



Reinterpreting Religion in the Digital Age: Theology, Ethics, and Christian Education

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed how faith is practiced and how Christian Religious Education is delivered, necessitating a theological reinterpretation of religious formation in digital contexts. This study aims to develop a theoretical framework that integrates theology, ethics, digital literacy, and spirituality to guide Christian education in the digital era. Employing a qualitative literature review method, the study analyzes scholarly works on digital theology, education, and ethics to examine how digital environments shape faith formation, moral reasoning, and community engagement. The findings reveal that digital media functions not merely as a communication tool but as a formative environment influencing spiritual identity and ethical behavior. The proposed digital Christian Religious Education model emphasizes four interrelated dimensions: theology as the foundation of faith, ethics as responsible digital citizenship, digital literacy as critical engagement, and spirituality as holistic formation across physical and virtual spaces. This study contributes to global discourse by offering an integrative and contextual approach that empowers Christian educators to foster authentic spiritual growth and responsible digital discipleship in an increasingly networked world.

Keywords: Christian Religious Education, digital media, digital pedagogy, digital religion, digital theology

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Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology in the last two decades has significantly reshaped how religion is practiced, studied, and transmitted, including within the field of Christian Religious Education. According to Campbell and Tsuria (2021), the emergence of digital religion represents not only the migration of religious practices to online spaces but also the transformation of belief expressions, authority structures, and community interactions through digital mediation. Recent global data show that over 70% of religious organizations worldwide use digital platforms for worship, education, and pastoral communication (Pew Research Center, 2023). This increasing digitalization of religious life requires educators and theologians to reassess traditional frameworks of teaching and spirituality in light of new media environments.

Scholars such as Garner (2020) and Zhang (2025) emphasize that digital theology must move beyond perceiving technology as a neutral tool and instead view it as a formative environment that shapes identity, ethics, and the experience of faith. Meanwhile, Boiliu and Telaumbanua (2022) highlight that digital innovation in Christian education can increase learning motivation when accompanied by critical theological reflection. However, despite these growing studies, limited research has explored how the theoretical frameworks of digital religion and digital theology can be integrated into pedagogical models for Christian Religious Education. This gap reveals the need for a comprehensive and contextual reinterpretation of Christian education in the digital era, particularly in developing a theological imagination that is both faithful and digitally literate.

Theoretically, this study builds on three intersecting dimensions: 1) theoretical frameworks of digital religion, which describe how online religious practices shape belief and authority (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021); 2) digital ethics, which addresses challenges such as misinformation, privacy, and authenticity in online faith practices (Ess, 2017; Tafonao, 2018); and 3) digital theology, which provides theological reflection on faith, embodiment, and spirituality in virtual spaces (Basongan, 2022; Garner, 2020). The relationship among these three constructs forms the conceptual foundation of this study, as illustrated in Figure 1.

The main objective of this study is to develop an integrative framework that connects digital theology, digital ethics, and digital pedagogy to strengthen faith formation and Christian Religious Education in the digital ages.

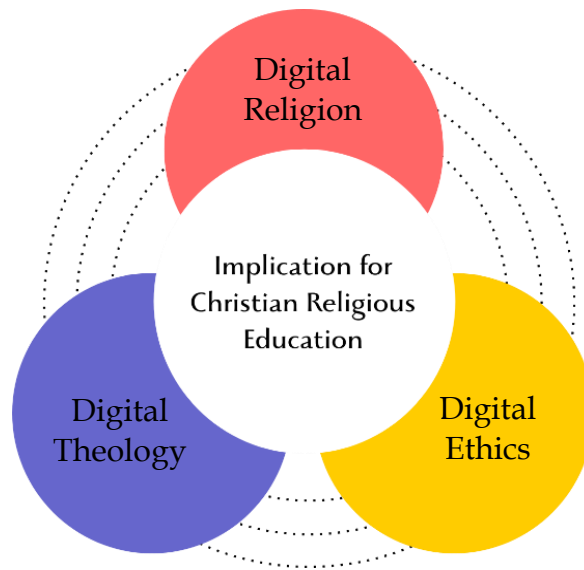


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

(Diagram suggestion: Three overlapping circles representing Digital Religion, Digital Ethics, and Digital Theology, with Implications for Christian Religious Education at the intersection.)

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach, utilising a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, to synthesise theoretical, ethical, and theological perspectives on digital religious practices and their implications for Christian Religious Education. This method is selected because it enables a comprehensive and critical integration of interdisciplinary insights, allowing the researcher to construct conceptual linkages between digital media, theology, and education. According to Zed (2014), library research focuses on collecting and analyzing credible written sources relevant to the research topic, while Creswell (2018) emphasises that qualitative synthesis seeks to interpret meanings and build theoretical understanding, rather than quantifying phenomena.

