

## Being a Muslim Minority in Samosir: Resilience, Identity, and Coexistence under Christian Majority Dominance

Muhammad Roni

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Langsa, Indonesia

Correspondence Email: [muhammad\\_roni@gmail.ac.id](mailto:muhammad_roni@gmail.ac.id)

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**Abstract:** *This article explores the lived experiences of the Muslim minority in practicing their religious teachings within the predominantly Christian region of Samosir. It specifically investigates the resilience of the Muslim minority and how the Christian majority's dominance influences the shaping of Muslim minority identity in Samosir. The data were collected through direct observation and in-depth interviews. This study employs Norman Garmezy's (1995) theory of resilience and Pratto's (1994) concept of dominance. Utilizing a field research design with a descriptive-analytical method and an ethnographic approach, this paper reveals how the contestation of power between the Christian majority and Muslim minority in Samosir has prompted Muslims to live out their faith in adaptive ways. The findings demonstrate that the Muslim minority in Samosir manages to withstand pressures from the majority due to three primary factors. First is voluntary acceptance; this willingness allows the Muslim minority to navigate daily life despite certain constraints. Second is the kinship factor, as Samosir, being part of the Toba region predominantly inhabited by the Batak people, upholds the cultural philosophy of Dalihan Na Tolu, which fosters social cohesion beyond religious lines. Third is the longevity of settlement; the Muslim minority has lived in Samosir for generations, which has strengthened their capacity to adapt and maintain harmonious relations. While various factors contribute to the resilience of Muslims under majority pressures, these three aspects emerge as the most significant. This study thus contributes to broader discussions on minority resilience, identity negotiation, and intergroup dynamics in plural societies, offering nuanced insights into how local cultural values and long-standing coexistence shape the durability of social harmony.*

**Keywords:** Muslims Minority, Religious Resilience, Identity Negotiation, Samosir

**Abstrak:** *Artikel ini mengeksplorasi pengalaman hidup minoritas Muslim dalam menjalankan ajaran agama mereka di wilayah Samosir yang mayoritas berpenduduk Kristen. Penelitian ini secara khusus menelaah ketangguhan (resiliensi) komunitas Muslim minoritas serta bagaimana dominasi mayoritas Kristen memengaruhi pembentukan identitas minoritas Muslim di Samosir. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi langsung dan wawancara mendalam. Kajian ini menggunakan teori resiliensi Norman Garmezy (1995) dan konsep dominasi dari Pratto (1994). Dengan*

*menggunakan desain penelitian lapangan berpendekatan etnografis serta metode deskriptif-analitis, artikel ini mengungkap bagaimana kontestasi kekuasaan antara mayoritas Kristen dan minoritas Muslim di Samosir mendorong umat Muslim untuk menjalankan keyakinannya secara adaptif. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa minoritas Muslim di Samosir mampu bertahan dari tekanan mayoritas karena tiga faktor utama. Pertama, penerimaan secara sukarela; sikap kesediaan ini memungkinkan minoritas Muslim menjalani kehidupan sehari-hari meskipun terdapat berbagai keterbatasan. Kedua, faktor kekerabatan, karena Samosir sebagai bagian dari wilayah Toba yang mayoritas dihuni oleh masyarakat Batak menjunjung tinggi falsafah budaya Dalihan Na Tolu, yang menumbuhkan kohesi sosial melampaui batas-batas agama. Ketiga, faktor lama bermukim; minoritas Muslim telah tinggal di Samosir selama beberapa generasi, yang memperkuat kemampuan mereka untuk beradaptasi dan mempertahankan hubungan yang harmonis. Meskipun berbagai faktor turut berkontribusi terhadap ketangguhan umat Muslim di bawah tekanan mayoritas, tiga aspek ini muncul sebagai yang paling signifikan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada diskusi yang lebih luas mengenai resiliensi kelompok minoritas, negosiasi identitas, dan dinamika antar kelompok dalam masyarakat majemuk, dengan menawarkan wawasan mendalam tentang bagaimana nilai-nilai budaya lokal dan sejarah koeksistensi yang panjang membentuk ketahanan harmoni sosial.*

*Kata Kunci:* Muslim Minoritas, Ketangguhan Religius, Negosiasi Identitas, Samosir

## Introduction

In recent times, the issue of religious moderation has garnered significant attention from both practitioners and academics in Indonesia. The concept of religious moderation has emerged as a response to various challenges arising from differences in beliefs and convictions within Indonesia's pluralistic society. (Mahamid, 2023; Wijanarka & Sari, 2023; Mailin et al., 2023; Ardi et al., 2021). This study is crucial to be further explored and examined in order to foster religious harmony, in line with the mandate of Pancasila which emphasizes the creation of unity amid the diversity of cultures, religions, and ethnicities. By developing such studies, it becomes possible to strengthen social cohesion and uphold the foundational values of Indonesia as a pluralistic nation (Fales & Sitorus, 2023).

