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Divine Concepts, Tawhid, and Algorithmic Thinking: A Comparative Analysis of Christian and Islamic Perspectives on Educational Theology in the Era of Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract

The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into educational environments has generated significant ethical and pedagogical challenges, particularly for faith-based schools that must balance technological innovation with deeply rooted theological commitments. While global research has examined AI's pedagogical potential, limited attention has been given to how religious educational institutions interpret and regulate AI through their theological worldviews. This study aims to investigate how Christian educational theology, grounded in the Imago Dei, and Islamic educational theology, rooted in Tawhid and Akhlak, shape institutional policies, classroom practices, and ethical decision-making related to the use of AI. A qualitative comparative case study was conducted at SMA Katolik Frater Don Bosco and MAN Model Manado using classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The findings reveal that both schools adopt similar governance principles, including restricting AI autonomy in evaluative decisions, safeguarding human dignity, emphasizing a character-centered pedagogy, and using AI primarily to support rather than replace relational teaching roles. Although grounded in distinct theological traditions, both institutions articulate ethical boundaries that foreground human responsibility, moral intention, and personal interaction as essential elements of learning. These results demonstrate that religious traditions offer robust moral infrastructures for developing human-centered "algorethics" and provide contextually grounded insights that can enrich national and global discussions on the ethical implementation of AI in education.

Keywords: Educational Theology; Artificial Intelligence (AI); Imago Dei; Tawhid and Akhlak; Digital Ethics; Faith-Based Schools.

Abstrak

Integrasi cepat kecerdasan buatan (AI) ke dalam lingkungan pendidikan telah memunculkan tantangan etis dan pedagogis yang signifikan, terutama bagi sekolah-sekolah berbasis agama yang harus menyeimbangkan inovasi teknologi dengan komitmen teologis yang telah mengakar. Meskipun penelitian global telah banyak membahas potensi pedagogis AI, perhatian yang diberikan pada cara institusi pendidikan keagamaan menafsirkan dan mengatur penggunaan AI berdasarkan kerangka teologi mereka masih sangat terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana teologi pendidikan Kristen yang berlandaskan konsep Imago Dei serta teologi pendidikan Islam yang berpijak pada prinsip Tawhid dan Akhlak membentuk kebijakan institusional, praktik pembelajaran, dan pengambilan keputusan etis terkait penggunaan AI. Studi kasus komparatif kualitatif dilakukan di SMA Katolik Frater Don Bosco dan MAN Model Manado melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan analisis dokumen. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kedua sekolah menerapkan prinsip tata kelola yang serupa, termasuk pembatasan otonomi AI dalam proses evaluasi, perlindungan martabat manusia, penekanan pada pedagogi berbasis

karakter, serta pemanfaatan AI terutama sebagai alat pendukung tanpa menggantikan peran relasional guru. Meskipun berlandaskan tradisi teologis yang berbeda, kedua institusi merumuskan batasan etis yang menempatkan tanggung jawab moral, niat, dan interaksi personal sebagai elemen kunci dalam proses pembelajaran. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa tradisi keagamaan menyediakan infrastruktur moral yang kuat untuk mengembangkan "algoretika" yang berpusat pada manusia dan memberikan wawasan kontekstual yang dapat memperkaya diskursus nasional dan global mengenai implementasi etis AI dalam pendidikan.

Kata Kunci: *Teologi Pendidikan; Kecerdasan Buatan (AI); Imago Dei; Tawhid dan Akhlak; Etika Digital; Sekolah Berbasis Agama.*

INTRODUCTION

The accelerated development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping educational systems worldwide, prompting urgent debates about its ethical, pedagogical, and theological implications. Scholars highlight the transformative potential of AI for personalization and efficiency in learning (Nguyen, 2025; N. R. Strunk, 2016; V. Strunk & Willis, 2025), while simultaneously warning about risks related to academic integrity, algorithmic bias, and erosion of human agency (Ahmed, Sumi, & Aziz, 2025; Papakostas, 2025). In Indonesia, the rapid migration of approximately 68 million students to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic exposed longstanding disparities in digital access and teacher preparedness (Eden, Chisom, & Adeniyi, 2024; Fiftiyansyah & Ali, 2024; Johari, Ali, Musa, Zakir, & Shahrill, 2024; Jurriëns & Tapsell, 2017; Maspul, 2025). As AI tools become integrated into post-pandemic classrooms, the challenge shifts from adoption to the development of robust ethical and pedagogical frameworks grounded in local cultural and religious contexts. Recent studies emphasize that AI adoption in education must be guided by principled ethical frameworks to prevent the erosion of human agency and data justice (Floridi & Cowls, 2019; Holmes, Bailik, & Fadel, 2019; Otoluwa, Salim, Saud, Darise, & Asma, 2025). Moreover, global analyses show that AI-driven educational reforms increasingly shape governance and power relations in schooling systems (Kalonde, Boateng, & Duedu, 2025).

