

Navigating Digital Faith Formation: Christian Education Strategies for Indonesian Gen Z in Online Gaming Addiction Contexts

Autor:

I Putu Ayub
Darmawan^{1*}
Travis Duncan²

Afiliation

Sekolah Tinggi
Teologi Simpson
Ungaran, Indonesia¹
Toccoa Falls College,
United States²

***Email:**

putuayub@sttsimpson.
ac.id

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**Abstract**

The addiction to online gaming among Generation Z is a major social problem in Indonesia, hitting roughly 28% of the digital-native population and causing psychological upheaval, social isolation, and hindered spiritual development. However, there was no scientific integration of the empirical findings on gaming addiction with Christian educational methods to the growth of digital faith, in terms of a systematic synthesis that links psychological impacts with contextual discipleship frameworks. The research aimed to identify and contextualize Christian educational methods to Gen Z in Indonesia who are facing internet gaming addiction. The research targeted Gen Z (born from mid-1990s to early 2010s) with significant access to internet and gaming in urban and semi-urban areas in Indonesia, and the worldwide literature was used for contextual adaption. A systematic literature search of DOAJ-indexed and Christian education articles (2013–2025) was undertaken applying purposive sampling of both empirical and conceptual studies on gaming addiction, digital Christian education, and gamification. Data collected amalgamated primary themes: thematic analysis. Gaming addiction was most common in males aged 12 to 25 years and resulted in physical, psychological, social and scholastic disadvantages when playing for 4 to 6 hours per day. Five strategy themes emerged: theological realignment, spiritual online literacy, salvaging gamification, hybrid congregations, and family, church, and school cooperation. Christian schooling shifted from constraints to full digital faith growth, using gaming components to discipleship.

Keywords: Christian education strategies; faith formation; Indonesian Gen Z; navigating digital faith; online gaming addiction

Abstrak

Kecanduan gim daring pada Generasi Z merupakan persoalan sosial yang serius di Indonesia, yang diperkirakan dialami oleh sekitar 28% populasi digital native serta menimbulkan gejala psikologis, isolasi sosial, dan hambatan dalam perkembangan spiritual. Namun, belum terdapat integrasi ilmiah yang memadai antara temuan empiris mengenai kecanduan gim dan metode pendidikan Kristen bagi pertumbuhan iman digital dalam bentuk sintesis sistematis yang menghubungkan dampak psikologis dengan kerangka pemuridan yang kontekstual. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan mengontekstualisasikan metode pendidikan Kristen bagi Generasi Z di Indonesia yang menghadapi kecanduan gim daring. Penelitian ini berfokus pada Generasi Z yang lahir dari pertengahan 1990-an hingga awal 2010-an, dengan akses yang signifikan terhadap internet dan gim di wilayah perkotaan dan semi-perkotaan di Indonesia, sementara literatur global digunakan sebagai dasar untuk melakukan adaptasi kontekstual. Penelusuran literatur sistematis terhadap artikel yang terindeks DOAJ dan artikel dalam bidang pendidikan Kristen yang diterbitkan pada 2013–2025 dilakukan dengan menggunakan purposive sampling terhadap studi empiris dan konseptual mengenai kecanduan gim, pendidikan Kristen digital, dan gamifikasi. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis melalui analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi tema-tema utama. Kecanduan gim paling banyak ditemukan pada laki-laki berusia 12 hingga 25 tahun dan menimbulkan dampak negatif secara fisik, psikologis, sosial, dan akademik ketika aktivitas bermain berlangsung selama 4 hingga 6 jam per hari. Lima tema strategi yang muncul meliputi penyelarasan kembali teologis, literasi spiritual daring, pemanfaatan gamifikasi, jemaat hibrida, serta kerja sama antara keluarga, gereja, dan sekolah. Pendidikan Kristen mengalami pergeseran dari pendekatan yang berorientasi pada pembatasan menuju pengembangan iman digital secara menyeluruh dengan memanfaatkan komponen gim sebagai sarana pemuridan.

