive interfaith interaction, particularly in urban areas such as Yangon. During the 2019 Eid al-Fitr celebrations in the Than Lyin area, a group of Buddhist monks and Buddhists took to the streets to distribute white roses to Muslims as a symbol of rejection of intolerance and support for social harmony. This action was noteworthy because it reflected the existence of space for more inclusive interfaith solidarity, while also showing that not all areas in Myanmar are completely dominated by ethnic and religious tensions. Although local in nature and not always representative of the overall national situation, this moment provided evidence that positive interactions can still occur when communities build safe spaces for communication.

Overall, Muslim life in Myanmar can be understood as a layered process of collective adaptation. The community maintains its identity through regular worship practices, small-scale religious study groups, and the strengthening of family networks that function as an internal support system. At the same time, they avoid overly conspicuous public expressions in order to maintain security and social stability. In a broader context, the resilience of Muslim communities is formed through a combination of interest in religious practices, forms of internal solidarity, and strategies for surviving ever-changing socio-political pressures. This adaptation shows that even though the space for religious expression is limited, Muslim identity and practices are maintained through flexible and resilient community mechanisms.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive design because it aims to deeply understand the subjective experiences of a Muslim individual regarding religious identity and religious coping mechanisms in two different social contexts, namely Singapore and Myanmar. The qualitative method was chosen because it is considered the most appropriate for capturing meaning, spiritual reflection, and emotional dynamics that cannot be measured quantitatively but can be understood through narratives and interpretations of lived experiences (Yucel & Whyte, 2023). Through this descriptive design, the researchers were able to explain how the participant interprets Islam, the social barriers he faces, and how he uses his religious beliefs to cope with stress (Tan, 2008). To comprehensively record elements such as facial expressions, body movements, intonation, and emotional reactions, semi-structured interviews were used in conjunction with observations of nonverbal cues during online interview sessions (De Nolf et al., 2021). The researchers also used interview recordings, digital notes, and verbatim transcripts as triangulation materials to support their conclusions (Urooj et al., 2025).

Religious identity and religious coping mechanisms are the two main variables examined in this study. Religious identity refers to the participant's understanding, commitment, emotional attachment, and daily religious practices that shape how he views his self, others, and the surrounding social world (Yucel & Whyte, 2023). Social structures and societal acceptance especially in minority contexts such as Singapore and Myanmar also influence this identity (Tan, 2008). Conversely, religious coping mechanisms refer to the ways in which the participant uses spiritual values such as prayer, worship, and social support to manage life stress, deal with discrimination, or alleviate psychological

pressure. According to Urooj et al. (2025), religious coping strategies promote inner peace, self-acceptance, and positive reappraisal of life's challenges. Recent studies further show that such coping enhances well-being by enabling more flexible cognitive reappraisal (Abdollahi et al., 2024). Similar findings have been observed among Malay communities, who view religious coping and tawakkal as sources of psychological resilience and subjective well-being (Ikhwanisifa & Raudatussalamah, 2022).

The participant in this study is a Muslim individual living in Singapore and Myanmar. He was selected because his lived experiences span two different social, cultural, and political environments, allowing for rich insights into religious identity and coping. A purposive sampling strategy was applied to ensure that the participant's possessed deep understanding of religious practices, experiences of social pressure or discrimination, and the coping strategies she uses in everyday life (De Nolf et al., 2021). Although this study involved only one participant, qualitative research prioritizes depth of data rather than sample size (Yucel & Whyte, 2023).

Semi-structured interviews were used during data collection to allow the participant to freely and deeply shared his experiences. During the interviews, the researchers also evaluated nonverbal indicators such as changes in expression, eye contact, intonation, and reflective pauses, which commonly appear when discussing sensitive topics related to spirituality or emotional experience. These observations added an important layer of contextual understanding to the verbal data (De Nolf et al., 2021). Data validity was reinforced through triangulation using interview recordings, notes, and other documentation (Urooj et al., 2025). The research procedure involved preparing interview and observation guidelines based on theories of religious identity and religious coping, obtaining permissions, conducting online interviews, recording data, transcribing the sessions verbatim, and compiling digital documentation.