Existing scholarship increasingly explores religious perspectives on AI. Christian theological discussions focus on reframing the *Imago Dei* in light of machine intelligence, emphasizing relationality, vulnerability, and moral responsibility as markers of human uniqueness beyond cognition (Doromontan, 2022; Meneguetti, 2025). Meanwhile, Islamic scholars argue that *Tawhid* provides a holistic worldview that situates technology within divine sovereignty, requiring its use to promote *maslahah* (benefit) and avoid *mafsadah* (harm) (Abdelnour, 2025; Budiman et al., 2024; Kurniawan, 2024). The role of *akhlak* (ethics) and the centrality of the *qalb* (heart) over *aql* (reason) in Islamic ethics further highlight dimensions of intelligence that machines cannot replicate (Budiyono, Suroso, & Priyanto, 2024; Ismail & Berghout, 2025; Nurdi & Ahmad, 2025). However, while these studies offer rich conceptual insights, they remain primarily theoretical. Christian theological discourse reevaluates the *Imago Dei* in light of technological evolution, emphasizing relationality and moral responsibility over cognitive capability (Silitonga & Belo, 2025). Meanwhile, Islamic perspectives highlight that AI must remain within the boundaries of *Tawhid* and ethical stewardship, as machine agency cannot replace human moral accountability (Alamsyah, Yayuli, & Remanda, 2025; Ar et al., 2025; Permadi, Sain, Thelma, & Alai, 2025).

A critical research gap persists: existing literature does not examine how these theological principles are operationalized within real school institutions, particularly in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation with a significant Catholic minority. No comparative empirical study has yet investigated how faith-based schools interpret AI, translate doctrine into policy, or shape teacher and student practices in digital environments. This gap is especially important because faith-based schools function as moral communities

whose responses to AI may differ significantly from secular institutions (Roebben & Stosch, 2022; Sahin, 2018). Although growing scholarship examines the AI ethics conceptually, empirical studies exploring how theological frameworks shape institutional AI practices remain limited (Akhyar, Deliani, & Khadijah, 2025; Wiese, Patil, Schiff, & Magana, 2025). No research yet analyzes how Christian and Islamic educational theologies are operationalized in real school governance.

Therefore, this study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of how two theological frameworks *Imago Dei* in Catholic education and *Tawhid-Akhlak* in Islamic education shape AI governance, classroom practices, and ethical norms in SMA Katolik Frater Don Bosco and MAN Model Manado. The article argues that despite doctrinal differences, both traditions converge toward a humanistic, relational, and character-centered orientation to AI that resists technocentric determinism. This study fills a methodological and conceptual gap by demonstrating how theology becomes a practical ethical infrastructure in the daily life of schools, thereby contributing to emerging global discussions on faith-informed AI governance (Coeckelbergh, 2020; Lauer, 2021; Vallor, 2016).

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative comparative case study design to examine in depth the integration of AI within the context of faith-based education in Indonesia (Jordan, 2011). This methodological approach was selected for its capacity to yield nuanced, contextually grounded insights into how abstract theological concepts are operationalized into concrete policies, classroom practices, and institutional cultures within specific school environments (Roebben & Stosch, 2022).

Two schools were selected as cases for comparison: *SMA Katolik Frater Don Bosco Manado*, which represents the Catholic educational tradition, and *Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Model Manado*, which represents the state Islamic educational tradition. The selection of these two schools in the same city allows for control of regional geographic and socioeconomic variables, making it more likely that observed differences are due to institutional and theological factors.

The primary data sources for this study were observations, document studies, and interviews collected in 2023. The observation data consisted of participant observation. The document study data consisted of examinations of internal school policy documents and external regulations used as references, such as circulars from the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Kemendikbud*) and decrees from the Directorate General of Islamic Education (*Dirjen Pendis*) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Kemenag*). Both data sets were systematically summarized in comparative tables. These tables map the ethical-theological principles, use of AI applications, and policy implementation in both schools, enabling direct comparative analysis.

