

Reconstructing of Christian Adolescent Identity through Christian Faith Education amid the Validation Crisis in the Digital Ecosystem

Autor:

Jacob Messakh^{1*}
Sostenis Nggebu²

Afiliation

Sekolah Tinggi
Teologi Bethel The
Way, Indonesia¹
Sekolah Tinggi
Sekolah Tinggi
Teologi Saint Paul
Bandung, Indonesia²

***Email:**

sostenis.nggebu@gmail.com

Dates:

Submitted: 08/07/2026
Revised: 19/08/2026
Accepted: 22/09/2026

DOI :

<https://doi.org/10.5354/7/5a1tge32>

Licensee: REAL
DIDACHE. This work is
licensed under a Creative
Commons Attribution-
Share Alike 4.0
International License



Abstract

The digital era brings real disruption in the form of identity crises, anxiety, and moral degradation among Christian adolescents due to dependence on digital devices and the pursuit of external validation on social media. This study aims to formulate a strategy for reconstructing faith formation, grounded in biblical truth, in order to restore the identity of Christian adolescents amid the complexity of digital spaces. Using a literature review method with a theological-practical analysis approach, this study produces three main pillars of character reconstruction: the integration of classical spiritual disciplines (prayer, meditation on Scripture, and solitude) as an antidote to digital noise; digital ethics grounded in the Fruit of the Spirit, particularly self-control; and the church and family as a redemptive community that provides a safe space. These three pillars are not merely practical recommendations but the result of a conceptual synthesis that integrates the spiritual, ethical, and communal dimensions of Christian adolescent identity reconstruction. In conclusion, the validation crisis experienced by Christian adolescents can be addressed, and their identity restored, through integrative Christian Faith Education, so that they are no longer victims of the flow of information but become agents of change who live with integrity in digital spaces.

Keywords: Christian adolescent character; Christian faith education; digital ethics; Imago Dei; spiritual disciplines

Abstrak

Era digital membawa disrupsi nyata berupa krisis identitas, kecemasan, dan degradasi moral pada remaja Kristen akibat ketergantungan gawai dan pencarian validasi eksternal di media sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk merumuskan strategi rekonstruksi pembinaan iman yang berlandaskan kebenaran Alkitab guna memulihkan identitas remaja Kristen di tengah kompleksitas ruang digital. Melalui metode kajian literatur dengan pendekatan analisis teologis-praktis, penelitian ini menghasilkan tiga pilar utama rekonstruksi karakter, yaitu integrasi disiplin spiritual klasik (doa, meditasi Firman, dan solitude) sebagai penawar kebisingan digital, etika digital yang berakar pada buah Roh (khususnya penguasaan diri), serta gereja dan keluarga sebagai komunitas penebusan (redemptive community) yang menyediakan ruang aman. Ketiga pilar tersebut bukan sekadar rekomendasi praktis, tetapi merupakan hasil sintesis konseptual penelitian yang mengintegrasikan dimensi spiritual, etis, dan komunitarian dalam rekonstruksi identitas remaja Kristen. Kesimpulannya, krisis validasi yang dialami remaja Kristen dapat diatasi dan identitas mereka dapat dipulihkan melalui Pendidikan Iman Kristen yang integratif, sehingga mereka tidak lagi menjadi korban arus informasi, melainkan bertransformasi menjadi agen perubahan yang berintegritas di ruang digital.

Kata Kunci: disiplin spiritual; etika digital; Imago Dei; karakter remaja Kristen; pendidikan iman Kristen

INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, Christian adolescents are called to build a strong foundation of identity by becoming firmly rooted in the unchanging truth of God. As the next generation of the Church, they can use technology wisely and responsibly as a positive means of nurturing their faith and strengthening healthy communities in digital spaces. In this study, Christian Faith Education refers to the intentional formation of faith and character that takes place in the family, the church, and the school, including Christian Religious Education as its school-based form. Walean et al. emphasize that such education serves as a primary pillar that equips adolescents to face the changes of the digital era courageously and without fear. Through a strong foundation of faith, Christian adolescents are empowered to think critically, make appropriate decisions without compromising God's truth, and remain steadfast amid the currents of digital spaces so that they are not easily swayed but instead become a positive influence within them (Walean et al., 2024). By placing the source of their self-confidence in God's love rather than in the number of likes or followers they receive, adolescents can maintain their mental well-being and demonstrate an authentic Christian identity that positively impacts others.

However, the rapid development of technology has triggered various crises among adolescents, ranging from mental and psychological health problems and moral decline to risky sexual behavior and criminal acts. This condition is exacerbated by limited digital literacy, as many adolescents have insufficient understanding of how technology operates and are unaware of the real dangers associated with its misuse, making them highly vulnerable to becoming trapped in various negative behaviors in digital spaces. Thacker states that excessive exposure to idealistically curated content in digital spaces often triggers unhealthy social comparisons, which, in turn, can lead to anxiety, depression, and identity crises (Thacker, 2022). Furthermore, Smith and Sutton emphasize that dependence on external validation through the number of likes or followers has eroded the foundation of adolescents' self-confidence, replacing it with fragile existential standards (Smith & Sutton, 2021a). Consequently, adolescents experience a disorientation of identity because their standards of self-worth are no longer rooted in the truth of God but rather in fluctuating external validation in digital spaces. This condition contributes to a profound mental health crisis and distances

them from a comprehensive understanding of their Christian identity.