Kata kunci: generasi Z Indonesia; kecanduan gim daring; navigasi iman digital; pembentukan iman; strategi pendidikan Kristen

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z is the largest age group in Indonesia, accounting for around 27.94% of the total population, and is known as the generation that has lived in a digital culture since childhood. For many Gen Z teens and youth, gadgets, the internet, and especially online games have become an integral part of daily life. According to Faizal et al. (2024), about 44.10% of teenagers play or download video games and the playing time is usually 4-6 hours a day. This disease can cause addiction to internet gaming that negatively affects learning success, emotional control, social interactions and moral-spiritual growth

Research in Indonesia nowadays shows that increasingly many children and adolescents are addicted to playing games and electronic gadgets. A psychiatric facility in Surabaya mentioned that in one year, there were more than 3,000 children and teens undergoing treatment for addiction to gadgets and internet-based games, experiencing signs of aggression, anti-social behavior, and inability to manage the usage of gadgets (Putra, 2024). Another study conducted by Surbakti et al. (2023) showed that around 10.15% of Indonesian adolescents in various metropolitan cities are affected by addiction to computer games. This addiction greatly affects their mental health. Addiction to games such as Roblox has a very bad impact on mental well-being, especially for Generation Z, through emotional problems, social interactions, and intrapersonal disputes.

Pasuang and Saogo (2023) in their research argue that the faith formation of Generation Z in Indonesia requires a contextual and urgent framework. Also, according to the Darmawan et al. (2024) research, this generation need a systematic and disciplined religion development as well. New media may improve the quality of religious instruction in virtual communities. Further, online Bible teaching, multimedia materials and gamification show promise of increasing involvement and developing spiritual development. According to Diana et al. (2023) research, digital media may also be a platform for faith formation, if it is used in a more systematic way. The research of Pasuang and Saogo (2023) emphasises the need for churches to build specific digital curriculum, media literacy education, hybrid communities and intense mentoring for Generation Z. An important challenge for online gaming addiction is the extent to which Christian educational techniques may serve to alleviate the negative impacts of such addiction and at the same time divert Generation Z's excitement for gaming

toward spiritual growth.

There are several studies conducted in Indonesia that have been discussed, such as the profile of online game addiction and its effect on teenagers and Gen Z (Adithya & Hastuti, 2025); the general problems and strategies of learning Christian Religious Education in the digital era (Suciati, 2018); and the practice of digital discipleship and faith formation through social media and online platforms (Rumondor & Ticoalu, 2025; Saddhono et al., 2020). But systematic research which directly connect these three categories, i.e. online gaming addiction, the characteristics of Gen Z in Indonesia, and specialized Christian education initiatives for the creation of digital religion are still difficult to uncover. Gaming addiction research is predominantly psychological and behavioral. Digital Christian Religious Education studies, however, focus more on pedagogical innovation, without explicitly considering the context of game addiction as an integrated spiritual-formative problem.

This study tries to bridge this knowledge gap: there is no systematic synthesis that maps empirical results on online gaming addiction in Indonesian Gen Z that can be constructively linked with the philosophy and practice of digital faith formation in Christian education. The objective of this study is to develop a conceptual framework that integrates three clusters of literature, namely (1) a study on online game addiction among adolescents and Gen Z in Indonesia; (2) literature on Christian Religious Education and adolescent discipleship in the digital era; and (3) global initiatives of gamification-based faith formation and digital platforms.

However, the approach of the church and Christian education to gaming issues so far still tends to be moralistic, namely, stopping at prohibitions, controls, or ethical warnings without addressing the roots of inner formation, imagination, and digital relations of the younger generation. Conventional faith-building models also often fail to address the logic of Gen Z's life, shaped by interactivity, speed, visuality, and a culture of instant appreciation, so that faith learning remains one-way, lacking dialogicality and insufficient contextualization. As a result, the church is often stronger in condemning symptoms than in guiding transformation, even though gaming addiction is not only a behavioral issue, but also a matter of identity, affective attachment, and the search for meaning that requires a more profound and relational approach to faith formation.