The interview data consists of transcripts of interviews with informants, namely school principals and teachers. These interviews provide access to their perspectives, motivations, and reflections on integrating religious values in facing technological challenges. These informants are listed in the following table:

Table 1: Informant Data

Brother Don Bosco Catholic High School		Manado Model State Islamic Senior High School (MAN)	
Initials	**Position**	**Initials**	**Position**
FL	Headmaster	SA	Headmaster
JL	Teacher	AR	Teacher
SU	Teacher	BR	Teacher
AK	Teacher	SN	Teacher

The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, which entailed systematically coding the collected material to identify recurring patterns, themes, and categories emerging from the field data (Khanom, Tarequl, & Mahmudulhassan, 2025). These themes were examined not only at a descriptive level but also interpreted through the lens of the study's guiding theological frameworks *Imago Dei* for SMA Katolik Frater Don Bosco and *Tawhid* alongside *Akhlak* for MAN Model Manado. This dual-layered analytical process enabled the progression from concrete empirical observations to a more profound theoretical understanding, while also facilitating a structured and meaningful comparison between the two cases. In doing so, it illuminated both the points of divergence and areas of convergence in their theological-pedagogical responses to the integration of AI.

RESULTS

This study finds that both case study institutions occupy strategic positions within Manado's educational landscape. The city presents a unique social milieu characterized by harmonious inter-religious coexistence, fostering an environment conducive to pluralistic academic excellence (Sahari, Lundeto, Mash'ud, & Tohis, 2025). SMA Katolik Frater Don Bosco, managed by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart (*Frater-Frater Hati Kudus*), has long been renowned for its emphasis on academic discipline and holistic character formation that transcends denominational boundaries, thereby attracting students from diverse backgrounds (FL, 2023). Meanwhile, MAN Model Manado represents the pinnacle of state Islamic education, integrating general knowledge with balanced Islamic studies, serving as a primary reference for Muslim families seeking a solid foundation of faith alongside global competitiveness for their children (SA, 2023). Field data confirm that these institutions are not merely consumers of technology, but active agents navigating modernity through their respective spiritual values.

An analysis of the applications utilized in instructional processes reveals significant strategic divergences between the two schools, heavily influenced by digital infrastructure realities and the socio-economic status of the student body. The details of digital platform usage in both schools are presented in the following table:

Table 2: Usage of Applications Using AI Features

NO	APPLICATION	MAN Model Manado	SMA Katolik Frater Don Bosco
		Presentation	**Presentation**
1	WhatsApp	100%	80%
2	Google Classroom	70%	80%
3	Google Meet	-	20%
4	Google Form	20%	20%
5	Zoom Meeting	-	100%
6	Madrasah E-Learning	80%	-
7	Messenger	10%	-
8	YouTube	30%	-
9	Zenius	10%	-

Sources: Researchers' data

Based on the data in the table above, SMA Frater Don Bosco exhibits a high reliance on bandwidth-intensive platforms such as Zoom (100%) and Google Classroom (80%). This indicates the availability of more stable internet infrastructure among its student population. Conversely, MAN Model Manado records universal adoption of WhatsApp (100%) and extensive use of the "E-Learning Madrasah" platform (80%). The dominance of data-efficient tools at MAN Model Manado reflects a pragmatic adaptation by the school to the challenges of internet access disparity still faced by a segment of its students (UNICEF, 2020).

Beyond the divergence in application selection, the findings also map the implementation frameworks and the changing role of the teacher. The two schools operate under the auspices of different ministries the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (*Kemendikbudristek*) for SMA Katolik Frater Don Bosco and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Kemenag*) for MAN Model Manado which influences their learning administration formats.

Table 3: Implementation of Applications Using AI Features

Implementation Type	MAN Model Manado	SMA Katolik Frater Don Bosco
Regulation	Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education, Ministry of Religion No. 2791/2020, Joint Decree of 4 Ministers, Decree of the Head of MAN Model 1 Manado	Circular Letter of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 4/2020, Letter of the Ministry of Education and Culture No. 719/P/2020, Joint Decree of 4 Ministers
Application	WhatsApp, Madrasah E-learning, Google Classroom, Google Meet, Google Form, Messenger, YouTube, Zenius	WhatsApp, Google Classroom, Google Form, Google Meet, Zoom Meeting
Lesson Plan	One-page COVID-19 Emergency RPP	One-page COVID-19 Emergency RPP
Method	Assignments, Resumes, Tutorials, Q&A, Lectures	Independent assignments, Q&A, Lectures
Evaluation	Student activity in completing assignments and questions and answers	Student activity in completing assignments and questions and answers

Institutional policies at both schools represent a microcosmic manifestation of broader religious discourse. Policies at SMA Katolik Frater Don Bosco align with calls from Church leaders regarding "algorethics" and the wisdom of the heart (Doromontan, 2022; Szczerba, 2020), while the approach at MAN Model Manado reflects the perspectives of Islamic organizations, such as the decisions of the NU *Bahtsul Masail* and Muhammadiyah's guidelines regarding technology (Lika, 2024; Syakir, 2025). In this regard, schools function as "living laboratories" where national policies and religious views are tested (Norsworthy, 2024).