All data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method for identifying patterns, meanings, and major themes within the participant's narrative related to religious identity and coping mechanisms. The analysis began with an in-depth reading of the transcripts, coding important segments, and grouping the codes into broad themes such as "the meaning of being Muslim," "social challenges and discrimination," "the role of prayer and worship," "social support," and "religious and non-religious coping strategies." This analytical approach enabled the researchers to develop a comprehensive interpretation of the relationship between religious identity, coping practices, and the participant's emotional well-being (Urooj et al., 2025). The study's findings align with recent literature showing that religious coping plays a significant role in psychological stability, particularly among Muslim individuals living in countries with different social dynamics and policies (Fatimah et al., 2023).

Results

1. The Dynamics of Muslim Life in Singapore and Myanmar

The participant explained that the way people view Muslim identity is very different between Singapore and Myanmar. According to him, Singapore is a socially diverse environment that is

culturally accepting of differences, so being a Muslim never triggers negative responses or surprise from others. He emphasized this through his statement, "*Singapore are more open to being multicultural... people won't react much here... But in Myanmar... it's like you are a rare species.*" This statement shows that in Singapore, diversity is not only present but is embedded in daily social values and practices, making Muslim identity accepted as a natural part of the social structure. In contrast, in Myanmar, especially in areas where Muslims are a small group, the presence of a Muslim can arouse curiosity and even alienation, as if this identity is not commonly found. In addition, he also observed a stronger level of conservatism among Myanmar Muslims, where tabligh and da'wah activities are carried out intensely and often cause social pressure on individuals who do not follow certain religious standards. This was evident when he said, "*In Myanmar... you will see people who just do tabligh full time... criticizing you if you don't do certain things.*" This condition distinguishes Myanmar from Singapore, which, according to him, places religion more in the private sphere, so that one does not have to face intervention in matters of worship from fellow Muslims or from the wider social community.

In addition, he mentioned differences in state policies regarding religious expression, such as regulations on loudspeakers for the call to prayer. He said, "*In Singapore... the sound is more limited... But in Myanmar... you can hear the call to prayer louder,*" which shows that Myanmar allows more freedom in certain rituals, although this does not always correlate with social acceptance of Muslims. These experiences led to the conclusion that Singapore provides a more supportive living environment for Muslim identity, both in terms of social security and institutional support. In Singapore, he felt that his religious identity was recognized, unquestioned, and facilitated through policies that allowed Muslims to worship comfortably without feeling alienated. In contrast, Myanmar provides considerable spiritual space in the form of freedom to perform the call to prayer or engage in religious activities, but does not always guarantee social comfort for Muslim minorities who often face stereotypes, feelings of alienation, or pressure from internal religious communities. Thus, a comparison of these two experiences shows that stability, acceptance, and religious comfort are easier to find in Singapore than in Myanmar, according to the participants' perspectives.

2. Interfaith Relations, Social Challenges, and Experiences of Discrimination

The participant indicated that the social context greatly determines the quality of interfaith interactions. In Singapore, diversity is considered part of everyday life, so he has never been treated differently because of his Muslim identity. He said, "*People won't act differently or... discriminate here.*" This illustrates that inclusiveness is ingrained in Singaporean social culture.

In Myanmar, the situation is more complex. He emphasized that society's treatment of Muslims depends greatly on the region. In big cities like Yangon, people's attitudes tend to be positive and more open, while other areas have a history of interfaith tensions, so the potential for discrimination is higher. This is reflected in his statement "*If you go to different parts of Myanmar... you would get treated differently... there are religious riots.*" This situation shows that social security for Muslims is not always consistent across all regions of Myanmar. He also experienced the direct impact of discrimination since childhood. While attending school in a predominantly Buddhist environment, he

experienced emotional discrimination and was forced to eat food that was forbidden to him. He said, "*They put pork in my lunchbox... I would feel very sad, very emotional.*" This incident shows how a Muslim child can feel excluded due to a lack of interfaith understanding from an early age.

However, his experiences as an adult have strengthened his view that goodness and evil are not determined by a person's religion, but by their character. He concluded, "*Good people, bad people are involved in every religion.*" This view shows a more mature understanding of social diversity.

3. Support from the Community and Non-Muslim Friends

Although he is a minority in Myanmar, the participant actually receives a lot of support from his friends of other faiths. Since childhood, his circle of friends has been dominated by non-Muslims, so interfaith interaction has been a natural part of his life. His friends even pay attention to his needs as a Muslim, such as choosing halal restaurants or sending him halal food. He said, "*They would always consider going to restaurants where I can eat halal food... even their parents... will sometimes send halal food.*" This kind of social support made him feel accepted and appreciated regardless of his status as a minority. He also admitted that, in terms of numbers, he interacted more often with non-Muslims than with Muslims. He said, "*I know more people who are not Muslims than who are Muslims.*" This reflects the quality of interfaith relationships that are built not because of similarities in identity, but because of personal closeness and mutual respect. His experience shows that life as a minority is not always identical with isolation. In his experience, he has actually found supportive social relationships that have helped him grow emotionally and socially.