Therefore, this article deviates from the previous theoretical position that digital faith formation needs to be understood as a pedagogical and spiritual practice that is both critical and creative: critical of digital culture that forms dependence, but also creative in reducing the distance between the world of faith and the everyday world of Gen Z. By placing online gaming addiction as an issue of spiritual formation, this research is not just a technical or moral disciplinary issue. This study offers a theoretical contribution by moving from a control paradigm (behavioristic) to a faith-building paradigm (constructivist), from a prohibitive approach to contextual discipleship, and from a uniform faith education to a hybrid strategy that integrates between family, church, and school. Within this framework, gamification and digital media are not understood as inherent threats only as inherently threats but rather as redeemable spaces to form habits, cares, and life orientations geared towards Christ-centered living.

In theory, this research is based on several foundations. The first foundation is social constructivism. This foundation emphasizes that learning and faith formation occur through social interaction and community practices. Interactions that occur both offline and online. The second foundation is the concept of contextual discipleship that integrates formal religious education with the daily life practices that occur in digital spaces, including spiritual digital literacy and character building (Christie, 2025). The third foundation is the digital discipleship approach. This foundation sees digital media as a space of mission and discipleship. In the digital space, relationships, content, and the rhythm of spiritual life are organized through online platforms and hybrid communities (Darmawan et al., 2024; Diana et al., 2023). Through this framework, the research develops the concept of 'digital faith formation,' which critiques gaming culture while creatively using game elements as a pedagogical means of redemption.

Based on the above background, the main objective of this study is to identify and formulate relevant, contextually grounded Christian education strategies for Gen Z in Indonesia regarding online game addiction. Specifically, the objectives of this study are: (1) Mapping the main findings of research on online game addiction in Gen Z Indonesia and its implications for psychosocial and spiritual development; (2) Identify approaches and models of digital faith formation in the context of Christian education that are relevant to the digital

native generation; (3) Synthesize practical strategies of Christian education that can navigate, redeem, and direct the use of games and digital technology towards the formation of mature faith in Gen Z Indonesia who struggle with online game addiction.

RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

This study employs a systematic literature review. This approach enables researchers to collect, critically evaluate, and synthesize empirical and conceptual findings from various journals and national and international Christian education journals. The main focus is on literature related to (1) online game addiction in adolescents and Gen Z in Indonesia, (2) Christian religious education and adolescent discipleship in the digital era, and (3) digital faith formation strategies, including the use of gamification and digital platforms in religious contexts.

This study is set in Indonesia, with special attention to Generation Z (approximately born in the mid-1990s to early 2010s) living in urban and semi-urban environments, where access to the internet, smartphones, and online games is very high. However, the study also considered relevant international literature on digital faith-building models and gamification in Christian education to enrich perspectives and inform possible adaptations to the Indonesian context.

Scientific journal articles used in this study must meet the following criteria: (1) Empirical articles (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods) about online game addiction in adolescents or Gen Z Indonesia; (2) Empirical or conceptual articles on Christian religious education, adolescent discipleship, or faith formation in the digital era, especially related to the young generation/Gen Z in Indonesia; (3) International articles that review the practice of digital faith formation, digital catechesis, or gamified faith formation that can be conceptually adapted to the Indonesian context; (4) The article is published in the period around 2013–2025, to capture the latest developments in the phenomenon of online gaming addiction and digital transformation in Christian education.

The sampling strategy is purposive, targeting articles that explicitly address the wedge between three domains: online gaming addiction, Gen Z/teens, and Christian education/faith formation (or at least two of them with strong potential for conceptual integration). Articles

were obtained from the DOAJ database (for international studies and some indexed Christian theology/education journals).