The research process follows a systematic protocol adapted from the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework. The first stage, identification, involved collecting literature from reputable academic databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate using keywords including digital religion, digital theology, religious education, Christian education, and media ethics. In the screening stage, duplicate and non-academic materials were removed, and the search was limited to publications between 2014 and 2025 to ensure contemporary relevance. The eligibility stage

consisted of evaluating abstracts and full texts to ensure that each selected work explicitly discussed the relationship between religion and digital media. Finally, the inclusion stage focused on selecting literature that met the established criteria for qualitative synthesis and conceptual analysis.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were determined to maintain the quality and focus of the sources used in this study, as summarized in the table below.

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Type of Source	Peer-reviewed journals, books, and proceedings in theology, media, or education	Blog posts, magazines, and non-academic sources
Language	English and Indonesian	Other languages without translation
Relevance	Explicitly addresses digital religion, digital theology, or Christian education	Focuses only on secular digital culture or non-Christian contexts
Publication Year	2014–2025	Earlier than 2014 unless seminal

Table 1. Literature Selection Criteria

Data extraction was carried out systematically using an analytical framework consisting of six key dimensions: author and year, theoretical framework, key findings on religion–technology interaction, ethical considerations, theological reflections, and educational implications for Christian Religious Education. This framework allows comparison across different sources and facilitates synthesis between theoretical models of digital media and their theological–educational applications.

The quality of the selected literature was assessed using four indicators: scholarly credibility (e.g., indexed journal or academic publisher), theoretical depth and relevance, transparency of argumentation, and integration across theology, media studies, and pedagogy. Only works that met at least three of these four quality indicators were included in the final analysis. Data analysis was conducted through thematic coding and conceptual synthesis following Creswell (2014) and Sugiyono (2019). The process involved reading and coding recurring concepts such as digital mediation, spiritual authenticity, and virtual embodiment, grouping theoretical, ethical, and theological perspectives, and synthesizing them to form an integrative conceptual model that links digital religion and Christian education.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrated analytical model that combines theoretical frameworks (mediatization and media ecology), digital ethics, and theological reflection, which are then explicitly applied to the context of Christian Religious Education. Unlike previous studies that address these aspects separately, this study develops a conceptual synthesis that serves as a foundation for curriculum design and digital pedagogy grounded in Christian theological principles. Through this integrated framework, the study contributes to expanding the scope of both digital theology and educational theory in the contemporary Christian context.

Finding and Discussion

Recontextualizing Religion in the Digital Era: Beyond Book Review toward Theoretical Construction

The analysis of Campbell and Tsuria (2021) shows that digital religion is not a marginal phenomenon but central to how identity, community, and authority are formed in online spaces. They argue that theoretical frameworks such as media ecology, mediation, mediatization, and Religious-Social Shaping of Technology (RSST) allow scholars to see digital media not merely as tools but as environments that shape religious practice. However, these frameworks, while rich, often remain descriptive and lack a synthesized theoretical model that explicitly integrates ethical and theological dimensions. Mou et al. (2025) studies such as *Emerging Media Use and Acceptance of Digital Immortality: A Cluster Analysis among Chinese Young Generations* provide evidence of young people negotiating identity and existential beliefs in digital media, which suggests that ethical and theological concerns must be built into any comprehensive framework. Similarly, Chen et al. (2025) studies such as *The Digital Landscape of God: Narrative, Visuals and Viewer Engagement of Religious Videos on YouTube* show that narrative and visual design deeply influence the spiritual engagement of viewers, which hints at how form of expression impacts the substance of faith. Therefore, this study seeks to move beyond summary to the construction of a synthesised theoretical foundation that combines these frameworks with ethical theology for Christian Religious Education.

To translate these insights into pedagogy, the study posits that religion in the digital era should be conceived as adaptive, embodied, and hybrid, meaning

that faith traditions offline remain essential but are transformed in their modes of expression online. Offline rituals, embodied practices, communal interactions remain the core of substance; online practices are legitimate channels of experience but prone to risks of superficiality. International literature from Lae (2025), such as *Digital Transformation and Challenges in Christian Religious Education: A Critical Perspective* documents that student engagement increases when hybrid models of learning (combining offline and online) are adopted, yet warns of erosion in interpersonal spiritual formation if digital literacy and theological reflection are not embedded. Another international example from Dan Kia and Majesty (2025) about *Transformation of Christian Religious Education with Artificial Intelligence: Building A Spiritual Future In The Digital World* shows that AI tools can personalize learning in Christian Religious Education, but also risk reducing communal and incarnational aspects if not used ethically. These international findings affirm the necessity of a framework for Christian education that preserves embodied spiritual substance while embracing digital innovation. Thus, this section develops a proposed integrative model that sees theology, ethics, and digital media as interwoven dimensions in religious expression, not as separate categories.