The theme of adolescents' existence in the digital era has received considerable attention from various scholarly perspectives. For instance, Koehuan and Priyatna state that in the digital era, adolescents often experience anxiety as an identity crisis permeates their lives (Koehuan & Priyatna, 2024). Tandana et al., (2022) discuss Christian Religious Education for adolescents, focusing on the formation of their behavior. Meanwhile, Yanti and Baou have examined how the use of digital devices can contribute to the development of adolescents' character (Yanti & Baou, 2024). Similarly, Waleleng et al. emphasize that parents play a highly important role in shaping adolescents' character amid the digital era (Waleleng et al., 2023). These studies, however, tend to address particular aspects of the problem separately and have not yet integrated them within a framework for Christian identity reconstruction.

The literature discussed above indicates that studies addressing the reconstruction of adolescent identity in the digital era remain limited. Prasetya and Joseph argue that Christian adolescents must be ministered to so that they can develop Christian character characterized by integrity in digital spaces (Prasetya & Joseph, 2023). Yet a gap persists between theology, which tends to be abstract and normative, and the praxis of Christian Faith Education, which is often overly technical and administrative, particularly in responding to digital disruption. This study therefore views technological disruption not merely as a behavioral threat but also as an existential challenge that requires the strengthening of solid spiritual and moral foundations, and it positions Christian Faith Education as an instrument for addressing the identity crisis among adolescents, which is frequently triggered by the pursuit of external validation within the digital ecosystem.

The novelty of this study lies in developing a framework for Christian identity reconstruction that connects theological foundations, faith formation, and digital praxis. By integrating Christian theology with a comprehensive approach to faith education that brings together theological foundations, spiritual formation, and adolescents' psychological well-being, this study proposes an applicable framework for addressing adolescents' existential struggles while fostering responsible digital ethics. The framework is both preventive and curative, integrating the roles of family, church, and faith formation in shaping adolescents who can adapt to the digital era while maintaining Christian integrity.

The significance of this study lies in providing theological-practical guidance for churches and parents in accompanying adolescents, so that social media is no longer viewed merely as a threat but as a ministry field that can be managed wisely. Adolescents whose faith has been nurtured can become a means of support for their peers in their daily interactions. This effort seeks to transform social media from merely a space for passive content consumption into a strategic mission field for Christian adolescents. This study not only offers protective strategies against the negative impacts of technology but also repositions Christian adolescents from victims or passive consumers into agents of change in digital spaces. Smith and Sutton explain that by strengthening Christian identity as the primary foundation, adolescents no longer become victims of the flow of information but rather agents of change who bring the values of the Kingdom of God into digital spaces (Smith & Sutton, 2021a). This study is therefore important for equipping adolescents with spiritual resilience so that their presence on social media reflects moral integrity, enabling them to bear witness through their lives to others within a digital society. The formulation of faith-based strategies integrating spiritual disciplines is expected to form adolescents who are not only mentally healthy but also morally steadfast amid the complexities of the digital era.

Accordingly, this study aims to formulate a strategy for reconstructing faith formation among Christian adolescents in the digital era. The strategy is grounded in biblical truth and focuses on strengthening adolescents' understanding of themselves and their engagement with the digital world.

This study articulates its primary conceptual contribution through the formulation of three pillars for the reconstruction of character and identity: the integration of classical spiritual disciplines, digital ethics grounded in the Fruit of the Spirit, and the church and family as a redemptive community. The integration of these three pillars forms a distinctive theoretical framework for addressing the dynamics of Christian adolescent character formation in the digital era.

METHOD

This study employs a theological literature review aimed at exploring information and data in depth to identify themes, structures, and patterns within the documents examined

(Harianto GP, 2025, pp. 295–301). Data were obtained from Google Scholar, the Mendeley reference management application, and relevant scholarly journals. The selected sources were primarily publications from the past seven years, while older sources were included when necessary. The study uses a theological-practical literature analysis that integrates biblical texts, particularly the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23, contemporary theological literature, and research on adolescent development in the digital era. The analysis began by identifying adolescents’ existential challenges, including identity disorientation and anxiety related to social media use, through relevant scholarly articles and pastoral theology literature. It then critically evaluated current Christian Faith Education models and developed a theological synthesis to reformulate adolescent self-identity based on the truth of God and the biblical concept of *Imago Dei*.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The conceptual framework of the findings is summarized in Table 1, which synthesizes the key dimensions, concepts, and sources of the discussion. Two terms used in the table and throughout the discussion require clarification. External validation refers to the approval that adolescents seek from others through digital metrics such as likes, comments, and followers. Meaning hunger refers to a condition in which adolescents enjoy extensive connectivity yet experience an inner emptiness of purpose; the term echoes Frankl’s notion of the existential vacuum, that is, the experience of lacking meaning in life (Frankl, 2006).