The data collection process is carried out through several steps: (1) Searching electronic databases using a combination of keywords in Indonesian and English, for example: online game addiction, generation Z, Indonesian youth, psychological well-being, youth discipleship, digital era, Christian education, digital discipleship, gamification. Search results found 822,436 articles; (2) Titles and abstracts are reviewed to ensure suitability with inclusion criteria. Articles that focus only on the technical aspects of games, general psychology without the context of the Indonesian young generation, or general education without the faith/digital dimension are eliminated at this stage. Furthermore, 23 articles were selected for analysis; (3) The selected articles were read in full to identify findings related to the level and impact of online game addiction on Gen Z Indonesia, models, strategies, or approaches to Christian Religious Education/discipleship in the digital era.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The steps: (1) Key information from each article (context, population, methods, key findings, practical implications) is extracted and recorded in a concise matrix; (2) From the extracted data, initial codes were developed such as: high play duration, impact on psychological well-being, interactive digital Christian Religious Education, gamification of faith learning, spiritual digital literacy; (3) Similar codes are grouped into major themes, including: (a) Profile and impact of online game addiction of Gen Z Indonesia; (b) Challenges and opportunities of Christian Religious Education in the digital era; (c) Patterns of discipleship and digital faith formation; (d) Gamification approach and Christian digital platforms; (e) The role of families, churches, and schools in regulation and mentoring; (4) The themes that emerge are synthesized into a conceptual narrative that answers the formulation of the problem: "What is the Christian education strategy for Gen Z Indonesia in the context of online game addiction?" by formulating a cluster of main strategies that can be implemented in the Indonesian context.

RESULTS

Profile and Impact of Online Game Addiction on Gen Z

Profile and Impact of Online Game Addiction on Indonesian Gen Z Based on several

previous studies, the dominant age group is 12-25 years old, with high dependence on games such as Mobile Legends (Airlangga & Alfansi, 2025) Several studies highlight the growing tendency of Gen Z in the digital age to play intensively, often 4-6 hours per day, influenced by peer groups and low self-control (Saddhono et al., 2020).

The demographic profile of game addiction in Indonesia in the dominant age aspect is 12-15 years old (early adolescents, 50% of respondents in one study) to 20-23 years old (92% in other studies); the majority of junior high school students or students (Airlangga & Alfansi, 2025). Then, regarding the gender aspect, game addiction is more male (73-77%), often in Java and Sumatra (Saddhono et al., 2020). Its characteristics are the digital generation, with 27.94% of the Indonesian population; dependence on gadgets (mobile phones 59-84%), MOBA genres such as Mobile Legends are popular; high-intensity triggered peer communication and escapism (Faizal et al., 2024).

Table 1. The main impacts of game addiction

Impact Aspects	Main Description	Examples from Articles	Source
Academic	Decreased motivation to study, skipping school, low achievement.	Lack of concentration; ignores tasks for games.	(Anand, 2007; Andriani & Basri, 2022; Brunborg et al., 2014; Mahmud et al., 2023; Mila Agustin et al., 2024)
Economy/Other	High loyalty triggers in-app purchases; limited benefits such as language/technology skills if moderate.	Withdrawal of IDR 100,000-500,000/month; Flow Experience Increases Loyalty.	(Airlangga & Alfansi, 2025; Beltagui et al., 2019; Goltermann, 2020; Hsiao & Chen, 2016; Lee, 2025)
Mental/ Psychological	Aggressiveness, anxiety, depression, lack of self-control, unstable emotions when losing/failing to play.	Low self-control increases addiction; Stress when disconnected from the internet.	(Kakul & Javed, 2023; Lin et al., 2023; Mila Agustin et al., 2024; Torres-Rodríguez et al., 2018; Wartberg et al., 2019)
Social	Isolation, family/friend conflicts, lack of real interaction, prioritizing games over family.	High peer communication increases addiction; lack of social participation.	(Benjet et al., 2023; Király et al., 2014; Mila Agustin et al., 2024; Rosendo-Rios et al., 2022; Yue et al., 2026)
Physical	Sleep disorders, back/neck pain, obesity, fatigue, irregular diet.	Play 4-6 hours/day; injuries due to poor posture.	(Adithya & Hastuti, 2025; Cankurtaran et al., 2022; Kumar et al., 2023; Lam, 2014; Mila Agustin et al., 2024; Müller et al., 2019)

The main impact of gaming addiction occurs globally in several aspects. Based on the research articles analyzed, the dominant negative impacts are physical, mental, social, and academic, although gaming can be beneficial when controlled.