The originality of this study lies in constructing an applied theoretical foundation for digital Christian Religious Education that does more than review existing literature: it synthesizes multi-facet theory into a coherent model for practice. It reflects novelty because few studies have explicitly built a model combining ethical theology with media ecology and mediatisation in a pedagogical frame for Christian Religious Education. This study's model is meant to guide curriculum design, teacher training, and spiritual formation in digital-hybrid settings. It draws upon both Christian theological tradition (e.g., incarnation, community, authority) and recent empirical work from international research to ensure both relevance and robustness. Through this synthesis, the study contributes a theoretically grounded tool that Christian educators can employ to address challenges of authenticity, identity, community, and spiritual formation in the digital age.

Digital Religion and Theological Transformation

Digital media has evolved into a legitimate field for theological reflection, reshaping how believers encounter, express, and live out their faith in online contexts. Scholars such as Campbell and Tsuria (2021) emphasize that religion

adapts dynamically within digital environments through the processes of mediation and mediatization that reconfigure authority and authenticity. Similarly, Jun (2020) and P. Phillips et al. (2019) describe this as the emergence of digital theology, a discipline that integrates digital humanities and theological inquiry to explore how technology mediates divine communication. In this framework, online worship, prayer communities, and virtual Bible studies are not marginal phenomena but expressions of authentic spiritual life. This paradigm suggests that digital theology represents not a loss of substance but a transformation in expression that enables theology to engage with new cultural forms. Thus, digital media serves as both the medium and context through which theology continues its incarnational mission in the digital age.

Theological transformation in digital contexts requires critical engagement and theological literacy to prevent faith from being reduced to fragmented, individualistic interactions. Adria (2024) demonstrates that digital platforms, particularly immersive environments such as virtual reality, offer new affordances that reshape religious experiences through presence, embodiment, and interactivity. However, without critical discernment, these affordances risk fostering a superficial spirituality detached from embodied faith and communal worship. Therefore, theology must balance openness to digital innovation with an awareness of its potential to distort relational and incarnational dimensions of Christian life. The intersection of theology and digital humanities must preserve the depth of theological reflection while embracing methodological innovation (Dörpinghaus, 2022). This balance ensures that faith remains holistic even as it is mediated by digital technologies.

From a pedagogical standpoint, Christian Religious Education must reinterpret its teaching models in light of these theological shifts. Digital theology invites educators to design learning processes that cultivate not only doctrinal understanding but also digital discernment and ethical responsibility. P.M. Phillips (2023) argues that a theology of information can help educators guide students to perceive technology as a space of divine encounter rather than as a distraction. In this way, theology becomes participatory and dialogical, integrating digital tools to enhance spiritual formation rather than merely transmitting religious content. Thus, Christian Religious Education functions as a bridge between classical theology and the digital realities where learners construct meaning, identity, and community.

The rise of online religious communities also demands renewed ecclesiological reflection. Campbell and Tsuria (2021) describes digital religion as a “networked spiritual infrastructure,” emphasizing that faith communities now exist across physical and virtual boundaries. This reality challenges traditional notions of sacred space, suggesting that community formation can occur meaningfully within digital networks when grounded in shared faith and ethical practices. However, as Jun (2020) notes, digital church initiatives must maintain theological depth to avoid reducing worship to performative or entertainment-based experiences. The digital transformation of theology, therefore, must include an ecclesial dimension that integrates online participation with embodied sacramental life. Only through such integration can the digital church sustain authentic faith encounters rooted in the incarnational logic of Christianity.

Ultimately, digital theology redefines the relationship between revelation, communication, and technology. As Thomas et al. (2024) observe, emerging technologies such as the metaverse and AI-based platforms influence not only modes of worship but also the formation of spiritual identity and wellbeing. For Christian theology, this development offers both a challenge and an opportunity: a challenge to safeguard doctrinal integrity amid digital pluralism, and an opportunity to reimagine the presence of God within the networked world. The task of theologians and Christian educators is to articulate frameworks that affirm both divine transcendence and technological mediation. Through reflective integration, theology can continue to proclaim God’s truth within digital culture, embodying faith that is both ancient and forward-looking.