This conceptual framework suggests that digital disruption shifts adolescents’ self-worth toward digital metrics and gives rise to meaning hunger. In response, Christian Faith Education needs to undertake character reconstruction grounded in a theology of identity (*Imago Dei* and *in Christo*), which serves as the primary filter against the falsehoods of digital spaces. Pedagogically, this reconstruction positions adolescents as active subjects and emphasizes authentic role modeling (social learning). It is implemented through three pillars: the integration of classical spiritual disciplines, digital ethics grounded in the Fruit of the Spirit, and the church and family as a redemptive community. Taken together, these dimensions aim to transform adolescents from fragile digital consumers or victims of the flow of information into agents of change who possess strong spiritual resilience in digital spaces.

Telaumbanua et al. likewise note that Christian Religious Education, as the school-based form of Christian Faith Education, guides Generation Alpha adolescents to internalize ethical principles and develop strong digital character, enabling them to use digital media responsibly while continuing to reflect Christian values (Telaumbanua et al., 2026).

Table 1. Summary of the Conceptual Framework of Adolescent Digital Character

Dimension	Core Issue / Concept	Key Reference	Key Output
Root Cause	Adolescents pursue likes and followers (self-curation), triggering anxiety and a sense of emptiness (meaning hunger).	Thacker, Smith, Stanford, Frankl	Adolescents' self-worth is shifting from God to digital metrics.
Theological Foundation	Restoring the adolescent's identity as a noble creation (<i>Imago Dei</i>) redeemed in Christ (<i>in Christo</i>).	Dyer, Thacker, Kim, Groeschel	Identity in Christ serves as the primary filter for sifting through the falsehoods of the digital world.
Pedagogical Approach	Positioning adolescents as active subjects (Constructivism) who learn through real-life examples (Social Learning/Modeling).	Dyer, Thacker, Smith, Kim	Parenting approaches must shift from mere prohibition to critical dialogue and leading by example.
Intervention Praxis	Implementing three pillars: the integration of classical spiritual disciplines, digital ethics grounded in the Fruit of the Spirit, and the church and family as a redemptive community.	Kim, Groeschel, Smith	The synergy of spiritual disciplines and a healthy environment fosters good digital habits.
Target Outcomes	Transforming the adolescent's role from a passive, vulnerable internet user into an active participant who makes a positive impact.	Dyer, Thacker	Adolescents transform from victims of the digital tide into spiritually resilient agents of change.

Anatomy of the Validation Crisis: How the Digital Ecosystem Disrupts Adolescent Character

The contemporary digital ecosystem is no longer merely a passive communication tool but has become an existential space in which adolescents construct their identities. A key characteristic of social media is the provision of instant metrics, such as the number of likes, comments, and followers, which function as a form of immediate social reward. Because the

formation of identity is a central developmental task of adolescence (Erikson, 1968), adolescents can easily come to treat these metrics as indicators of their self-worth. The phenomenon of self-curation leads adolescents to present an idealistically edited version of their lives in order to gain approval and external validation from online communities (Thacker, 2022). In this way, social media tends to shift the standard of adolescent self-worth from internal value to digital metrics.

This shift triggers what can be described as a validation crisis, in which the foundation of self-confidence is no longer internal or theocentric (centered on God) but instead fluctuates according to digital algorithms (Smith & Sutton, 2021a). When expectations of online recognition are not met, adolescents become vulnerable to chronic anxiety, depression, and identity disorientation. Christian character, which should be rooted in moral steadfastness and the truth of God, becomes fragile because it is continually driven by opinions in digital spaces (Groeschel, 2021, pp. 55–59). Ultimately, digital culture gives rise to meaning hunger—a condition in which adolescents have extensive connectivity in quantitative terms but experience existential emptiness in qualitative terms. It can therefore be argued that dependence on external validation undermines adolescents’ psychological stability and distances them from a deeper sense of meaning in life.

This shift triggers what is referred to as a *validation crisis*, in which the foundation of self-confidence is no longer internal or theocentric (centered on God) but instead fluctuates according to digital algorithms. When expectations of virtual recognition are not met, adolescents become vulnerable to chronic anxiety, depression, and identity disorientation. Christian character, which should be rooted in moral steadfastness and the truth of God, becomes fragile because it is continually driven by opinions in the virtual world. Ultimately, digital culture can create a hunger for meaning, in which adolescents experience extensive connectivity while still facing existential emptiness. Dependence on external validation can undermine psychological stability and distance adolescents from a deeper sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Identity Theology: Reconsidering “Identity in Christ” in the Face of Digital Spaces

To reconstruct this disrupted identity, Christian Faith Education must be firmly rooted

in a sound theology of identity. The primary foundation of Christian character formation is the recognition that human beings were created in the image and likeness of God (*Imago Dei*). The structure of Genesis 1:26–27 displays a linguistic shift that carries theological significance. In verse 26, the plural cohortative verb form *na ‘āšeh* (“let us make”) expresses divine deliberation and is connected with the prepositional phrases *bəṣalmēnū* (“in our image”) and *kidmūtēnū* (“according to our likeness”), which describe the pattern for the creation of human beings. Verse 27 then shifts to the singular verb form *wayyibrā’* (“so God created”), which underscores the unity of God’s creative act in realizing His will. The poetic parallelism of verse 27 (“male and female He created them”) further indicates that both male and female bear the *Imago Dei*, so that its dignity belongs equally to every human being. Read in this way, *Imago Dei* is not merely an attribute of function or rationality but also a relational status and a representative mandate that establishes human beings as God’s representatives on earth, reflecting His character and sovereignty.