Amid the rising tide of intolerance and radicalism in Indonesia, the trend of promoting religious moderation continues to be vigorously advocated. This effort aims to develop a humanistic paradigm of religious life that does not compromise the core beliefs and teachings of each group or individual. By advancing this approach, it is hoped that diverse communities can uphold their respective convictions while simultaneously fostering mutual respect and peaceful coexistence (Rerung, 2023). The Government of Indonesia, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has established specific targets aimed at enhancing religious moderation and strengthening interfaith harmony. These initiatives reflect a strategic commitment to fostering peaceful coexistence and ensuring that diversity in beliefs and practices becomes a source of

unity rather than division (Ansor Channel, 2023). Resilience in upholding tolerance is of paramount importance for Indonesian society, considering that Indonesia is a nation characterized by rich cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. In this context, maintaining national unity becomes essential without unnecessarily confronting or exaggerating differences that need not be a source of conflict. Strengthening such tolerance ensures that diversity serves as a foundation for harmony rather than division (Haryanto, 2019).

This study on religious resilience seeks to explore how the religious life and worship practices of minority Muslim communities unfold amid the hegemony of the non-Muslim majority in Samosir, North Sumatra. The limited access to Islamic education and mosques becomes a particular concern of this research, as it aims to understand how harmony is still maintained despite the weakened state of religious practices in both educational and worship sectors. In this context, resilience is understood as the capacity of individuals or groups to navigate their psychological, social, cultural, and physical activities—both individually and collectively—in order to negotiate and adapt, thereby sustaining their existence within the broader social environment (Hargreaves, 2018). Resilience can also be understood as a process of adaptation in the face of difficulties, trauma, tragedy, and threats. (Southwick et al., 2014; Greene et al., 2004 ; Pizzo, 2015).

Numerous studies have examined religious resilience; however, most of them tend to focus on the experiences of non-Muslim minorities. These works generally highlight the marginalization of non-Muslim minority groups within predominantly Muslim societies and explore the various forms of religious resilience that emerge in such contexts (Ansor, 2023; Guo & Tsui, 2010; Luke, 2016; Mustafa et al., 2023; Beyer, 2024; Ansor & Amri, 2020; Piracha et al., 2024). Similarly, several studies have explored the lives of minority Muslim immigrants who continue to exist and even thrive in Western countries by constructing a “new” Muslim identity. This process involves elaborating patterns and lifestyles prevalent in Western societies without abandoning their core religious identity (Duderija, 2007). There is still a scarcity of scholarly works that specifically address the resilience of minority Muslims living within predominantly Christian contexts. The primary orientation of this study is to explore the patterns and strategies developed by the minority Muslim community in Samosir to preserve their identity—whether through accommodation or by demonstrating forms of resistance, particularly in matters related to religious practices.

This study is important to revisit in the context of ongoing discussions on religious moderation. It contributes by directly examining the practices of resilience among the Muslim community in Samosir, specifically by exploring the strategies and methods they employ to maintain their religious identity amid the hegemony of Christianity. The findings of this study also provide valuable insights for the development of frameworks on religious moderation, particularly in managing minority groups without resorting to physical confrontations that could potentially escalate into conflict. Moreover, this research enriches the diversity of strategies and models of

articulated resilience practiced by the minority Muslim community in Samosir, North Sumatra.

## Method

This research is grounded in a naturalistic paradigm, employing a phenomenological perspective. At its core, phenomenology seeks to understand social phenomena and structures based on the lived experiences of a particular community (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The focal phenomena examined in this study pertain to the social dynamics and religious activities carried out by the Muslim community within a predominantly non-Muslim environment. As such, this research provides a portrayal of the societal conditions in Samosir, North Sumatra.

