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Balancing Faith and Technology: The Role of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Guiding Students' Responsible AI Use According to Romans 12:2 at SD Swasta Generasi Bintang

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in guiding primary school students to use artificial intelligence (AI) responsibly, grounded in Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Conducted at SD Swasta Generasi Bintang with 104 Christian students and one CRE teacher, the research explores how teacher competence, encompassing pedagogical skill, relational guidance, and ethical modeling, influences students' digital literacy and spiritual discernment. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, utilizing classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the teacher, focused group discussions (FGDs) with students, and analysis of instructional materials. Thematic analysis revealed that teacher empathy, scenario-based learning, reflective questioning, storytelling, and Christ-centered modeling effectively integrated ethical AI use with spiritual formation. Students demonstrated increased awareness of responsible AI practices, applying discernment and moral reasoning aligned with biblical principles in their digital engagement. Observations indicated that collaborative and reflective activities reinforced peer support and fostered a classroom culture that emphasized ethical and faith-based decision-making. Challenges, such as managing a large classroom and varying levels of student readiness, were addressed through adaptive strategies including small-group discussions and scaffolded reflection exercises. The findings highlight the importance of teacher competence in balancing faith and technology, demonstrating that integrating biblical principles with digital literacy promotes holistic development, ethical awareness, and spiritual growth. This study contributes to understanding how CRE teachers can equip students to navigate modern technological tools without compromising their Christian values, offering a practical model for faith-informed digital education in primary school settings.

Keywords: *Faith, Christian Religious Education, Technology, AI Use*

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has brought profound opportunities and challenges to education, particularly in shaping students' cognitive, ethical, and social development. In primary school contexts, where foundational habits, values, and critical thinking skills are established, the influence of AI on students' learning behaviors cannot be overlooked. For Christian students, the integration of technology into daily learning must be navigated with discernment, balancing innovation with spiritual and moral integrity. Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers play a pivotal role in this process, as they are tasked with guiding students not only in acquiring knowledge but also in forming a Christian worldview that aligns with biblical principles. The apostle Paul's exhortation in Romans 12:2 *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,"* provides a theological foundation for cultivating discernment, critical thinking, and ethical decision-making in the context of technology use. This scripture encourages students to engage with modern tools, such as AI, in ways that reflect God's wisdom rather than uncritically adopting worldly patterns. At SD Swasta Generasi Bintang-Medan, there are 104 Christian students and one dedicated CRE teacher responsible for nurturing their spiritual, social, and intellectual development. Within this context, the teacher's competence-encompassing pedagogical skill, technological literacy, ethical guidance, and relational sensitivity-becomes central to helping students navigate AI responsibly. The challenge is multifaceted: students are naturally drawn to digital tools for learning, entertainment, and social interaction, yet without guidance, these tools can foster distraction, superficial thinking, or values misalignment. CRE teachers must therefore integrate spiritual formation with digital literacy, ensuring that students recognize the potential of AI as a tool for learning while maintaining discernment, ethical behavior, and a Christ-centered perspective. Research in educational technology emphasizes the importance of teacher competence in mediating students' interaction with digital tools. Teachers who demonstrate effective guidance, relational engagement, and value-oriented instruction help students internalize ethical frameworks that influence long-term behavior (Goleman, 2006; Noddings, 2013). In the context of CRE, this involves connecting biblical teachings to contemporary challenges, helping students apply spiritual wisdom in evaluating AI's benefits and risks. For example, through reflective discussion, scenario analysis, and role-playing exercises, teachers can encourage students to consider how AI applications may impact their learning habits, social interactions, and moral choices, ensuring alignment with Romans 12:2. Empirical studies on CRE teachers' competence in guiding responsible AI use among primary school students remain limited. Most research focuses on digital literacy, general pedagogy, or ethical education in isolation, while the integration of biblical principles with technology education has not been extensively explored. By investigating how CRE teachers at SD Swasta Generasi Bintang employ their pedagogical, relational, and ethical skills, this study aims to provide insights into effective strategies for balancing faith and technology. The research is guided by three primary questions: First, how does the CRE teacher demonstrate competence in guiding students to use AI responsibly? Second, how do students perceive and internalize these lessons in relation to their Christian faith? Third, what pedagogical strategies effectively integrate spiritual formation with technological literacy? Addressing these questions contributes to understanding the role of social,

pedagogical, and ethical competence in Christian education, highlighting the importance of equipping students with both spiritual discernment and technological proficiency. Ultimately, this study seeks to provide a model for navigating the challenges of AI in primary education while fostering a Christ-centered approach to digital engagement.