Dyer asserts that *Imago Dei* constitutes the true identity of redeemed believers who have been sealed “in Christ,” namely *in Christo* (Dyer, 2022, pp. 102–105). In this regard, the restoration of adolescent character must begin by restoring their awareness of their inherent dignity as creatures who reflect the image of God. Christian adolescents in the digital era need to recognize this identity as bearers of God’s image when they engage with social media.

In the context of contemporary digital theology, the digital self often becomes an antithesis to *Imago Dei* because it encourages human beings to construct an artificial image for the sake of superficial gratification (Thacker, 2020, pp. 89–93). Christian theology must therefore rearticulate that an adolescent’s worth is determined not by fluctuating evaluations on social media but by the permanent grace of God. This identity in Christ can function as a “primary filter” or hermeneutical lens for adolescents as they navigate and evaluate distorted information in digital spaces. When adolescents understand that they have been fully accepted by God, their excessive need for external validation on social media can be reduced (Kim & Kwon, 2025, pp. 89–92). This suggests that anchoring identity in Jesus Christ provides an essential theological filter for resisting false images in digital spaces. Churches that place Christ at the center of their lives can pass on a strong heritage of faith to the next generation (Nggebu et al., 2026, p. 164), so that adolescents, as the next generation of believers, can

contribute to meaningful social and cultural transformation in an increasingly complex global world.

The purpose is to enable Christian adolescents to develop a strong personality and a character that reflects Christ. This theology of identity also addresses the primary problem faced by Christian adolescents in today's digital ecosystem, namely identity disruption that contributes to declining mental health. Self-curation on social media leads adolescents to pursue external validation continually, often in ways that are inconsistent with their spiritual values. Consequently, their focus shifts from character formation rooted in the truth of God toward dependence on fluctuating worldly standards, which can trigger chronic anxiety and dissatisfaction with oneself (Thacker, 2022). The problem faced by Christian adolescents today is thus not merely technological adaptation but disruption in the formation of spiritual identity, reflected in the paradox of the digital era: broad access to information accompanied by meaning hunger. In line with Kim and Kwon (2025, pp. 89–92), the central argument of this study is that the mental integrity and strong personality of Christian adolescents can be maintained when they firmly ground their identity in Jesus Christ as the primary filter for navigating digital spaces. In this way, adolescents can rediscover their identity in Jesus, who came into the world to save them (Nggebu, 2025, pp. 12–13).

Exegetical Foundation: Galatians 5 and Digital Ethics

Exegetically, Paul's exhortation in Galatians 5 addresses the struggle of the Galatian churches, which were caught between two spiritual extremes: legalism concerning the Law of Moses and the danger of antinomianism, understood as the misuse of Christian freedom as an opportunity to live in sin (Gal. 5:1, 13). Paul emphasizes that true freedom does not mean rejecting the law to satisfy the desires of the flesh (*sarx*), but living in freedom motivated by love and guided by the Spirit. This historical situation resonates with contemporary digital spaces, where unrestricted online freedom can be misunderstood as permission to act without self-control. Christian digital ethics, therefore, is not restrictive legalism concerning internet rules but a concrete expression of the freedom granted by Christ, in which desires of the flesh expressed in digital spaces are placed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up others.

More specifically, in Galatians 5:19–21, Paul lists the “works of the flesh,” including discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, and envy, which are sharply contrasted with the “Fruit of the Spirit” in verses 22–23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This textual contrast provides a strong theological basis for the argument that the Fruit of the Spirit constitutes an essential foundation for digital ethics. On social media, the works of the flesh find new forms of expression, ranging from anger in comment sections (cyberbullying) and envy of others’ validation to doomscrolling and distorted pursuits of fame. Without an understanding of this contrast, digital ethics can easily be reduced to moralistic appeals. By contrast, self-control and gentleness, produced by the Holy Spirit, form a spiritual antithesis to destructive digital habits. This framework can guide Christian adolescents to consciously prioritize the guidance of the Holy Spirit in every online interaction. As a result, the works of the flesh no longer shape their digital expression, which instead becomes a means of reflecting the character of Christ in digital spaces. Soemarsono et al. state that Christian ethics is closely related to the Fruit of the Spirit (Soemarsono et al., 2026). Christian adolescents are likewise called to put the Fruit of the Spirit into practice in their use of social media. In this way, they can position themselves as bearers of the image of God who have been redeemed in Jesus Christ.