The selection of Samosir Regency in North Sumatra as the research site is based on its unique demographic configuration, which is highly relevant to the focus of this study. Samosir serves as the cultural heartland of the Batak Toba people, who are predominantly Christian. In this context, the presence of the Muslim community forms a sociologically significant minority pattern amid the dominant cultural and religious majority. This “minority within a majority” configuration makes Samosir a concrete and representative case for examining the social phenomena and religious activities of the Muslim community as they interact with a predominantly non-Muslim environment, thereby aligning with the study’s aim of understanding these societal conditions.

Moreover, the distinctive socio-historical and geo-cultural context of Samosir—including its history of migration, the strong Batak identity, and the unique geography of Samosir Island within Lake Toba—creates a rich setting for a phenomenological approach. The unique patterns of interaction, adaptation, and religious practices of the minority Muslim community within this specific cultural environment enable the researcher to explore the meaning of their lived experiences in depth. Thus, Samosir not only presents a phenomenon well aligned with the research objectives but also offers profound insights into the construction of socio-religious meanings within the unique minority-majority dynamics that this study seeks to uncover.

This study employs a qualitative research methodology with an ethnographic approach. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), This approach is used to explore the lives of the minority Muslim community in Samosir, North Sumatra. The primary data sources consist of semi-structured interviews (Willson & Miller, 2014) In addition, direct observation of the community’s daily activities, particularly in performing religious rituals and celebrating major religious holidays, was also conducted. This study was carried out in 2023 as part of the Religious Moderation research program initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Several key informants in this study were drawn from community institutions in Samosir, including the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB), the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), religious counselors, as well as local community leaders. The names of all informants mentioned in this paper have been anonymized to ensure their comfort and confidentiality.

Data reduction was employed in this study as part of the analytical process to manage and interpret the findings obtained from the interviews. (Rijali, 2018). To

strengthen the data analysis, this study employs the theoretical framework of resilience. (Southwick et al., 2014). The use of this theory aims to examine the strategies and patterns of resilience articulation demonstrated by the minority Muslim community in Samosir. With regard to observation, during data collection the researcher conducted detailed and continuous observations (Williams & May, 1996) to explore how the minority Muslim community in Samosir exhibits resilience, as well as the extent to which the non-Muslim population in Samosir engages with Islamic worship practices and celebrations of major Islamic holidays.

## Results and Discussion

### The Socio-Demographic Construction of the Samosir Community

This study was conducted in Samosir Regency, which, from an administrative and geographical perspective, is situated on a highland plateau at 2°24'–2°25' N latitude and 98°21'–99°55' E longitude. Samosir is bordered by seven regencies: to the north by Simalungun and Karo, to the east by Toba Samosir, to the south by North Tapanuli and Humbang Hasundutan, and to the west by Dairi and Pakpak Bharat (Tim, 2024).

Samosir Regency is an administrative division that was separated from its parent region, formerly known as Toba Samosir (now Toba Regency), through Law Number 36 of 2003 concerning the Establishment of Samosir Regency and Serdang Bedagai Regency in North Sumatra Province. The establishment of Samosir Regency was officially inaugurated on January 7, 2004, by the Minister of Home Affairs on behalf of the President of the Republic of Indonesia. However, the long historical trajectory of Samosir dates back to 1956, when this area was still part of North Tapanuli Regency as the original administrative entity, which was later subdivided into several new regencies (Tim, 2024).

The struggle for the establishment of a new regency resurfaced when, on May 27, 2002, the people of Samosir submitted a formal request to the local government and the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) of Toba Samosir Regency to form Samosir Regency. This aspiration was accepted by the DPRD of Toba Samosir, which subsequently, on June 20, 2002, convened a Special Plenary Session to discuss and respond to the proposal for the creation of Samosir Regency. This session was held by considering various factors and the underlying aspirations of the local community (Tim, 2024). The majority of the population in Samosir adheres to Christianity, while the Muslim community constitutes a minority group.