4. The Role of Faith, Worship Practices, and Religious Coping Strategies

Faith is the main foundation for participant in overcoming emotional pressure, uncertainty, and the demands of daily life. For him, worship is not just a ritual, but serves as a psychological space to rearrange thoughts, control emotions, and rediscover inner stability. This is evident in his words: "*Whenever I feel pressure... I will always go towards prayer... We feel sad, we pray. We feel happy, we pray.*" This statement shows that for him, prayer and worship are not only spiritual acts, but a constant coping mechanism, both in moments of stress and when he is in a positive state. In this context, religion provides a stable emotional structure, giving a sense of control amid uncertainty.

Furthermore, his spirituality does not stand alone, but is always accompanied by various practical efforts. In the second interview, he explained that he always tries to solve problems with his own abilities before finally relying on divine power. He stated, "*I would try to solve it myself first. Then I would turn towards Allah when I cannot pass through the hardship.*" This sentence shows two things: first, he has an active coping style, where he takes concrete steps in facing problems, and second, he uses religious coping complementarily when his personal abilities reach their limits. In other words, spiritual dependence is not a passive attitude, but part of a layered strategy that combines rational and spiritual efforts.

However, he acknowledges that intense pressure can weaken his mental stability. Sometimes his response becomes negative, especially when facing excessive stress. His admission hints at a phase where he questions his circumstances or feels emotionally overwhelmed. However, the process of

spiritual maturity has made him better able to interpret stress as part of a predetermined life journey. He said, "*Maybe it's not Allah wants me to do... there's a better plan for me.*" This attitude shows the emergence of meaning-focused coping, which is the ability to give positive meaning to difficult events. In this way, he reduces his emotional burden by believing that every obstacle contains wisdom and is directed by God's will.

When analyzed more deeply, his religious coping style reflects a mature and adaptive pattern. He does not use religion as a mere escape, but as a source of reorientation of meaning that restores calm and broadens his perspective. Prayer becomes a means to distance himself from pressure, while belief in God's plan helps to reduce disappointment and the tendency to blame himself. For him, worship is not just a spiritual activity, but an emotional regulation mechanism that helps him maintain mental balance in a dynamic and stressful social environment, both in Myanmar and Singapore.

5. Structural Support: Worship Facilities, Work Environment, and Ramadan Practices

According to him, Singapore provides institutional support that greatly helps Muslims perform their worship. He explained that prayer rooms are available in many workplaces and there are no obstacles to performing worship. He emphasized, "*You can take a five-minute break... go to the prayer room... Nobody will say anything.*" He also gets special time off on Fridays, "*You can get an hour and a half of lunchtime on Fridays for Jumu'ah prayer.*"

In contrast, Myanmar has considerable structural challenges. Not many workplaces provide prayer rooms or flexibility to perform prayers. This was confirmed by his statement "*In Myanmar... there's not even space for you to pray.*" These limitations are even more pronounced when fasting. In Singapore, access to food for breaking the fast is easy, while in Myanmar he always has to bring his own food. He said, "*You have to carry dates or water... because there's not much place where you can get food to break the fast.*"

From this experience, he feels that Singapore provides a support system that makes religious practices safer and more facilitated, while Myanmar relies more on the resilience of individuals and the local Muslim community.

6. Religious Identity, Meaning of Life, and Spiritual Development

The participant's religious identities was formed from birth, but it's meanings developed gradually over the course of his life. He described that being a Muslim was not just an administrative status, but a moral principle that shaped his views and behavior in various social spaces. He asserts, "*Being a Muslim... we have rules... I will try to follow every Islamic rule... try to be a good person first.*" This statement shows that Islamic identity functions as an ethical compass for him, a place where he refers to values to determine what is right, appropriate, and must be done in daily interactions.

As a minority growing up in a non-Muslim majority environment, this identity has a more complex role. Religion serves as an anchor that provides a sense of stability, especially since he is in a social space that is culturally and religiously different from his beliefs. His Muslim identity helps him feel connected to a wider community, even though he is not always physically in a Muslim-

majority environment. In this context, religious identity serves as a source of self-continuity that allows him to maintain a sense of who he is amid changing social environments.