Character Reconstruction through Integrative Christian Faith Education Practices

Building on this theological and exegetical foundation, Christian Faith Education needs an integrative strategy that attends to adolescents’ faith formation and psychological well-being together. Stanford shows that clinical and biblical perspectives need not be set against each other in caring for people who struggle with their mental health (Stanford, 2017, pp. 120–123). Adolescent character reconstruction cannot be achieved merely by prohibiting technology use or adopting an anti-digital stance. Rather, it requires transforming how technology is perceived, from a space of passive consumption into a mission field. Thus, the reconstruction of Christian adolescent character involves renewing their perspective on digital spaces, enabling them to view these spaces as opportunities to bear witness to their faith and to live as ambassadors of Christ who promote peace and Christian ethics grounded in the Fruit of the Spirit.

There are three pillars in this character reconstruction. *First, the Integration of Classical Spiritual Disciplines:* Christian Faith Education must integrate classical spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, meditation on Scripture, and solitude, as an antidote to digital noise (Kim & Kwon, 2025). Montang emphasizes the importance of Christian adolescents developing their character through deep reflection on Scripture in cultivating the maturity of their faith (Montang, 2025). Solitude, understood as being alone with God, trains adolescents to win the battle in their minds, to detach themselves temporarily from dependence on digital devices, and to develop healthy digital habits. Sumual and Rahayu (2025) emphasize that in the digital era, the development of reflective and relevant adolescent spirituality grounded in Christian values depends heavily on reconstructing the roles of the church and school. Both institutions must be able to transform themselves into faith-forming communities that are adaptive to the developments of the times. This pillar emphasizes that the Christian Faith Education curriculum needs to integrate classical spiritual disciplines in order to maintain adolescents' mental well-being amid the noise of the digital world. In particular, the practice of solitude with God serves as a crucial means of training adolescents to control and overcome their inner struggles while developing a much healthier digital lifestyle.

Second, Digital Ethics Grounded in the Fruit of the Spirit: Building on the exegesis of Galatians 5 above, the characteristics of the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23), including self-control, patience, and kindness, should be translated into practical digital ethics for adolescents. They need the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, who also strengthens the faith of the church community, including adolescents (cf. Winarjo, 2023). Self-control can be demonstrated through actions such as limiting screen time and avoiding comments that demean others, while kindness can be expressed by using digital spaces to share positive and encouraging content that strengthens others.

Third, the Church and Family as a Redemptive Community: The church community and the active role of parents as the closest transmitters of faith must provide a safe space for adolescents to address their existential struggles. The character and spirituality of Christian adolescents can be effectively shaped through a holistic approach that integrates biblical teachings with direct practice, although spiritual formation and the role of the church community have thus far received insufficient in-depth attention in theological literature

(Lahagu & Widjaja, 2024). To fulfill its redemptive role amid technological disruption, the church is required to engage in critical reflection so that it not only utilizes technology as a means of ministry but also remains aware of its appeal, which may potentially become a stumbling block to spirituality. The church thus needs to bridge spiritual growth and technological advancement so that it can continue to embody God's mission in a relevant manner within modern society (Simanjuntak, 2022). Within this redemptive community, adolescents are sincerely accepted as they are, without pressure always to appear perfect or pursue superficial recognition. The presence of a space characterized by authentic acceptance offers profound restoration to the soul, standing in stark contrast to the digital ecosystem, which is often filled with pretense.

Synthesis of the Three Pillars

Taken together, the three pillars indicate that Christian Faith Education must shift adolescents from passive consumers to agents of change through an integrative strategy. This character reconstruction rests on three main pillars: the integration of classical spiritual disciplines (prayer, meditation on Scripture, and solitude) as an antidote to digital anxiety; digital ethics grounded in the Fruit of the Spirit; and the church and family as a redemptive community that provides a safe space characterized by authentic acceptance. Through the synergy of these three pillars, Christian adolescents are not isolated from technology but rather have their perspectives redeemed so that they can develop healthy digital habits, experience restored mental well-being, and emerge as adolescents capable of making an impact in an era of disruption.

Through this approach, Christian adolescents are expected to no longer remain passive consumers in digital spaces but to become agents of change who think critically, make positive contributions, and maintain healthy and resilient mental well-being amid technological disruption. On the basis of the literature reviewed, this study argues that the integrated synergy among spiritual disciplines, Christian ethics on social media, and the support of a redemptive community can potentially contribute to shifting adolescents from vulnerable digital consumers prone to anxiety into agents of change in the digital public sphere. Therefore, this character reconstruction is not merely an effort to isolate adolescents

from technology but rather a liberation of their perspective, enabling them to utilize digital media as an authentic medium for ministry.

Dyer shows that technology carries both redeeming and corrupting potential for human life (Dyer, 2022). Building on this insight, this study proposes that Christian Faith Education can help reconstruct adolescent identity so that adolescents become agents of change who bring light and spiritual resilience into digital spaces rather than remaining fragile victims of the flow of information. Meanwhile, Samongilailai emphasizes that the church has a responsibility to shape adolescent character (Samongilailai, 2024). An appropriate approach to Christian Faith Education can help rebuild adolescents' identities amid the powerful flow of digital influence. As a result, adolescents need not remain vulnerable to the negative influence of the internet but can become spiritually resilient individuals who actively make a positive impact in digital spaces. From the perspective of this study, the synergy among spiritual disciplines, the ethics of the Fruit of the Spirit, and a healthy church-family ecosystem is a key factor in cultivating spiritually resilient Christian adolescents.