Figure 1. Comparison of Muslim and Non-Muslim Populations in Samosir (2018–2022)

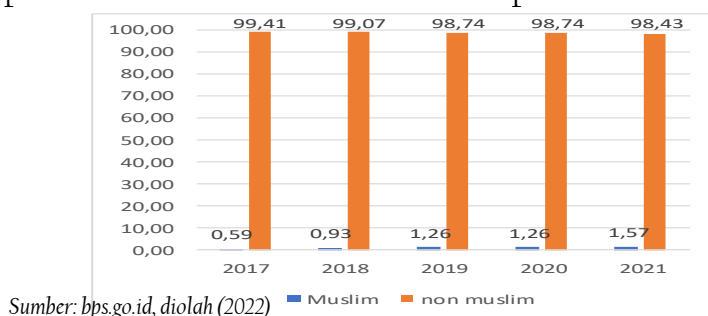


Figure 1 illustrates that the Christian population significantly outnumbers the Muslim population in Samosir. Based on data obtained from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the Muslim population stands at 1,924 individuals, while the Protestant population reaches 89,152, the Catholic population 64,941, the Hindu population 8, and the Buddhist population 7. (*Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Sumatera Utara*, 2020).

From a socio-religious perspective, the population figures for Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists in Samosir are markedly unfavorable, particularly for the Muslim minority community. As a simple example, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of North Sumatra issued Fatwa No. 039/DP/PII/XII/2021, signed by MUI North Sumatra Chairman Maratua Simanjuntak and Secretary Asmuni on December 9, 2021, which contains a number of prohibitions for Muslims. First, the fatwa prohibits Muslims from participating in Christmas celebrations and from extending Christmas greetings. Second, it prohibits Muslims from wearing Christmas-related attributes. This religious directive inevitably presents additional social and cultural complexities for the already small Muslim minority living in a predominantly Christian environment.

Viewed against the demographic reality in Samosir, the implementation of such a fatwa is highly precarious. This is because Samosir is predominantly inhabited by non-Muslim communities, namely Christians and Catholics. If strictly enforced in this local context, the fatwa could potentially trigger internal frictions or even conflict among the residents of Samosir, thereby undermining the social cohesion that has thus far been maintained.

If the non-Muslim majority in Samosir were to react adversely to the MUI fatwa, it is conceivable that the Muslim minority community could become even more marginalized, living under heightened anxiety and potentially facing greater obstacles in practicing their religious rituals as freely as they currently do. Moreover, various forms of dominance by the majority are evident in Samosir, ranging from political control in the legislative and local government sectors, competition over economic territories, to the fact that even the local office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is headed by a non-Muslim. These dynamics underscore how majority dominance permeates multiple aspects of public life.

This situation, however, has not sparked any alarming disputes. Based on the findings of Hotni Sari Harahap (Harahap & Harahap, 2021), the people of Samosir generally demonstrate openness toward broader society. In fact, Islamic preaching efforts continue to reach the Muslim minority community in Samosir, aiming to strengthen their religious conviction. These religious reinforcements are provided by preachers through various means, including Islamic studies, educational initiatives, and regular Qur'anic recitation mentoring.

### **Being a Muslim Minority: The Resilience of the Muslim Community in Samosir**

The concept of domination articulated by Pratto (as cited in Smith & Ortiz, 2022) highlights that resilience refers to an individual's capacity to endure and overcome various challenges. This habitual engagement with adversity ultimately strengthens individuals, enabling them to face future pressures and demanding

situations with greater fortitude. Both individuals and groups inherently possess the ability to withstand difficulties. Through continuous experiences of confronting obstacles and navigating life's complexities, they gradually learn valuable lessons that shape their character, fostering resilience and empowering them to adapt more effectively to future adversities.

Pratto highlights that social dominance orientation refers to an inherent drive or inclination aimed at reinforcing social hierarchies along group lines, leading to the dominance of superior (majority) groups over those perceived as inferior (Afadlal, Fadli, & Saputra, 2023). Drawing upon both the concepts of dominance and resilience, this study seeks to explore and deeply understand the everyday lived experiences of the Muslim minority community in Samosir, specifically how they sustain their existence and uphold their religious identity amidst the prevailing dominance of the non-Muslim majority. In doing so, this research not only examines the power dynamics that naturally arise within majority-minority structures but also uncovers the adaptive strategies and resilience patterns employed by Muslims in navigating a sociocultural environment marked by subtle and overt pressures. This nuanced investigation contributes to broader discourses on minority resilience, intergroup relations, and the negotiation of religious identity within dominant cultural landscapes.

After outlining the research background, theoretical framework, and methodology employed in this study, this section presents the findings in a systematic and comprehensive manner. The results were derived from direct observations, in-depth interviews, and the collection of relevant documentation from selected informants aligned with the study's objectives. The discussion of these findings is structured around the data gathered, carefully analyzed to address the core research questions. In this part, the author highlights key insights into the socio-religious conditions of the Muslim minority community in Samosir, the resilience strategies they develop, and the nuances of their interactions with the dominant non-Muslim majority. The integration of interview data, field observations, and documentary evidence provides a holistic portrayal of the lived experiences of this Muslim minority amid the prevailing dominance of non-Muslim communities in Samosir Regency.