Many research reveal that online gaming has become the most prominent pastime in the everyday lives of Gen Z in Indonesia. Research by Adithya and Hastuti (2025) found that many teenagers prefer to play competitive games such as Mobile Legends and platforms such as Roblox for 4–6 hours a day. Then Ismail's (2024) research on gaming addiction is characterized by: excessive attention, loss of control, withdrawal symptoms, and adverse effects on academic and social functioning. Research in Jakarta conducted by Adithya and Hastuti (2025) shows that there is a considerable negative relationship between Roblox addiction tendencies and mental well-being. The higher the rate of addiction, the worse the mental well-being, with the scale of conflict (intrapsychic and interpersonal) being the main cause of the decline in well-being. Low self-control and high intensity of communication among peer groups who are also addicted significantly predict high gaming addiction.

These findings suggest, conceptually, that the issue of online gaming addiction is not a technical or recreational issue, but a more fundamental issue of self-regulation, identity, relationships, and the meaning of life – all intricately connected to the domain of Christian faith formation and spirituality.

Challenges and Opportunities of Christian Education in the Digital Age for Gen Z

A study on Christian Religious Education and Generation Z in Indonesia illustrates that Gen Z is very digitally capable. Generation Z has a visual-interactive learning style, is more independent, but tends to be individualistic (Djami Bale & Hattu, 2023; Hendrawan et al., 2023; Yanti, 2022). In the field of education, digital technology can increase learning engagement, but it can also reduce the depth of face-to-face relationships, and reflection habits. Digital technology also has an impact on traditional spiritual disciplines if not balanced with adequate guidance (Gulo, 2025).

Yanti' (2022) research on Generation Z and the learning challenges of Christian Religious Education confirms that Christian Religious Education must develop a curriculum that is relevant to the digital context. Then, Christian Education also needs to improve

teachers' technological competence. Specifically in learning activities, community-based learning and authentic assessments that evaluate the character and practice of faith, not just cognition, need to be strengthened.

Similarly, the study of Gulo (2025) on the role of Gen Z in Christian Religious Education. The study of Gulo (2025) emphasizes that digital technology is changing the way this generation learns and interacts, presenting challenges such as religious disinformation and secularism, as well as opportunities for creative content development and cross-generational collaboration.

Digital distractions are a major challenge for Christian religious education. Digital media has an impact on a reduced focus on spiritual reflection. In the digital age, Gen Z prefers short content (short videos on YouTube, Instagram, and Tiktok) to long sermons, which risks giving rise to a very superficial understanding of Christian doctrine (Eskandar, 2024; Martin, 2025). Online disinformation, such as misinterpretations of the Bible on TikTok, can accelerate secularism and individualism, leading to a decline in Gen Z engaging in church worship practices due to the pandemic and virtual platforms (Safitri, 2025). In addition, in the context of educational practices, teachers' lack of technological competence leads to lagging; many Christian educators still rely on traditional face-to-face methods, failing to attract Gen Z who are self-taught through YouTube (Yanti, 2022).

Despite the challenges, the digital era also provides opportunities. The digital age opens up great opportunities, such as integrating technologies such as VR to simulate Paul's journey, which increases engagement among Gen Z students by 30-50%. Then Christian Religious Education can also leverage AI to personalize learning. For example, the application of adaptive daily prayer and strengthening independent spiritual discipline (Pasuang & Saogo, 2023). Gulo (2025) emphasizes Gen Z's potential as agents of change, with strategies such as digital literacy workshops and online community projects to implement ethical Christian values on social media. Research by Widjaja et al. (2025), Silaen (2025), as well as the research of Hasibuan and Marpaung (2025) support an interdisciplinary approach that combines contextual theology with digital learning or edutech to advance the mission of the virtual church.

Given these challenges and opportunities, the church needs a curriculum and teacher

adaptation strategy. Then the church must reformulate its digital mission. In the digital age, churches need to be more adaptive by developing interactive worship, live streaming, virtual mentoring, and collaboration with Gen Z Christian influencers (Darmawan et al., 2024). Then, the family plays a supervisory role, with weekly discussions on digital content, strengthening the spiritual discipline of the household (Mary et al., 2026; Putri et al., 2025). Christianity in the digital age for Gen Z can be transformational if challenges are overcome through holistic innovation.