The same principle applies to emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), which increasingly shapes the digital ecosystem that adolescents inhabit. Theologically, AI should be positioned as a supportive tool for learning, governed by principles of faith rather than serving as a substitute for teachers in shaping morality and spirituality. For this technology to support genuine faith development in the digital era, both mentors and parents need teaching-ethics guidelines that are not only contextual but also grounded in theology (Lumbantobing & Siagian, 2026, p. 84). This study therefore holds that Christian educators need to continually improve their digital competencies so that they can guide the wise use of AI in the classroom. In addition, educational curricula must integrate concrete Christian ethical guidelines so that students do not become trapped in superficial dependence on technology. Ultimately, churches and educational institutions must continue to design meaningful face-to-face spaces for deep interpersonal encounters in order to preserve the authenticity of spiritual guidance that can never be replicated by machines.

Implications

The implications of this study can be presented as follows. *First*, the Christian Faith

Education curriculum must undergo a paradigm shift, from its previous theoretical-legalistic orientation toward an applicable practical theology through a dialogical learning model. This implies that educators should no longer merely prohibit the use of digital devices or demand passive moral obedience but instead develop adolescents' metacognitive abilities so that they can think critically when filtering the hidden curriculum embedded in social media algorithms. This approach requires an interactive discussion space in which adolescents' digital experiences are examined from theological and psychological perspectives in order to build a foundation of resilience from within themselves. Groeschel emphasizes that lasting change in behavior begins with the renewal of one's thinking (Groeschel, 2021). For curriculum design, this implies that the Fruit of the Spirit should no longer be taught merely as an abstract theological concept but contextualized as a digital ethics competency (digital citizenship). Thacker similarly argues that Christian Faith Education should adopt a dialogical learning model in which adolescents' digital experiences are examined theologically and psychologically to build internal resilience rather than relying merely on external prohibitions (Thacker, 2022). Wenas and Verana emphasize that religious education plays a highly important role in shaping the character of the younger generation, including adolescents, so that they maintain purity of life and consistently act in accordance with sound moral values (Wenas & Verana, 2025).

Second, this character reconstruction implies the importance of integrating classical spiritual disciplines with the practical application of ethical values in adolescents' daily digital activities. The Christian Faith Education curriculum needs to provide space for the practice of solitude as an antidote to the anxiety caused by the noise of the digital world, while simultaneously translating the Fruit of the Spirit into concrete behavioral guidelines for internet use. The Fruit of the Spirit works within believers as a sign of the quality of spiritual maturity (Nggebu, 2024) and is essential for the younger generation, including adolescents, to maintain their faith firmly in the digital era (Tamera et al., 2023). Through this integration, adolescents are trained to control their thoughts, limit their screen time, and actively produce positive content that builds others up.

Third, the success of adolescents' moral transformation in digital spaces depends heavily on the supporting ecosystem, in which the church and family serve as a redemptive

community that provides authentic role models (modeling). Given that adolescents internalize character through the imitation of concrete actions, the consistent presence of parents and mentors who practice healthy digital faith is crucial. The role of mentors helps adolescents think critically about the situations they encounter so that they can position themselves as believers with steadfast faith (Patandung, 2023). When the church and family provide a safe space characterized by acceptance without demands for performance, adolescents will have alternative role models who can help them overcome their identity crisis. Thacker similarly emphasizes that Christian formation should help adolescents move from being vulnerable digital consumers experiencing meaning hunger to becoming agents of change who embody the values of the Kingdom of God (Thacker, 2022).

One important dimension of this supporting ecosystem is the transmission of faith within the family. Sibarani emphasizes that Christian adolescents need the heritage of faith passed down by their parents as the figures closest to them in their lives (Sibarani, 2021). This spiritual heritage can serve as a strong moral anchor so that they are not easily swayed by the dynamic values of the outside world. This heritage of faith is not merely a tradition but rather the transmission of lived experiences with God that have been tested and passed down from generation to generation.

The narratives of Isaac and Jacob illustrate this transmission. Isaac grew up witnessing firsthand the faithful obedience of his father, Abraham, which he subsequently lived out until he himself was blessed by God. Isaac's faith was then passed on to Jacob. Although Jacob experienced personal struggles, the foundation of faith he inherited from Isaac guided him to reclaim God's promise and experience a personal encounter with Him at Bethel (Gen. 26:24; 28:13). Through the concrete example of their parents, adolescents can see that the God worshiped by their parents is a living and faithful God who is ready to guide their own future.