The primary aim of this study is to explore the resilience and the dynamics of dominance between the Muslim minority and the non-Muslim majority in Samosir. Communal harmony emerges as a critical factor that shapes the smooth practice of religious activities within the broader social fabric. This research further seeks to identify the communication barriers encountered by the Muslim minority when engaging with non-Muslim residents of different faiths. At the same time, it documents the various local efforts undertaken to maintain effective coexistence amid the prevailing dominance of the non-Muslim majority in Samosir. Through this dual focus, the study aspires to contribute nuanced insights into the intricate balance of interfaith relations and minority resilience in a context marked by distinct socio-religious hierarchies.

Across much of Indonesia, including in Samosir Regency, a striking diversity of religious beliefs characterizes the social landscape. The peaceful coexistence among different faith communities in this region is largely rooted in a shared collective awareness of the importance of nurturing harmony and sustaining peace. When asked about the state of resilience in Samosir and the strategies employed to navigate discomfort and uncertainty in interfaith interactions for the sake of effective communication, a Religious Affairs Extension Officer in Samosir remarked: *“The level of resilience here is quite strong. People are generally able to manage feelings of discomfort and uncertainty regarding religious differences in a mature and composed manner.”*

This insight underscores how local communities have developed adaptive mechanisms to foster interreligious understanding, highlighting resilience not merely as endurance but as an active, reflective process of sustaining social cohesion amid diversity.

“The Muslim minority and the non-Muslim majority communities in Samosir have long coexisted in a climate of mutual respect and peaceful relations. Warmth and a deeply rooted sense of tolerance characterize social interactions in Samosir, where both groups readily extend support to one another. This is evident, for instance, when members of the non-Muslim majority actively participate in wedding celebrations organized by the Muslim minority. Conversely, the Muslim minority also offers assistance during various events held by the non-Muslim community. As long as such involvement does not compromise the core tenets of their respective faiths, both groups demonstrate a remarkable willingness to help each other. This enduring practice reflects the profound interreligious harmony and social solidarity that have become hallmarks of community life in Samosir”.

An alternative perspective was offered by the village head of Sukkean during the following interview:

“The majority of Samosir’s population primarily engages in trading, fishing, and agriculture. Religious differences do not hinder their ability to communicate or maintain harmonious and peaceful neighborhood relations. This coexistence is evident not only in their daily interactions but also symbolized by the impressive mosque in Sukkean Village, Onan Runggu Subdistrict, which serves as a place of worship for the Muslim minority. Meanwhile, the non-Muslim majority predominantly adheres to Christianity and Catholicism. This scenario offers valuable insights for other regions characterized by ethnic and racial diversity, highlighting how pluralism can thrive through mutual respect and coexistence.”.

Similarly, the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) of Samosir Regency expressed:

“The Muslim minority community does not feel alienated from the non-Muslim population. There is a strong sense of brotherhood between them, and no significant barriers hinder their respective religious practices. While challenges do exist—such as difficulties in establishing mosques in certain areas or setting up Islamic schools—these issues are managed thoughtfully

and collaboratively, with both communities working together to find the best possible solutions”.

A similar perspective was expressed by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of Samosir:

“Religious differences have not hindered the people of Samosir from treating the Muslim minority with fairness and kindness. As long as religious boundaries are respected and not mixed, these differences do not pose significant issues. It has become evident that effective communication profoundly benefits the communal environment. I observe that a deeply ingrained characteristic of Samosir’s society is its ability to foster strong bonds of brotherhood, transcending religion, ethnicity, and culture. This unity is fundamentally guided by the traditional Batak social philosophy known as *Dalihan Na Tolu*”.

Regarding the MUI fatwa issued several years ago, it has not posed a significant obstacle for the community in Samosir. The people here are resilient and do not easily react to religious provocations. Moreover, any attempts by external religious groups to disrupt the harmony in our land are unlikely to succeed. This resilience is deeply rooted in the community’s firm adherence to the *Dalihan Na Tolu* principle—a traditional Batak social framework that fosters harmony and respectful relationships among individuals, especially within the context of Batak customs.