Critical Dialectics: Between Fragmented Faith and Embodied Spirituality

The phenomenon of digital religion presents a complex dialectic between transformation and fragmentation. As Campbell and Tsuria (2021) argues, digital media reshapes how believers negotiate authority, identity, and community, but it also risks creating individualized and privatized faith expressions detached from traditional structures. Strengthening this perspective, Ding et al. (2025) show that digital-age film and television not only mediate religious expression but actively reshape interfaith encounters by introducing new ritual sensibilities, moral perceptions, and experiential frameworks that blur conventional boundaries between sacred and secular domains. Together, these insights indicate that digital religion cannot be categorized as either wholly positive or negative; rather, it

operates as a dialectical process. Within this process, digital religious life emerges as a hybrid formation that continually shifts between communal engagement and personal autonomy, between modes of participation and experiences of isolation.

The thesis–antithesis–synthesis model helps clarify this complexity. Religion evolves through digital media as a new space for the construction of identity, authority, and community. At the same time, this development generates tension between authenticity and simulation, between embodiment and mediation (Hoffmann et al., 2022). The antithesis emerges in the fragmentation of faith, as Terry Eagleton calls it, “disembodied spirituality,” which tends to reduce faith to feelings or personal sentiment. The synthesis, however, points to the possibility of embodied digital faith, where technology serves not as a replacement for physical presence but as an extension of it (Dyer, 2020). In this synthesis, the digital becomes a space for incarnational participation, rather than a substitute for the sacred.

Aspect	Main Idea
Thesis	Religion evolves through digital media as a new space for identity, community, and authority formation.
Antithesis	Digital religion risks fragmentation and the loss of communal and theological depth.
Synthesis	Faith transforms in form, not in substance; digital media supports, rather than replaces, embodied spirituality.

Table 2. Dialectical Model of Digital Religion and Embodied Faith

The dialectical tension between fragmented and embodied faith becomes a theological challenge for the church and Christian educators. Mediatization redefines how religion interacts with culture, but it also demands critical discernment to maintain theological integrity. Faith education must thus move beyond adaptation to technology and instead foster theological reflection on mediated presence and spiritual embodiment. The digital world offers both danger and potential: it can dilute sacred meaning, yet it can also deepen faith through new forms of participation and connection (Nainggolan & Pabisa, 2024). This dual nature requires educators to act as reflective mediators who balance innovation with incarnation.

In this light, Christian Religious Education must be grounded in the incarnational principle, the belief that faith is lived out through the body, community, and tangible acts of love. Dyer (2020) argues that technology should be seen as a theological partner that extends human capacity to reflect God’s image in the world. When used critically, digital tools can become media of grace

rather than distraction. The task of theology, therefore, is to discern how the presence of God can be mediated authentically within virtual spaces. The goal is not to escape embodiment but to renew it through the creative use of technology in faith formation.

The dialectical perspective thus affirms that digital faith is not disembodied but re-embodied through mediated relationships and participatory theology. As Campbell and Tsuria (2021) highlights, digital religion requires a “networked theology” that integrates human relationships, digital mediation, and divine presence. Such an approach invites believers to inhabit both online and offline worlds with theological integrity, turning technology into a context of grace. For Christian educators, this means equipping students not only with digital literacy but with theological imagination to encounter God in mediated forms. Faith in the digital era, then, is not diminished but reconfigured toward deeper incarnational awareness.

Toward a Framework for Digital Christian Religious Education

Theological Integration

Theological integration involves embedding Christian doctrine and biblical narratives into digital learning processes so that learners encounter not just information but formation of identity and faith. For instance, Situmorang and Halawa (2024) demonstrates that churches using digital media during the COVID-19 pandemic maintained theological integrity by interpreting online services through biblical theology, resisting the replacement of in-person worship entirely. Similarly, Lae (2025) emphasizes that theological content must be contextualized digitally. Scripture should mediate not only belief but ethical behavior. The framework proposed here incorporates curriculum units with scripture reading, reflection prompts, and both online and offline community worship practices, ensuring the Incarnation remains central. By integrating theological reflection in a digital context, Christian education ensures that faith is experienced cognitively, spiritually, and ethically.

Theological integration also equips educators to interpret technology itself through theological lenses, understanding creation, sin, redemption, and eschatology in digital life. Studies such as Elizabeth and Mikaere (2025) provide frameworks teaching love, humility, justice, and stewardship in digital ministries.

Educators using these models help learners understand that algorithms, virtual interactions, and online content are not morally neutral, but impact Christian vocation. Curriculum modules may explore how biblical themes such as community, sacrifice, and redemption are mediated digitally, linking faith with technology as a spiritual space.