Makausi et al. state that the faith heritage passed down by parents to their children plays a highly crucial role in shaping and strengthening adolescents' self-esteem. Amid the transitional period of adolescence, which is often marked by identity crises and emotional pressures, spiritual values instilled from an early age function as both a moral anchor and a stable emotional foundation. Faith provides a sense of belonging and assurance that their existence is valuable and unconditionally loved by the Creator, rather than deriving their

worth from superficial validation within their social environment or on social media (Makausi et al., 2025). When adolescents understand that their identities are rooted in the noble values and love taught within their families, they can grow into more resilient individuals who are less easily shaken by failure and are able to view themselves positively and with confidence.

In practice, the findings of this study can be applied through three concrete steps. *First*, Christian parents and educators can establish healthy digital habits at home, such as periodic device-free times, to cultivate the discipline of solitude with God (Smith & Sutton, 2021b, p. 152). *Second*, local churches can organize pastoral counseling and guidance programs that focus on ethical digital literacy and mental health, providing adolescents with a space to express their anxieties without fear of being judged (Kim & Kwon, 2025). *Third*, Christian adolescents can be encouraged to shift their paradigm on social media from being consumers who pursue likes to becoming agents of change who bear witness through their lives, using their digital platforms as a mission field that reflects the character of the Fruit of the Spirit, such as self-control and kindness (Thacker, 2022). These steps show that the application of this study centers on collaboration among three parties: the family, the church, and the adolescents themselves. Its implementation is intended to establish a healthy digital lifestyle centered on the Christian faith. Within the home environment, parents and educators play a role in cultivating spiritual discipline by limiting the use of digital devices. Meanwhile, local churches are responsible for supporting adolescents' mental health and digital literacy through an open pastoral approach. Ultimately, all of this support is intended to enable Christian adolescents to transform their approach to social media, moving beyond merely seeking digital recognition (likes) and instead actively utilizing social media as a medium for ministry and living testimony that reflects the character of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the validation crisis and identity disruption experienced by Christian adolescents in the digital ecosystem are rooted in fragile existential foundations, particularly when judgments in digital spaces are valued more highly than the truth of God. The theological synthesis developed in this study indicates that adolescents' psychological integrity and moral resilience can be strengthened by reconstructing their identity through an

understanding of themselves as *Imago Dei* and their existence “in Jesus Christ.” Integrative Christian Faith Education, supported by the church and family as redemptive communities, can help translate the character of the Fruit of the Spirit into practical digital ethics. Through this framework, Christian adolescents can move beyond passive responses to technological disruption and participate actively as agents of positive change in digital society. As a conceptual literature study, these conclusions require further empirical testing to examine their applicability to the faith formation of Christian adolescents in digital contexts.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used Grammarly and QuillBot in a limited capacity for language editing, namely grammar, spelling, and clarity, as well as for refining the phrasing of selected passages. These tools were not used to generate ideas, arguments, findings, or references. All literature searching, theological analysis, conceptual synthesis, and formulation of conclusions were carried out entirely by the author. After using these tools, the author reviewed and edited the entire manuscript to ensure accuracy of meaning, integrity of argument, and originality of expression, and takes full responsibility for the content of this publication.

REFERENCES

- Dyer, J. (2022). *From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology*, rev. ed. Kregel Publications.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity Youth and Crisis*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Frankl, V. E. (2006). *Man's Search for Meaning*. Beacon Press.
- Groeschel, C. (2021). *Winning the War in Your Mind: Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life*. Zondervan.
- Harianto GP. (2025). *Metodologi dan Jenis-Jenis Pendekatan Penelitian*. Agiamedia.
- Kim, M., & Kwon, D. (2025). *Teenagers and Mental Health: A Handbook for Parents, Pastors, and Youth Leaders*. New Growth Press.
- Koehuan, N. A., & Priyatna, N. (2024). Tantangan Pendidikan Kristen Dalam Membantu Para Remaja Kristen Menghadapi Krisis Identitas Di Era Digital. *Jurnal Silih Asah*, 1(2),