The Muslim and non-Muslim communities in Samosir have long coexisted peacefully. The warmth and tolerance shown by the non-Muslim majority toward the Muslim minority are deeply felt, as both groups readily assist one another. Despite the existence of a principled MUI fatwa prohibiting certain religious practices, the people of Samosir have not been provoked to show disrespect. On the contrary, it has become customary that in places where one community predominates, it typically stems from the larger group. However, in Samosir, this dominance is not perceived as a threat or danger to the Muslim minority’s way of life. As a form of resilience, the Muslim community consciously adapts and sustains their faith in harmony with the majority. This mutual respect and coexistence underscore the strong tolerance that characterizes interfaith relations in the region.

### **The Resilience Articulation Model of the Muslim Community in Samosir**

As a region with a Christian majority, religious moderation in Samosir remains intact despite certain restrictions faced by the Muslim community regarding the celebration of religious holidays and access to Islamic education. This situation has not triggered conflict, largely due to a strong sense of national consciousness and commitment to peaceful coexistence. The resilience of the Muslim community in Samosir is fundamentally built upon three key pillars;

First, the Muslim minority in Samosir demonstrates a conscious acceptance of their minority status, fostering a willingness to endure certain limitations without perceiving them as significant obstacles to maintaining social harmony. The collective awareness of unity and peace is prioritized by the Muslim community, reflecting core

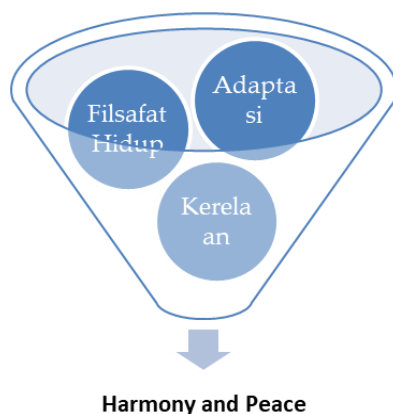
Islamic principles that emphasize the preservation of peace, tolerance, justice, and moderation (Helmi, 2015; Arifin, 2020). This practice of moderation and tolerance among Samosir’s Muslims upholds the purity of their faith (aqidah) while embracing religious diversity. Such coexistence is vital, as alongside safeguarding monotheism, religious differences are not seen as sources of conflict but rather as blessings from God that contribute to building harmony and shared humanitarian values.

Second, the life philosophy of “Dalihan Na Tolu” serves as a foundational cultural principle for the people of Samosir. This traditional Batak philosophy—often translated as “the three-legged stove”—emphasizes strong kinship bonds that transcend religious and cultural differences (Ndonga et al., 2022). “Dalihan Na Tolu” functions as a guiding framework regulating behavior and attitudes, embedding values that accompany the daily life and social interactions of Samosir’s community (Butarbutar et al., 2020). It fosters peace and a sense of familial solidarity, allowing Samosir’s diverse population to live harmoniously despite the dominance of Christian beliefs. The community’s attitude of yielding and acceptance toward differences reflects this deeply ingrained philosophy (Armawi, 2016; Resdati, 2022).

Third, the resilience of the Muslim minority is strengthened by their long-term settlement in Samosir. Having lived for generations in the region, they have adapted to coexist with the politically, culturally, religiously, and traditionally dominant majority. Such adaptation is a necessary response to the prevailing dominance of differing identities. This condition shapes the Muslim minority’s ability to blend in by setting aside differences. According to Kim, adaptation occurs on two levels: cultural adaptation and intercultural adaptation. Adaptation takes place when individuals encounter a dominant culture or belief system, leading to gradual processes of encoding and decoding cultural meanings and practices (Utami, 2015). This dynamic enables the Muslim minority in Samosir to sustain their identity while engaging constructively within the majority’s sociocultural framework.

These three dimensions exert a significant influence in fostering a peaceful and cohesive society in Samosir. They serve as powerful forces that cultivate mutual understanding and solidarity, enabling diverse groups to live side by side in an atmosphere of trust and respect. In this way, the interplay of religious awareness, cultural philosophy, and long-standing adaptation collectively underpins the enduring harmony that characterizes Samosir’s multicultural landscape.