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy in this framework goes beyond mastering tools. It entails evaluating content, discerning biases, understanding algorithms, and creating responsible digital content. Frameworks like DigCompEdu, highlighted in *Tools for Assessing Teacher Digital Literacy: A Review*, identify key domains for educators: pedagogical use of technology, assessment, professional development, and learner support. For students in Christian Religious Education, digital literacy involves understanding how religious content is produced, how media shapes faith perceptions, and responding ethically (Nguyen & Habók, 2022). Research from Politeknik Negeri Ambon indicates that strong digital literacy significantly improves student engagement, academic performance, and moral development in Christian Religious Education contexts (Pariama, 2024). The Digital Christian Religious Education framework includes structured digital literacy components from early curriculum stages, such as media workshops, church content creation projects, and critical analyses of online religious messages.

Ethical Engagement

Ethical engagement emphasizes virtues like honesty, justice, love, and stewardship in digital spaces, guiding interactions, sharing, and communication online. Elizabeth and Mikaere (2025) identify risks such as misinformation, individualism, and weakened community bonds when ethical frameworks are absent. Christian Religious Education can teach ethical engagement through case studies, for example responding to hate speech or data misuse, moderation of online communities, and accountability mechanisms. Sugihyono (2025) demonstrates that students receiving ethical guidance in digital behavior display greater responsibility and discernment. Consequently, the Digital Christian Religious Education framework integrates explicit lessons on digital citizenship, highlighting Christian ethical obligations both online and offline.

Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation in hybrid spaces nurtures faith across both physical church settings and digital contexts, ensuring spiritual identity remains coherent and discipleship is lived, not merely consumed. Situmorang and Halawa (2024) show that students develop stronger faith identity when digital theological literacy teaches reflective engagement with information and faith traditions. Similarly, Gulo and Tapilaha (2024) find that integrating spirituality and critical reasoning enhances student spiritual engagement. The digital Christian Religious Education framework proposes regular spiritual practices that span both online and offline environments, including online devotions, prayer groups, digital retreats, and in-person worship. Digital faith communities complement spiritual discipline practices such as prayer, Bible meditation, confession, and service.

Assessment templates are included to measure spiritual maturity in digital contexts, tracking commitment, spiritual practices, community participation, and reflective capacity. This allows educators and students to monitor growth in knowledge, spiritual habits, virtue, and service, making digital spirituality an integrated part of lived Christian identity. This framework moves Christian education from merely transmitting doctrine toward forming critical, reflective, and digitally engaged disciples whose faith is theological, ethical, digitally literate, and spiritually formed.

Digital Ethics and Spiritual Formation Model

Digital environments create complex ethical challenges, including privacy violations, identity manipulation, misinformation, and online harassment. Addressing these issues requires a Christian moral framework that helps individuals navigate online spaces responsibly. Ethical and spiritual formation must be integrated into digital engagement, so learners do not treat technology as a value-neutral environment. Christian education should equip learners to critically assess their online actions, evaluate the broader impact of digital content, and develop practices consistent with faith values. Establishing a structured model for digital ethics promotes not only responsible behavior but also communal accountability and spiritual growth. This model positions reflection, discernment, and virtue as central components of digital engagement.

Reflective Engagement with Technology

Engaging with technology ethically requires deliberate reflection on how digital tools shape individual behavior, social interaction, and moral reasoning. Christians need to critically examine the mechanisms behind content delivery, including algorithms, platform structures, and recommendation systems (Ott, 2019). Reflection helps learners recognize how online environments can subtly influence values, opinions, and social norms. Scheid (2025) highlights that radicalization, misinformation, and echo chambers are amplified without intentional reflection, making ethical discernment essential. Structured reflection exercises, discussions, and case studies allow learners to apply biblical principles to everyday digital interactions. This approach ensures that technology is a space for thoughtful engagement rather than passive consumption.

Christian institutions can provide additional support by integrating reflective practices into curricula and spiritual exercises. Churches develop digital policies, training programs, and spaces for ethical dialogue to guide engagement (Elizabeth & Mikaere, 2025). Reflection exercises can include journaling about digital experiences, evaluating online ethical dilemmas, and discussing moral implications of social media use. Engaging students in peer discussions helps them articulate values, consider diverse perspectives, and internalize ethical frameworks. These practices reinforce that ethical digital behavior is not optional but a spiritual discipline aligned with Christian formation. Reflection creates a foundation for intentional decision-making and moral accountability online.

Learners benefit from combining ethical reflection with technological literacy. Understanding the design and function of digital tools allows individuals to anticipate the moral consequences of technology use. Scheid (2025) observes that awareness of algorithmic influence strengthens discernment and empowers users to act responsibly. By linking reflection with practical skills, learners can recognize patterns of manipulation, bias, or unethical content. Integrating reflection into spiritual formation ensures that moral insight translates into action. Ethical engagement becomes a holistic process where technology use, faith, and virtue intersect.