- 208–222. <https://doi.org/10.54765/silihasah.v1i2.59>
- Lahagu, A., & Widjaja, F. I. (2024). Strategi Efektif Internalisasi Nilai Kristen Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Dan Spiritualitas Remaja Kristen. *Manna Rafflesia*, 11(1), 358–377.
- Lumbantobing, S. G., & Siagian, L. E. (2026). The Integration of Artificial Intelligence in Christian Religious Education: Analysis and a Theologically Grounded Pedagogical Ethics Framework. *Real Didache*, 6(1), 84–98.
- Makausi, E. M., Selanno, S., & Mamahit, M. M. (2025). Warisan Keteladanan Iman Orang Tua Dalam Membangun Karakter Remaja Perempuan Di Jemaat Gmim “Lahai-Roi” Malalayang Kota Manado Elvna. *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan*, 11(4), 283–298.
- Montang, R. D. (2025). Remaja kristen yang beriman. *Solideo: Jurnal Pendidikan Masyarakat*, 3(2), 95–107.
- Nggebu, S. (2024). Spektrum Karya Roh Kudus dalam Rangka Membangun Spiritualitas Kristen Sejati. *Saint Paul’S Review*, 4(2), 149–164. <https://doi.org/10.56194/spr.v4i2.95>
- Nggebu, S. (2025). *Jesus The Boss: Pemahaman Mendalam Tentang Gelar-Gelar Yesus*. Andi.
- Nggebu, S., Hamzah, S., Sitohang, R. M., & Setiyanto, D. (2026). Ontologi Kristen sebagai Fondasi Strategi Misi bagi Generasi Z di Era Digital. *Incuclo Journal of Christian Education*, 6(2), 164–178.
- Patandung, Y. (2023). Adolescence Students’ Critical Thinking Skills in the Context of Christian Education. *International Journal of Asian Education*, 5(3), 150–156.
- Prasetya, P. A., & Joseph, L. S. (2023). Kekuatan Karakter pada Remaja Kristen dalam Pergaulan di Era Milenial: Kajian Pendidikan Agama Kristen yang Menghidupkan Penta. *Jurnal Shanan*, 7(1), 45–56. <https://doi.org/10.33541/shanan.v7i1.4074>
- Samongilailai, H. N. (2024). Peran ajaran Teologi dalam Membangun karakter remaja kristen di Era Kontemporer. *Tri Tunggal*, 2(4), 355–363.
- Sibarani, Y. (2021). Peran Orang Tua Dalam Mewariskan Iman Bagi Dalam Era Revolusi Industri 4 . 0. *Jurnal Gamaliel : Teologi Praktika*, 3(1), 14–33.
- Simanjuntak, F. (2022). Larut tapi Tidak Hanyut: Sebuah Refleksi Spiritualitas Gereja dalam Pusaran Teknologi di Masa Pandemi Covid-19. *DIEGESIS: Jurnal Teologi*

- Kharismatika*, 4(2), 52–62. <https://doi.org/10.53547/diegesis.v4i2.93>
- Smith, B., & Sutton, A. T. (2021a). *Redeeming Technology: A Christian Approach to Healthy Digital Habits*. Concordia Publishing House.
- Smith, B., & Sutton, A. T. (2021b). *Redeeming Technology: A Christian Approach to Healthy Digital Habits*. Concordia Publishing House.
- Soemarsono, Y., Heryanto, D., & Sumampouw, J. (2026). Membaca Teologi Buah Roh Dari Perspektif Pendidikan Karakter Kristen: Landasan Iman Dalam Pembentukan Kualitas Rohani Remaja. *Kadesi*, 8(2), 173–194.
- Stanford, M. S. (2017). *Grace for the Afflicted: A Clinical and Biblical Perspective on Mental Illness*. IVP Academic.
- Sumual, E. N., & Rahayu, Y. F. (2025). Penggunaan Gadget dan Tantangan Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam Membina Remaja Kristen di Era Digital. *Manthano: Jurnal Pendidikan Kristen*, 5(1), 1–14.
- Tamera, D. M., Jenny, C., & Kotta, H. (2023). Menelusuri Buah-Buah Roh: “Galatia 5:22-23 dan Transformasi Diri Bagi Generasi Muda Kristen”. *Conscientia: Jurnal Teologi Kristen*, 2(2), 54–70.
- Tandana, E. A., Yowa, E. K., & Manik, N. D. Y. (2022). Character Education in Forming Student Behavior: A Viewpoint of Christian Religious Education Learning. *Didache: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen*, 3(2), 161–176.
- Telaumbanua, A. A. S., Telaumbanua, D., Daeli, M. C. P., & Leiwakabessy, M. A. (2026). The Role of Christian Religious Education in Shaping Christian Ethics for Generation Alpha’s Social Media Engagement Autor: *Real Didache*, 6(1), 1–25.
- Thacker, J. (2020). *The Age of AI: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity*. Zondervan Academi.
- Thacker, J. (2022). *Following Jesus in a Digital Age*. B&H Publishing Group,.
- Walean, R. R., Messakh, J. J., Siagian, L. E., Harefa, F., & Harefa, K. (2024). Peran Pendidikan Agama Kristen Bagi Remaja dalam Menghadapi Tantangan Zaman di Era Digital. *Regula Fidei: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 9(1), 68–80. <https://doi.org/10.33541/rfidei.v9i1.201>
- Waleleng, G. J., Rares, J. J., Menantu, Mi., Tasik, F., & Tumengkol, S. M. (2023). Journal of

- Asian Multicultural Research for Educational Study. *Journal of Asian M*, 4(1), 1–9.
- Wenas, J. C., & Verana, K. (2025). The Role of Religious Education in Shaping the Character of the Younger Generation. *International Journal of Christian Education and Philosophical Inquiry*, 1(2), 29–42.
- Winarjo, H. (2023). Jesus Christ as The Embodiment of the Wisdom of God: A Theological Commentary on James 3:13-18. *Veritas: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pelayanan*, 22(2), 303–319. <https://doi.org/10.36421/veritas.v22i2.539>
- Yanti, S., & Baou, O. M. (2024). The Impact Of Using Gadget Media On Teenager Character (Study In Lapole Village, Maligano District, Muna Ragency). *Jurnal Societal*, 1(1), 1–10.