He also experienced a transformation in how he interpreted destiny and life's journey. As a child, he had many ambitions and expectations, and the gap between his desires and reality made him prone to frustration. However, as he grew older, he learned to interpret life events through the lens of faith. He said, "*It's all according to Allah's plan... whether it happens or not... it all depends on Him.*" This statement reflects his spiritual deepening: he began to understand that failure is not the end, but part of a process designed to lead him to a better path.

His religious identity is not only about obedience to rules, but also about how he understands himself and his life's mission. His attitude of surrender is not a form of giving up, but the result of long reflection that humans have limitations in controlling life. For him, the belief that every event has a divine purpose gives him a peace that he does not find through secular mechanisms. His Muslim identity provides him with a broad framework for understanding life's journey, reducing anxiety about things beyond his control, and fostering a sense of confidence that every life decision does not stand alone but is connected to a greater plan.

Furthermore, his religious identity seems to bring balance between two dimensions: the moral responsibility to do good, and spiritual acceptance of God's will. These two aspects complement each other and form a solid orientation in life. With this foundation, he understands religion not only as a duty, but as a source of meaning that creates emotional resilience, a sense of direction, and inner stability.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the participant's religious experiences and social life gradually shaped his Muslim identity, which developed dynamically from childhood to adulthood. He grew up with an ascribed identity as Muslims and strengthen his religious understanding through education at madrasahs, which instill values of orthopraxis, discipline in worship, and social ethics that form the basis of moral behavior in his daily life (Fauzi, 2021; Alfazri et al., 2025). The values he acquired then developed into mature prosocial motivation, evident in his tendency to do good and encourage others to do good as part of a Muslim's moral responsibility (Nurshabrina, 2025). This religious identity not only functions as a symbol of religious membership, but also becomes a framework of values that guides behavior, decisions, and the way he sees himself as part of a wider community. Thus, his Muslim identity is formed through a combination of religious teachings, personal life experiences, and social interactions in various cultural contexts.

In the process of forming this identity, the teachings of the Madrasah play a significant role as a source of psychological calm and resilience when participant face discrimination, social pressure, or unpleasant emotional experiences during his school years. He revealed that whenever he experienced negative treatment, he will recall religious teachings that emphasized patience, determination, and the meaning of life's trials, which are in line with the concept that worldly difficulties are part of the journey towards a better life in the hereafter (Saputra et al., 2024). His view, which is oriented towards

life after death, helps him rearrange his understanding of bitter experiences as a meaningful process, not as a psychological threat. This mechanism functions as Positive Religious Coping (PRC), which protects him from the destructive effects of Negative Religious Coping (NRC), such as anger towards God or the assumption that he is being treated unfairly by fate, which often arises when emotional pressure reaches its peak (Putri et al., 2025). Thus, religion serves as a psychological support that stabilizes emotions, provides meaning, and strengthens resilience.

The results of the study also show that participant's spirituality deepens with age. While in his youth he was greatly influenced by ambition, hope, and worldly orientation, in adulthood he demonstrated a more mature, reflective, and accepting religious understanding. He realize that not all desires can be fulfilled, and that the realities of life that do not go according to plan are not personal failures, but rather part of divine providence that contains wisdom (Fauziah & Fatimah, 2023). This perspective is in line with the concept of mature tawakkal, in which human effort is integrated with acceptance of God's plan without passivity or surrender. The process of reinterpreting failure and life's pressures reflects the development of a more mature religious identity, where religion functions not only as a source of emotional stability and direction in life, but also as a set of behavioral rules.

Meanwhile, non-religious coping strategies also play an important role in maintaining the psychological balance of participants, especially through sleep as a mechanism for emotional recovery. When facing pressure, he explained that he chose to sleep as a way to calm himself, and this finding is in line with empirical evidence showing that quality sleep is an adaptive coping strategy that can restore cognitive function and regulate the emotional system (APA, 2013). Restorative sleep not only reduces short-term emotional burden but also prevents the emergence of maladaptive coping patterns such as excessive rumination, which has been shown to increase when sleep quality declines (Lantow et al., 2021). In fact, sleep disorders such as insomnia play a significant role as risk factors for the onset or recurrence of depression, making maintaining sleep quality an important strategy for long-term mental health (Fang et al., 2019). Thus, the simple response "*I just sleep*" is not a form of escape, but rather an effective and adaptive recovery strategy.