Online Moral Decision-Making Skills

Developing moral decision-making skills is essential for responding to digital dilemmas effectively. Christians must learn to analyze situations, weigh

potential consequences, and make choices that reflect justice, compassion, and accountability (Sugiri, 2024). Scenario-based exercises, simulations, and ethical case studies are practical methods to strengthen these skills. Exposure to diverse ethical challenges, such as misinformation, cyberbullying, or privacy breaches, helps learners practice discernment in controlled environments. Repeated engagement in moral reasoning enhances the ability to navigate real-world digital contexts with integrity. Decision-making skills become a habit of both critical thought and spiritual mindfulness.

Education for moral decision-making should integrate theological principles with practical applications. Ott (2019) emphasizes that biblical ethics provide a coherent framework for evaluating right and wrong in complex digital interactions. Rebecchi et al. (2024) highlight that educators play a key role in modelling ethical behavior and guiding learners through challenging scenarios. Students learn to connect abstract moral concepts with specific online behaviors, fostering a deep understanding of responsibility and stewardship. Ethical decision-making training strengthens not only individual integrity but also the ethical culture of online communities. Developing these skills cultivates agents of digital engagement who act in alignment with Christian values.

Ethical decision-making also requires awareness of social and technological influences on behavior. Scheid (2025) notes that online environments can encourage impulsive or unreflective choices due to algorithmic design or peer pressure. Teaching students to pause, evaluate evidence, and consider long-term effects helps counteract these pressures. Integrating reflective exercises, guided discussions, and accountability structures supports sustained moral development. Combining practical skills with ethical reasoning enables learners to anticipate dilemmas and respond faithfully. Moral decision-making becomes both a cognitive skill and a spiritual discipline for responsible digital engagement.

Commitment to Justice, Truth, and Love

A firm commitment to justice, truth, and love underpins ethical behavior in digital spaces. Ott (2019) explains that these virtues guide Christians in creating and sharing content that promotes well-being and counters harm. Engaging online requires discernment to avoid spreading misinformation, inciting conflict, or exploiting others. Elizabeth and Mikaere (2025) argue that faith-based organizations can support these commitments through clear digital

policies, ethical guidelines, and community standards. By embedding justice, truth, and love into digital engagement, Christians act not only for personal integrity but also for the common good. Ethical participation fosters a culture where digital spaces reflect spiritual values.

Promoting justice, truth, and love involves proactive engagement with harmful content and structural challenges. Scheid (2025) highlights the influence of algorithms in amplifying extremism and bias, necessitating advocacy and ethical intervention. Learners should develop skills to identify misleading narratives, counteract unethical practices, and model virtuous behavior online. Churches and educational institutions can provide mentorship, workshops, and collaborative initiatives to cultivate these competencies. Digital spaces become arenas for moral formation, where ethical principles guide actions and community engagement. Commitment to virtues ensures that Christians respond constructively to challenges rather than passively consuming content.

Embedding justice, truth, and love into spiritual formation encourages sustained ethical behavior across all online and offline contexts. Ethical development is an ongoing process requiring reflection, discipline, and practice (Sugiri, 2024). Learners internalize these virtues through repeated engagement, observation of role models, and participation in faith-based communities. Ethical competence reinforces personal spiritual growth and contributes to healthier online cultures. This approach links moral reasoning directly to digital action, ensuring that faith informs responsible technology use. Commitment to virtues transforms digital engagement into an expression of lived Christianity.

Educators as Facilitators of Digital Spirituality

Discernment of God's Presence in Digital Spaces

Educators play a crucial role in helping students recognize God's presence in digital spaces. Digitalization has transformed religious practices and community dynamics, affecting how believers interact and experience God's presence online (Grigore & Cobzeanu, 2025). This requires educators to guide students in distinguishing between content that nurtures faith and content that can distract from Christian values. This approach aligns with Flynn (2013), who emphasizes the importance of careful use of digital tools to deepen one's relationship with God without falling into passive consumption.

Educators can facilitate this process through shared reflection, group discussions, and spiritual exercises that direct students to become aware of God's presence in their online activities. In doing so, students are not merely consumers of digital content but active participants in their spiritual experiences. Integrating spirituality into digital education also involves developing deep reflective habits that help students assess the impact of their digital interactions on their spiritual life. This approach supports Holsclaw and Holsclaw (2025) who highlight the importance of forming secure connections with God through intentional and conscious spiritual practices.