Amidst this technological disruption, both institutions reaffirm the central role of the educator not merely as a conveyor of information, but as an architect of character (Syukur, Maghfurin, Marhamah, & Jehwae, 2024). At SMA Katolik Frater Don Bosco, the teacher acts as a "pastoral shepherd" accompanying the students' spiritual journey, for instance through prayer and emotional support (AK, 2023; JL, 2023). Meanwhile, at MAN Model Manado, the teacher is viewed as *uswah hasanah* (a good role model), responsible for instilling noble character (*akhlak*) and connecting lessons with the principles of *Tawhid* (Hasanah, Arafat, Barni, Raya, & Aprilianto, 2024); SA, 2023; BR, 2023; AR, 2023).

The most significant finding of this study is the presence of robust ethical frameworks designed to limit AI autonomy. Although the foundational theological doctrines differ, policy mapping results indicate that both schools generate convergent practical regulations. A detailed comparison of these ethical-theological frameworks and their practical applications is summarized in the following table:

Table 4: Comparison of Ethical-Theological Frameworks in AI Adoption

Ethical/ Theological Principles	Christian Theological Foundation (SMA Katolik Frater Don Bosco)	Theological Foundation of Islam (MAN Model Manado)	Practical Applications & Policies (Convergence)
Human Dignity	Each student is an Imago Dei, a unique and precious image of God, demanding a holistic approach.	Humans are God's caliphs (representatives), possessing dignity that must be protected from dehumanization.	AI is prohibited from making final decisions on discipline or graduation. Strict data privacy policies protect students' personal information.
Trust/Stewardship	Humans are called to be responsible stewards of creation, including technology.	Technology is a trust from Allah that must be used for maslahah (good) and not cause mafsadah (damage).	Developing a "Critical AI Literacy" curriculum that addresses the social and environmental impacts of AI. Encouraging AI-based projects for social justice.
Truth & Integrity	Education aims to seek Truth, demanding intellectual and spiritual honesty.	Maintaining honest morals (siddiq) and verifying (tabayyun) information.	Strict policy on AI plagiarism. Train students to verify AI output with authoritative sources (Scripture, primary texts).

Relationality & Community	Character formation occurs in a community of mutual love. The teacher's role is as a spiritual shepherd.	Maintaining brotherhood and social relationships. Avoiding alienation caused by technology.	AI is used to automate administrative tasks to increase face-to-face teacher-student interaction time. Prohibiting AI chatbots for final counseling.
Justice & Equality	Paying attention to the "least" and ensuring equal opportunities for all.	Uphold justice ('adl) and ensure technology is accessible to all without discrimination.	Policies to provide equitable access to AI tools. Audit algorithms for potential bias against certain student groups.

The policies outlined above confirm that both schools agree on prohibiting the use of AI in strategic decision-making processes regarding student outcomes, such as graduation or disciplinary sanctions, as these require authentic human deliberation.

DISCUSSION

Theological Convergence: Human Dignity Above Algorithms

This study reveals a robust practical convergence between the two religious traditions under investigation. Despite being rooted in fundamentally distinct theological doctrines, both schools arrive at identical ethical conclusions regarding the boundaries of AI application in education. This convergence underscores that religious values function as critical moral filters, ensuring that technology remains a tool serving humanity rather than an entity that dominates or defines human value itself (Norzaman et al., 2025; Pambayun, Firmansyah, Nurkhasanah, Indayati, & Masfiah, 2025; Santoso, Hasyim, Nurjaleka, & Rochman, 2025). Religion, in this context, does not repudiate progress but erects an "ethical fence" to ensure that advancement does not erode the essence of humanity (Prakoso & Taib, 2025; Xu, 2025). In this regard, both Christian and Islamic traditions concur in their total rejection of student "datafication." They oppose the reductive view wherein individual students are perceived merely as sets of numbers, performance metrics, or data patterns predictable by algorithms. Both schools emphasize the dimension of mystery within the human being the potential for growth, repentance, and change which cannot be mathematically calculated even by the most advanced machines.