Prayer and supplication are also other important pillars in the participant's religious coping mechanisms. For him, worship is not just a formal ritual, but serves as a psychological and spiritual space to reorganize emotions, relieve anxiety, and restore a sense of self. This is consistent with research findings showing that prayer can reduce physical and emotional tension through the activation of relaxation responses and regulate neurotransmitters that affect emotional stability (Sari et al., 2022; Al-Bukhari et al., 2025). The consistency of the five daily prayers also creates a rhythm of life that provides a sense of stability, order, and certainty in the face of social pressures (Wasfiyah et al., 2025). Prayer and dhikr function as cognitive mechanisms that transfer psychological burdens to a higher power, thereby fostering optimism, hope, and tranquility, all of which are important components of Positive Religious Coping (Saputra et al., 2024; Arti et al., 2024). On various occasions, he even visited the mosque just to sit and find peace, showing that places of worship can be places that restore emotional and spiritual balance.

The findings of this study also reveal the dynamics between Positive Religious Coping (PRC) and Negative Religious Coping (NRC) that developed throughout the participant life. Initially, he exhibited a sequential coping pattern, in which he attempted to resolve problems on his own before surrendering them to God. In some situations, this pattern could potentially result in negative religious struggle when solutions were not found, as seen in his statement that heavy pressure had once caused him to think negatively (Suhariyadi, 2022). However, when he began to understand that not all plans go according to his will and that God's provisions have their own wisdom, there was a shift from NRC responses to more stable PRC responses. This change marked spiritual maturity that emphasized a balance between tawakkal (trust in God) and ikhtiar (effort).

Life experiences in two different cultural contexts can also enrich participants' understanding of religious identity. Living in Singapore provided him with a safe, multicultural, and inclusive environment, so that his Muslim identity did not become a source of stereotypes or social barriers. This contrasts with his experience in Myanmar, where being Muslim often provoked surprise, social distance, and even discrimination in certain areas (Hidayat, 2025; Aung-Thwin, 2008). However, he also found that kindness does not depend on a person's religion because the greatest support he received was from non-Muslim friends who respected his halal needs, provided food when he was fasting, and created a safe space for him as a religious minority there. This reinforces the view that interfaith interactions have a significant contribution in shaping emotional well-being, enriching the meaning of identity, and strengthening resilience (Singh, 2022; Triwahyuni, 2022).

Structural factors also play an important role in the religious functioning of participant. Singapore provides adequate worship facilities, including prayer rooms in the workplace and flexibility for Friday prayers, allowing religious practices to be carried out comfortably and without obstacles (Saifuddin Amin, 2018). In contrast, Myanmar has limited worship spaces and access to halal food, making fasting and prayer more challenging, so he must rely on personal resilience and community solidarity (Helmiati, 2013). These differences in conditions show how structural support can strengthen religious identity, while environments with less support require stronger spiritual and social coping strategies.

Overall, the results of the study show that the development of participant's religious identity is a process influenced by complex interactions between education, experiences of discrimination, interfaith social support, structural conditions of the state, and religious coping dynamics that develop in accordance with age. This identity not only becomes a value system that guides behavior, but also a source of meaning in life, a guardian of emotional balance, and a foundation of psychological resilience. The combination of personal effort, social support, and spiritual beliefs forms a pattern of religiosity that is mature, adaptive, and able to survive in various socio-cultural environments (Apriyanti et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2022). Thus, this study confirms that religious identity is not a static construct, but rather a dynamic process that is continuously shaped by life experiences, spiritual reflection, and the social context in which he find his self.

Conclusion

This study concludes that participant's religious identity is formed continuously throughout his life through social interaction, religious education, family background, and self-reflection. This identity not only functions as a symbol of belief, but also as a moral framework and source of meaning that guides individual in facing various challenges in life. When faced with stress or discrimination, religious coping mechanisms (such as prayer, supplication, dhikr, and tawakkal) can provide psychological resilience, spiritual guidance, and significant emotional calm. This study also shows that the expression of religious identity is greatly influenced by the socio-political context in which individual find his self. Singapore provides structural support and a safe space for religious practice, while Myanmar presents pressure as a minority and experiences of discrimination that demand stronger coping skills and spiritual resilience. Overall, this study confirms that the social environment has a major influence on the formation of religious identity, the use of religious coping mechanisms, and the development of resilience, emotional well-being, and spiritual maturity in individual.

Acknowledgement

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