Youth Discipleship and Digital Faith Formation

Several studies highlight the need for contextual adolescent discipleship in the digital age. Sasono and Boiliu's (2025) article on Christian youth discipleship in the digital age recommends a discipleship model that integrates formal Christian Religious Education with spiritual digital literacy, moral character building, and a broader mission perspective. Other research on using digital technology for evangelism and Gen Z discipleship shows that social media, streaming platforms, digital storytelling, and the involvement of Christian influencers can significantly increase ministry effectiveness, including by serving as a flexible discipleship space.

A study on digital discipleship among GKII youth during and after the pandemic was conducted by Darmawan et al. (2024) found that social media and platforms such as WhatsApp and Zoom are the main means of digital discipleship. Themes that are often raised in mentoring include discipleship, soteriology, spiritual life, motivation, and youth ministry in the digital age. The discipleship pattern (NM-SM: Nurtured, Matured, Served, Mission) offers a gradual, holistic framework for faith formation that can also be adapted to contexts of gaming addiction.

Gamification and Digital Platforms for Faith Building

Globally, innovative platforms like The G.O.O.D. Catechesis, Lightgliders, and Catechumen.io merge gamification with catechesis and faith formation, delivering video curricula, interactive games, and structured spiritual activities optimized for digital natives (Fay, 2026; Lesigues, 2024; Tarihoran et al., 2024). These tools embed biblical narratives,

guided prayer, reflective journals, and online communities within a gamification framework—featuring weekly points, badges, missions, and challenges—that increase engagement by 40-60% compared to traditional methods, per the pilot study. However, while driving retention among youth (e.g., Lightglider's 75% completion rate in U.S. parishes), they are at shallow risk without in-depth doctrinal oversight, prompting calls for a hybrid model that integrates offline guidance (Fay, 2026). In Indonesia, similar adaptations through apps such as "Digital Catechesis" address local contexts, blending cultural motifs with Reformed theology to counter secular digital disruption (Sa'dan, 2024).

These practices show that the element of play need not always be the enemy of faith formation; rather, it can be redeemed and directed to support deeper spiritual involvement. The discourse on gamification in an ecclesiastical context raises the idea of using digital badges for faith formation, game-based missions, and game kits that teach the values of God's Kingdom (Moss, 2025). Research in Batam conducted by Pasuang and Saogo (2023) also reported the success of churches that implemented gamified Bible learning platforms, in which participants earned badges and points for spiritual tasks such as memorizing verses, daily prayers, and participation in online fellowship.

Synthesis: Key Themes of Christian Education Strategy

From the thematic analysis, several main strategy clusters emerged as an answer to the formulation of this research problem. First, Theological reorientation towards gaming culture. The church and Christian educational institutions need to view gaming addiction as a spiritual and formative problem, not merely a moralistic or technical one, with an emphasis on the formation of will, love, and imagination directed to Christ. Second, strengthening spiritual digital literacy and self-regulation. Christian education needs to teach time management skills, recognize addiction patterns, and assess digital content from a faith perspective, not just issue prohibitions. Third, the use of gamification and redeemed digital platforms. Elements of play can be used to package spiritual practices (prayer, Bible reading, ministry) into an interactive, meaningful, and relevant experience for Gen Z. Fourth, Hybrid community development (online–offline). Faith communities need to be present and active both in physical and digital spaces, with a meeting rhythm that combines face-to-face fellowship and

online mentoring (Pasuang & Saogo, 2023). Fifth, Tricenter collaboration: family–church–school. Christian education policies and practices towards online gaming must be integrated, involving parents, Christian Education teachers, and church leaders in formulating regulations and patterns of mutual mentoring. The following table 2 summarizes the theme of the study results and their strategic implications.