Cultivating Meaningful Online Faith Practices

Educators play a central role in fostering meaningful faith practices in digital spaces. According to Boiliu and Telaumbanua (2022), virtual worship through live streaming or real-time broadcasts can help congregants stay connected despite physical distance. This demonstrates that technology can be used to strengthen faith communities even when members are not physically together. Implementing meaningful online faith practices involves using digital platforms for activities such as communal prayer, Bible study, and spiritual discussions. With guidance from educators, students can participate actively in these activities, building a strong faith community even in digital environments. Furthermore, educators can facilitate the development of students' personal faith practices through digital resources that support spiritual growth. This includes using Christian meditation apps, spiritual podcasts, and online reflection materials. In this way, students are encouraged to integrate their faith into their daily digital lives.

Connecting Spiritual Formation with Embodied Community Life

Educators need to connect spiritual formation with embodied, real-world community life. According to Benson (2024), while digital tools can enhance engagement with God and fellow believers, overreliance on digital media may conflict with Christian character formation if emphasis is placed more on content delivery than on real-life interaction and expression of faith within community.

Educators can facilitate this connection by creating opportunities for students to interact directly, both physically and through digital platforms that support authentic and meaningful communication. In this way, students can

experience God's presence in their faith community, both virtually and in person. In addition, educators can integrate Christian values into community activities, such as social service, emotional support, and collaboration in spiritual projects. This strengthens community bonds and helps students see their faith as an integral part of their everyday lives.

Theoretical Synthesis and Proposed Model

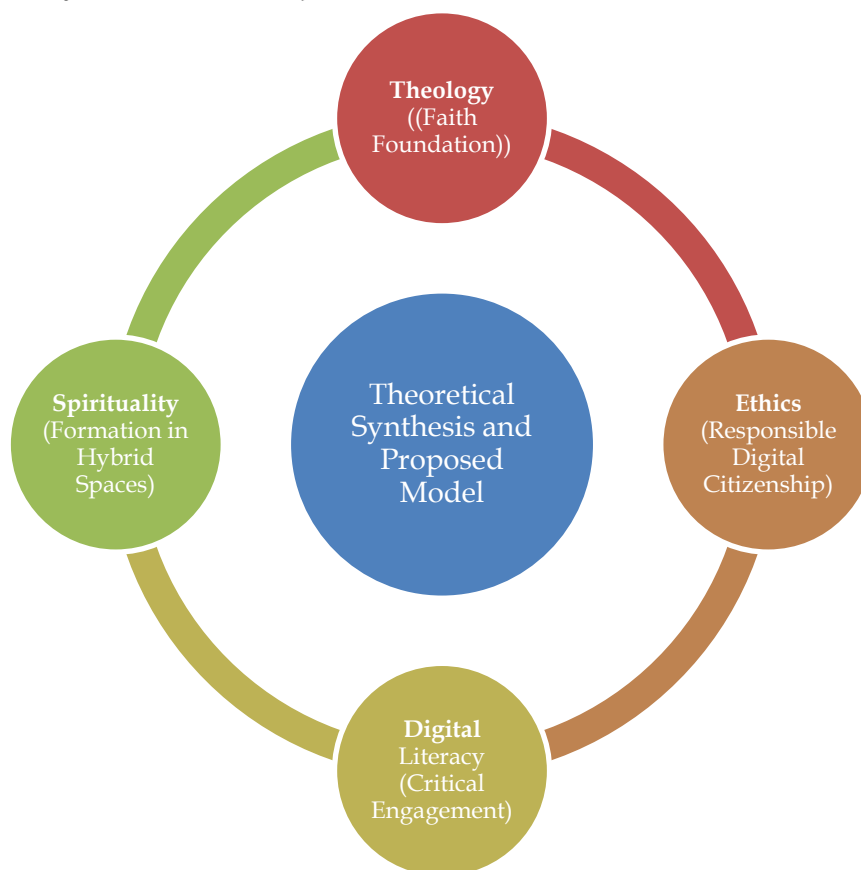


Figure 2. Theoretical Synthesis and Proposed Model

Theology (Faith Foundation)

Theology serves as the faith foundation that guides Christian Religious Education in integrating spiritual principles with technological engagement. In the digital age, theological reflection must shape how students understand their identity and mission as believers online. Elkana (2023) emphasizes that technology-based theological training provides a relevant response to the changing contexts of faith formation. Through theological grounding, students learn to apply biblical truths to digital realities, ensuring that their online

expressions remain consistent with Christian ethics. This integration fosters both intellectual understanding and spiritual transformation. Ultimately, digital theology enables a holistic faith that remains rooted in Scripture while engaging meaningfully with contemporary digital culture.