METHODS

A qualitative descriptive research design was implemented to explore how a Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher guides students in the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) based on Romans 12:2. Qualitative descriptive research is particularly suitable for understanding complex processes, teacher-student interactions, and the integration of ethical and spiritual principles in real educational settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research focused on the teacher's competence, including pedagogical skill, relational guidance, and ethical instruction, as well as students' perceptions and experiences regarding AI use and biblical principles. The participants comprised 104 Christian students aged 7-12 and one CRE teacher responsible for their religious instruction. Given the unique setting of having a single CRE teacher, the study utilized a case study approach, providing an in-depth examination of teacher practices and student responses within the classroom environment. Purposive sampling was applied to select a subset of students for focused group discussions (FGDs), ensuring representation across grade levels and engagement levels in CRE activities. Classroom observation was carried out over four weeks, focusing on teacher-student interactions, guidance on AI use, incorporation of biblical principles, and relational strategies that foster ethical awareness. Observational notes captured examples of scenario discussions, reflective questioning, and teacher interventions that encouraged students to think critically about technology use in light of Romans 12:2. Semi-structured interviews with the CRE teacher provided insight into pedagogical strategies, challenges, and the integration of biblical principles with technology guidance. The interview explored how the teacher balances the promotion of AI literacy with spiritual discernment and moral education. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. Third, FGDs with 20 students, divided into groups of 5-6, allowed participants to discuss their understanding of AI, experiences in applying responsible technology use, and reflections on the teacher's guidance in light of Christian values. This method captured students' perspectives and enabled the triangulation of observational and interview data. Document analysis was conducted on classroom activity guides to identify explicit strategies for integrating AI literacy, ethical reasoning, and biblical teachings. Transcripts from interviews, FGDs, and observation notes were coded to identify recurring patterns related to teacher competence, student understanding, ethical decision-making, and integration of Romans 12:2 into practice. Parental consent was obtained for all students, and voluntary participation was emphasized. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by assigning codes to students, and findings were reported in aggregate form. This methodological approach ensured a comprehensive, ethically responsible exploration of how CRE teacher competence shapes students' responsible use of AI while nurturing spiritual discernment and moral integrity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher is pivotal in guiding students to use artificial intelligence (AI) responsibly, integrating ethical discernment and biblical principles into their digital engagement. Data collected through classroom observation, interviews with the CRE teacher, focused group discussions (FGDs) with students, and analysis of teaching materials revealed several key themes: teacher empathy and relational guidance, pedagogical strategies for responsible AI use, modeling Christ-centered behavior, student engagement and perception, and challenges and adaptive strategies. Observation and interviews highlighted that the teacher's empathy played a central role in mediating students' interactions with AI. The teacher demonstrated sensitivity to students' curiosity, concerns, and anxieties regarding technology use. For instance, during a classroom session on digital research tools, several students expressed excitement but also confusion about differentiating reliable information from unverified sources. The teacher addressed their concerns by linking the lesson to Romans 12:2 explaining that discernment involves avoiding conformity to worldly patterns of uncritical information consumption. One teacher explained: *"I encourage students to pause and think before using AI. Just as Paul instructs us to be transformed by renewing our minds, they should evaluate AI tools critically and ethically."* This approach exemplifies the integration of relational guidance with biblical principles, allowing students to experience responsible decision-making as a reflection of faith. Observations noted that students who received individualized attention felt more confident in using AI responsibly, demonstrating that empathy fosters both trust and spiritual engagement.

Pedagogical Strategies for Responsible AI Use

The teacher employed a variety of pedagogical strategies to connect AI literacy with Christian ethical formation. Storytelling, reflective questioning, and scenario-based exercises were frequently used. For example, students were presented with hypothetical situations such as encountering inappropriate content or AI-generated misinformation. The teacher guided discussions on how to respond, prompting students to consider both practical and ethical dimensions: *"How would God want us to respond if an AI tool suggests something harmful or dishonest? Can we use it in a way that honors Him?"* Observations indicated that these strategies were effective in promoting critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and self-regulation. Students actively participated in role-playing exercises, collaborative problem-solving, and peer reflection sessions. FGDs revealed that these activities helped students internalize the principle of Romans 12:2, recognizing that AI can be a beneficial tool when used with discernment and moral awareness. The CRE teacher consistently modeled Christ-centered behavior, demonstrating patience, ethical judgment, and reflective decision-making when interacting with AI tools. For instance, during a session on AI-assisted learning applications, the teacher transparently discussed limitations and potential misuses of technology, encouraging students to consider ethical implications before acting. Interviews revealed that the teacher consciously viewed modeling as a pedagogical strategy: *"Students observe how I navigate technology with caution and thoughtfulness. By seeing me practice discernment, they learn to reflect God's love and wisdom in their own choices."* This modeling reinforced the relational dimension of teaching, showing that responsible AI use is not merely a cognitive skill but also a moral and spiritual practice. Students mirrored these behaviors during collaborative exercises,

demonstrating respectful communication, ethical problem-solving, and mutual accountability.