Table 2. Study findings themes and their strategic implications

Main Theme	Key Findings	Implications for Christian Education Strategies
Profile of Indonesia's Gen Z game addiction	High duration of play impacts psychological well-being, influenced by self-control & peer group (Faizal et al., 2024).	Strategies should touch on psychological and spiritual aspects: self-regulation, identity, relationships, and the meaning of life, not just technical prohibitions.
Challenges & opportunities of Christian Religious Education in the digital age	Gen Z digital native, visual-interactive, individualistic learning style; Technology Opportunities as well as Risks (Yanti, 2022).	Christian education must undergo pedagogical and curricular transformation, integrating technology while maintaining the depth of relationships and spirituality.
Digital discipleship & hybrid community	Social media and effective digital platforms for discipleship, NM-SM patterns, discipleship themes relevant to the digital context (Christie, 2025).	Churches and schools need a structured, sustainable hybrid model of discipleship that includes a rhythm of online–offline meetings.
Gamification & digital faith platform	Gamified catechesis increases faith engagement and access to spiritual formation through Spiritual games and challenges (Pasuang & Saogo, 2023).	Games and gamification can be redeemed as means of learning faith, rather than simply being positioned as enemies of spiritual formation.
The role of family–church–school	Regulation and assistance are effective when there is synergy of all parties; Parents often lack spiritual digital literacy (Ismail, 2024).	There is a need for a Christian education intervention design that trains parents, church leaders, and Christian Religious Education teachers in Gen Z's digital mentoring.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that online game addiction among Indonesian Gen Z is a real phenomenon, with significant prevalence and a clear negative impact on psychological well-being and social functioning. Then research on Christian religious education and

adolescent discipleship in the digital age confirms that the characteristics of Gen Z as digital natives pose an urgent need to adapt curricula, pedagogies, and discipleship patterns into digitally relevant forms without sacrificing the depth of faith formation. Various global and local experiments with gamification and Christian digital platforms show that elements of games can be used positively for faith formation, provided they are designed with a sound theological and pedagogical framework (Fay, 2026).

The findings of this study lead to the need for a Christian education strategy that does not stop at efforts to reduce playing hours or ban games, but moves towards the formation of a critical, creative, and incarnate digital faith: challenging digital idolatry, but at the same time being present within the digital space to shape the imagination and spiritual habits of Gen Z.

From "Game Bans" to "Digital Faith Formations"

Most traditional Christian church and school approaches to online gaming tend to focus on strict bans or restrictions. Such approaches often do not explain the spiritual dimension and the formation behind it. In fact, research conducted by Faizal et al. (2024) shows that factors such as self-control, then healthy social support, and deep meaning in life have a very strong relationship with addiction levels and psychological well-being.

This signals the need for a shift from a "behavior control" paradigm to a "faith-building" approach: helping Gen Z develop a Christ-rooted identity that allows them to make sound decisions about the game, rather than simply obeying external rules. Within the framework of social constructivism, the formation of meaning and value of faith occurs through interactions within communities, both offline and online (Darmawan et al., 2024; Yanti, 2022). Therefore, Christian education strategies should include the formation of a strong and profound theological narrative about the body, time, pleasure, and technology as God's gifts that need to be managed, not deified. This is expected to result in a deeper Christian life.

Digitally Transformed Christian Education

Studies on Christian Religious Education in the digital age confirm that Gen Z responds more to visual, interactive, and collaborative learning, compared to the one-way

lecture model (Pujiono, 2021). This implies that Christian Religious Education is not enough to simply add "PowerPoint" or "video" as a complement, but it needs to redesign learning strategies: online discussions, digital collaborative projects, multimedia storytelling, and reflective activities involving platforms that are already familiar to Gen Z (Gulo, 2025).

In the context of gaming addiction, a Christian Education class can be a space to critically analyze addictive mechanisms in games (reward schedules, loot boxes, social pressure). Then, relate the issue to the biblical theme of freedom, slavery, and idolatry. Christian Religious Education classes can also invite students to develop concrete "digital rules of life" that can be practiced together.

Hybrid Discipleship and Continuing Mentoring

Research on digital discipleship during the pandemic showed that Christian youth communities can grow through hybrid meeting patterns: regular face-to-face combined with small online groups, mentoring via WhatsApp/Zoom, and regularly posted devotional content. The NM-SM (Nurtured, Matured, Served, Mission) pattern offers a framework of faith growth stages that can be adapted to the context of struggle with games (Darmawan et al., 2024; Sasono & Boiliu, 2025).

In the context of gaming addiction, hybrid discipleship allows for more intense and real-time mentoring, for example, when teens struggle at night when the temptation to play is strongest. Hybrid discipleship also allows for group chats to rebuke one another with love, pray, and remind one another of Together's commitments. In addition, hybrid discipleship allows for measurable, digitally reported "spiritual mission" assignments (e.g., days off games, replacing an hour of games with prayer/PA, small home ministry).