Ethics (Responsible Digital Citizenship)

Ethics in digital Christian Religious Education develops students' awareness to act responsibly and compassionately in online spaces. Kaya and Köseoğlu (2023) argue that integrating digital ethics into religious and moral education curricula helps learners understand the ethical dimensions of digital citizenship. Students are encouraged to respect privacy, avoid cyberbullying, and discern moral implications of their digital behavior. By embedding ethical principles within digital learning, Christian educators cultivate critical moral reasoning. This process nurtures digital citizens who uphold Christian virtues while navigating technological challenges. Consequently, ethical awareness becomes an inseparable part of faith-based engagement in digital contexts.

Digital Literacy (Critical Engagement)

Digital literacy in Christian Religious Education equips students to use technology effectively, critically, and purposefully in learning and ministry. Pariama (2024) found that integrating digital literacy into religious education enhances student engagement and moral development. This literacy enables learners to evaluate online information critically, align digital practices with Christian values, and apply technology for spiritual growth. Educators are thus called to design learning experiences that promote discernment and digital responsibility. Such an approach transforms technology from a passive tool into a medium for meaningful faith expression. Ultimately, digital literacy fosters wisdom and discernment, core competencies for Christian learners in an information-saturated world.

Spirituality (Formation in Hybrid Spaces)

Spirituality in digital Christian Religious Education emphasizes holistic faith formation through hybrid learning spaces that blend physical and virtual experiences. Pujiwati and Subekti (2024) demonstrate that integrating prayer and technology increases the effectiveness of theological education in the digital era.

Such hybrid approaches allow students to experience authentic spiritual practices both offline and online. This model promotes a balanced approach to engaging with faith, community, and technology. Spiritual formation thus becomes dynamic, continuous, and contextually relevant. Through hybrid spirituality, students develop resilient faith that transcends boundaries of space and technology.

Implications

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of Christian Religious Education by offering an integrative framework that connects digital theology, digital ethics, digital literacy, and spirituality within hybrid learning environments. It advances the discourse of digital theology by emphasizing how faith, ethical reasoning, and digital competence can interact coherently in forming Christian identity in the digital era. Practically, the findings guide for educators to design faith-based digital pedagogy that nurtures responsible digital citizenship and critical engagement with technology. The model helps teachers and curriculum developers incorporate theological reflection and ethical discernment into digital learning processes, making religious education more contextual and transformative. The advantage of this research lies in its interdisciplinary synthesis that bridges theology, ethics, and pedagogy, offering a holistic vision of faith formation. Its impact extends to the broader scientific community by contributing to the emerging field of digital religion studies and providing empirical insights applicable to global Christian education contexts. Ultimately, this study strengthens the scientific understanding of how faith and technology can coexist productively to shape authentic and responsible Christian formation in the digital age.

Recommendations for further research

This research provides a significant contribution by presenting an integrative theoretical framework that unites theology, ethics, digital literacy, and spirituality within the context of Christian Religious Education. Its main advantage lies in offering a holistic model that helps educators and theologians understand how digital spaces shape faith, identity, and ethical formation. However, since this study is based primarily on qualitative literature review, it is limited by the absence of empirical validation from real classroom or

community settings. Future studies are therefore encouraged to conduct field-based or mixed-method research to test the practical implementation and effectiveness of the proposed Digital Christian Religious Education Model. Further research could also explore comparative studies across different cultural or denominational contexts to identify how digital theology and ethics function globally in faith formation. Expanding this line of inquiry will deepen the theoretical foundations and enhance the practical applicability of digital religious education in diverse educational environments. Ultimately, continuing this research can strengthen the global understanding of how faith and technology interact to nurture authentic Christian discipleship in the digital era.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the integration of theology, ethics, digital literacy, and spirituality forms a holistic foundation for reinterpreting Christian Religious Education in the digital era. Digital spaces, when approached through theological reflection and ethical responsibility, can serve as transformative environments for faith formation rather than sources of distraction or superficial engagement. Educators hold a vital role as facilitators of digital spirituality, guiding students to discern God's presence in online interactions, cultivate meaningful faith practices, and link their spiritual formation to real-life community experiences. The proposed theoretical model highlights that theology provides the faith foundation, ethics directs responsible digital behavior, digital literacy fosters critical and constructive engagement, and spirituality nurtures holistic growth across physical and digital dimensions. Therefore, Christian Religious Education in the digital age must move beyond traditional instruction to form digital disciples who embody Christian values, exercise moral discernment, and live faithfully in both virtual and embodied spaces. The findings affirm that technology, when integrated with theological and ethical depth, can strengthen the mission of Christian education to build character, deepen faith, and promote responsible participation in the digital society.

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