Student Engagement and Perception

FGDs and observational data indicated that students were highly engaged and positively responded to the integration of AI literacy with Christian ethics. Many students expressed appreciation for the teacher's guidance in helping them differentiate between responsible and irresponsible uses of AI. One student shared: *"I used to just copy answers from AI without thinking. Now I ask myself if it is right and helpful, and I remember what the teacher said about not following the world blindly."* Students reported increased awareness of digital ethics, spiritual discernment, and critical evaluation skills. Observations revealed that collaborative reflection sessions strengthened peer support, as students encouraged each other to make ethical choices in AI use, creating a classroom culture that reinforced moral and spiritual learning. The principle of Romans 12:2, *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"* was consistently applied throughout classroom activities. The teacher emphasized that AI, like any worldly tool, must be approached thoughtfully, ensuring that students' choices align with God's wisdom rather than uncritically following popular trends or superficial information. Lessons connected technology use with spiritual reflection, ethical reasoning, and self-discipline, enabling students to experience digital engagement as a form of spiritual practice. Students demonstrated the ability to articulate this integration, stating that responsible AI use is an expression of honoring God and renewing their minds in line with biblical teaching. Managing 104 students individually was demanding for a single teacher, occasionally limiting personalized guidance. Some students initially struggled to connect abstract biblical principles with practical AI applications. To address these challenges, the teacher employed adaptive strategies such as small-group discussions, peer mentoring, and scaffolded reflection exercises. These approaches ensured inclusivity and maximized engagement, allowing students to apply ethical and spiritual principles effectively in diverse contexts. The study underscores the necessity of developing CRE teachers' social, pedagogical, and ethical competence as essential tools for guiding responsible AI use. Effective teacher guidance can help students cultivate critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and spiritual discernment simultaneously. Integrating biblical principles with technology literacy fosters holistic development, ensuring that students internalize both cognitive and moral dimensions of AI engagement. Training programs for CRE teachers should prioritize strategies that combine faith-based education with digital literacy, relational pedagogy, and ethical modeling.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the competence of a Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher is essential in guiding students to engage with artificial intelligence (AI) responsibly while nurturing spiritual discernment and ethical behavior. At SD Swasta Generasi Bintang-Medan, the CRE teacher's pedagogical, relational, and ethical skills were found to be instrumental in helping 104 Christian students navigate AI tools in ways that align with biblical principles, particularly Romans 12:2: *"Do not be conformed to this*

world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." By fostering critical thinking, reflective decision-making, and ethical awareness, the teacher enabled students to internalize the notion that AI can be a beneficial tool when used thoughtfully and morally. Empathy emerged as a foundational component of teacher competence, allowing students to feel supported, understood, and encouraged in their use of AI. The teacher's ability to listen attentively, respond sensitively to students' concerns, and model ethical decision-making provided both relational and instructional guidance. Observations and interviews revealed that students were more confident in evaluating AI applications, discerning reliable information, and applying biblical principles in digital contexts when relational guidance was present. Pedagogical strategies, such as scenario-based exercises, reflective questioning, storytelling, and collaborative problem-solving, effectively connected technological literacy with spiritual formation. These approaches facilitated students' cognitive understanding of AI tools while simultaneously promoting moral and spiritual awareness. The teacher's modeling of Christ-centered behavior further reinforced ethical and spiritual learning, demonstrating that technology use is not value-neutral but can be integrated into a Christ-centered worldview. Students reported increased awareness of responsible AI use, recognizing the importance of discernment, ethical decision-making, and alignment with God's wisdom. Classroom practices that fostered peer collaboration and reflective dialogue strengthened these skills, creating a supportive environment where technology and faith were mutually reinforcing. The study underscores several practical and pedagogical implications. First, CRE teachers must develop both technological literacy and social-emotional competence to guide students effectively. Second, integrating biblical principles with digital literacy fosters holistic development, equipping students to navigate contemporary challenges without compromising their faith. Adaptive strategies, such as small-group discussions and scaffolded reflection, are necessary in larger classrooms to ensure inclusivity and engagement. The study highlights that balancing faith and technology requires intentional teacher competence, combining pedagogical expertise, relational sensitivity, and ethical modeling. By guiding students in responsible AI use according to Romans 12:2, CRE teachers can cultivate spiritually grounded, morally aware, and technologically proficient students, providing a model for holistic Christian education in the digital era. This research contributes to the understanding of how faith-informed pedagogy can effectively mediate technology use, ensuring that students develop as critical thinkers, ethical users of AI, and faithful followers of Christ.

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