Redeeming Games: Gamification and Digital Faith Platforms

International studies of gamified catechesis and platforms such as Lightgliders and G.O.O.D Catechesis show that elements of the game—missions, points, badges, levels, leaderboards—can be used to increase engagement in spiritual activities without reducing the depth of meaning, as long as the theological design is strong (Calloway, 2024; Lesigues, 2024). In the Indonesian context, a study of churches in Batam with gamified Bible study

platforms showed an increase in youth attendance and participation in online spiritual activities (Pasuang & Saogo, 2023).

For Gen Z who are already accustomed to the reward–achievement dynamics in games, leveraging gamification can bridge the transition from "the joy of gaming" to the "joy of following Christ". Then Gen Z also uses gamification to provide concrete experiences that spiritual discipline can also be fun and challenging. In addition, Gen Z can also use gamification using familiar symbolic language (badges, levels, quests) to map out the journey of faith.

Nevertheless, gamification needs to be criticized so as not to fall into the danger of new legalism (measuring faith only by points and badges) or superficiality (worship is judged only by "fun" games). That is why gamification should be placed under a holistic discipleship framework, not the end goal.

Family, Church, and School Collaboration

Research by Saddhono et al. (2020) shows that gaming addiction is often rooted in a lack of structure and time constraints at home, as well as the absence of parental control and companionship. On the other hand, Christian churches and schools often bear the burden of great hope to "improve" the spiritual condition of adolescents, while families are not adequately equipped to participate actively.

Therefore, Christian education strategies in the context of gaming addiction need to involve: First, Spiritual digital literacy training for parents: not just knowing how to limit screens, but understanding how to talk openly about faith, technology, and fun with children; Second, Curriculum synergy between schools and churches: the theme of digital struggle and games does not only appear in KKR or retreats, but is integrated in Christian Religious Education, youth worship, and cell groups; Third, the creation of a mutually agreed "family digital agreement", supported by churches and schools, so that adolescents do not feel alone against the temptation of games.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that online game addiction among Indonesian Gen Z is a complex phenomenon that touches on psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. High play duration, weak self-control, and the influence of peer groups who are also addicted have been shown to correlate with decreased psychological well-being and intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts. This fact places gaming addiction not just as a behavioral problem, but as a serious faith formation issue for the younger generation.

On the other hand, Gen Z's identity as a digital-native generation creates challenges and opportunities for Christian Religious Education and discipleship. Digital technology can enrich faith learning through visual, interactive, and collaborative media, as long as it is balanced with strengthened social and spiritual aspects, a relevant curriculum, and technology-proficient teachers. The practice of digital discipleship and hybrid communities shows that social media and digital platforms can be effective spaces for spiritual mentoring and continuous faith learning.

By integrating findings from the literature on psychology, Christian education, and gamified faith formation innovations, this article formulates several clusters of Christian education strategies for Gen Z Indonesia in the context of online game addiction: (1) theological reorientation to game culture as an issue of worship and heart formation; (2) strengthening spiritual digital literacy and self-regulation; (3) the use of gamification and digital platforms that are redeemed for spiritual discipline; (4) the development of a structured hybrid (online–offline) faith community; and (5) intensive collaboration between families, churches, and schools.

Forming digital faith for Indonesian Gen Z requires a critical and creative approach: recognizing and overcoming the dangers of online gaming addiction while, at the same time, redeeming the logic of games and the digital space as a field of learning and discipleship in light of the Gospel. Thus, Christian education is called not only to "keep Gen Z away" from gaming, but to help them learn to live as faithful disciples of Christ in an increasingly digitized world.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI USE

The authors declare that AI-assisted writing tools were used in preparing this manuscript, namely QuillBot for paraphrasing and Grammarly for grammar checking and language refinement. These tools were used only to improve the clarity and readability of text written by the authors. They were not used to generate research ideas, search for or select the included studies, analyse data, interpret findings, or formulate conclusions. All references were verified manually against their original sources, and all 23 included articles were read in full by the authors. The authors reviewed and edited all AI-assisted output and take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the published article. No AI tool is listed as an author.

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