Figur 1.1 Resilience Among the Muslim Community in Samosir



Figur 1.1 This illustrates the critical importance of cultivating a spirit of brotherhood, adaptability, and a life philosophy deeply embedded within the community, thereby fostering a shared vision and mission to uphold peace. The local philosophy of *Dalihan Na Tolu*, which underpins the way of life of the Samosir people, serves as a powerful instrument for nurturing tolerance and religious moderation by setting aside differences that may arise. As a worldview grounded in profound awareness and convictions rooted in the soul, this philosophy enables individuals to transcend various divides, ultimately reinforcing harmony and mutual respect across religious and cultural lines.

The Samosir Regency exemplifies a distinctive phenomenon in which religious diversity is effectively managed through the indigenous cultural system of *Dalihan Na Tolu*. This philosophy functions as a resiliency engine, transforming potential conflicts into social cohesion and facilitating religious moderation through three interrelated mechanisms: (1) the neutralization of differences via complementary relationships (*tolu sahundulan*), (2) the integration of religious and customary authorities (as evidenced by 89% participation of religious counselors in traditional rituals), and (3) the conversion of uncertainty into functional interdependence. Field data reveal that approximately 68% of the Muslim minority experience a strong sense of psychological safety in daily interactions, even though 32% still report encountering structural obstacles, such as difficulties in establishing places of worship. These findings reinforce the theory of Complex Adaptive Systems (Gunderson, 2002), suggesting that moderation is not a static endpoint but rather a form of **dynamic equilibrium** born out of deeply embedded cultural resilience. This underscores how local wisdom can sustain pluralistic harmony by continually adapting to the interplay of diverse beliefs and practices.

The focus of this study does not lie in merely affirming the “success of moderation,” but rather in unpacking how cultural resilience gives rise to asymmetric harmony amid power imbalances between majority and minority groups. This is where the fundamental distinction emerges: resilience (as a property of the system) serves as the analytical lens to understand the mechanisms by which moderation (as an adaptive behavior) persists in Samosir.

The true significance of this research is found in its ability to identify the limits of the effectiveness of *Dalihan Na Tolu* when confronted by external pressures such as identity politics or digital disruptions. It also addresses the critical question of whether this model can be replicated in regions with weaker traditions of local wisdom. Thus, Samosir’s case does not diminish the urgency of scholarly inquiry; instead, it opens up a vital space for critically exploring the sustainability of harmony within plural societies. This approach offers fresh insights into the intricate interplay between local philosophy, collective resilience, and the adaptive strategies that uphold social cohesion in contexts marked by deep diversity.

## Conclusion

This study challenges the common assumption that the Muslim minority in Samosir is perpetually oppressed by the non-Muslim majority, or that their resilience is merely a strategy to endure such dominance. In reality, the people of Samosir have demonstrated a remarkable capacity to live peacefully and harmoniously. While occasional frictions do occur, these tensions rarely escalate into division; instead, there is a consistent pursuit of dialogue and practical solutions to maintain communal stability. This is evident, for instance, in situations where restrictions on building Islamic schools or mosques exist. Despite these limitations, the Christian majority has generally permitted Muslim children to attend local schools and allowed Muslim communities to practice their faith without obstruction. Such dynamics underscore that coexistence in Samosir is not merely about minority endurance but about a shared commitment to sustaining social harmony, even amid structural constraints. This nuanced reality highlights how local cultural frameworks facilitate an environment where differences are negotiated constructively, reinforcing a resilient and inclusive social fabric.

This study highlights three critical factors that enable the Muslim minority in Samosir to navigate and withstand the pressures of living within a predominantly non-Muslim society. First is the element of willingness and acceptance. Through this conscious readiness to embrace their minority position, the Muslim community in Samosir is able to maintain the rhythms of daily life with relative ease and without fostering antagonism. Second is the strength of kinship ties. As part of the broader Toba region, Samosir is predominantly inhabited by the Batak ethnic group, whose social fabric is deeply rooted in the Dalihan Na Tolu philosophy. This cultural principle nurtures interdependence and mutual respect, serving as a powerful buffer against potential social fractures. Third, the resilience of the Muslim minority is anchored in their long-established presence in Samosir. Having settled in the area for generations, they have cultivated adaptive strategies that allow them to coexist harmoniously within a landscape where political, cultural, and religious power largely rests with the majority. Although various dynamics contribute to the ability of Muslims in Samosir to withstand majority pressures, these three factors—willing acceptance, kinship-based solidarity, and historical rootedness—emerge as the most influential in sustaining their collective resilience and preserving intercommunal harmony.

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