At SMA Katolik Frater Don Bosco, the principled rejection of machine dominance is deeply rooted in the doctrine of *Imago Dei*. Within this view, every student is perceived as a unique and precious image of God, possessing a spiritual dimension unreachable by machine computation (Edwards, 2025; Elice et al., 2025; Jogezai, Koroleva, & Ivanov, 2025; Rafida, Suwandi, & Ananda, 2024). The status of being created in the "Image of God" confers intrinsic value that is independent of economic utility or mere academic achievement. Consequently, the dignity of the student must not be degraded by automation systems that are blind to the value of the soul.

The practical consequence of this theology dictates that crucial decisions affecting a person's life such as character assessment, counseling recommendations, or graduation must

not be surrendered to machines. Such decisions require human wisdom, empathy, and deep contextual understanding; qualities that constitute the core of irreplaceable human dignity. The human teacher must remain the final authority in every assessment that is formative and determinant of a student's fate (Szczerba, 2020).

Furthermore, Christian theology at this institution translates the concept of *Imago Dei* into the ethical responsibility of stewardship. The call to be the image of God implies a vocation to be responsible stewards of all creation, including human-created technology (Lioy, 2024). Humans are called to subdue the earth and manage it, not to be enslaved by their own tools. Therefore, the use of AI must always be measured by its impact on human well-being and the integrity of creation. Technology is accepted insofar as it assists humans in fulfilling their noble calling to work and serve others. However, a firm line must be drawn when technology begins to threaten moral agency, privacy, and the freedom that is a Divine gift to every person.

Parallel to this perspective, MAN Model Manado grounds its digital ethics in the concept of humanity as *khalifah fil ardh* (God's vicegerent on earth). As *khalifah*, humans possess inherent dignity that must be absolutely protected from any form of dehumanization by technology (Rosyadi, 2022). This position of vicegerency places humans as leaders on earth endowed with intellect and revelation a status not granted to other beings, let alone inanimate objects such as machines.

This status of vicegerency automatically places humans above other creations, including intelligent machines. Humans are endowed with spirit and intellect to lead civilization, not to be led by algorithms of their own making. Surrendering moral decisions to AI is regarded as a denial of the leadership responsibility mandated by God to humanity.

Operationally, technology is viewed as an *amanah* (trust) from God that carries consequences of accountability in the hereafter. As trustees, humans are responsible for utilizing technology solely to achieve *maslahah* (public good) and actively prevent *mafsadah* (harm or corruption) (Tohis & Mansyur, 2025). This *maslahah-mafsadah* principle serves as the primary analytical tool in assessing every new application introduced into the school environment (Faris, 2024).

This principle underpins the content and algorithm filtering policies at the school. The institution actively ensures that no bias, violent content, or material damaging to faith (*akidah*) enters the classroom through uncontrolled AI. This demonstrates that openness to technology is balanced with rigorous spiritual vigilance.

The similarity in AI restriction policies at both schools is not coincidental, but a logical result of their respective theological structures, which place humans in a vertical relationship with God. Both *Imago Dei* and *Khalifah* affirm human transcendence beyond physical matter. The ontological status of the human being whether as "Image" in Christian theology or "Vicegerent" in Islamic theology confers a privileged position and moral agency not possessed by Artificial Intelligence. Machines, however intelligent, lack a vertical relationship with the Creator and do not bear moral burdens. Therefore, both traditions establish human dignity as a non-negotiable boundary for machine autonomy. This finding asserts that moral and

pedagogical authority must remain in the hands of human educators, preserving education as an endeavor by humans, of humans, and for humanizing humans.

Pedagogical Strategy: Re-humanizing Through Automation

An in-depth analysis of practices at both schools indicates astute pedagogical maneuvering in response to the presence of AI. Rather than adopting a stance of blind resistance (total rejection) or uncritical acceptance (adoption without reserve), these schools have chosen a strategic middle path. They recognize that rejecting technology in the digital age is an impossibility, yet leaving it uncontrolled is recklessness.

Therefore, the strategy adopted is "selective adoption." They do not reject technology; instead, they proactively use it to delegate administrative, repetitive, and mechanical tasks to AI. This approach is grounded in the pragmatic realization that heavy administrative burdens often serve as primary barriers preventing teachers from being fully present for their students.

This delegation strategy is consciously executed with a singular objective: to reallocate the teacher's most valuable resources time and attention to the most theological and essential realms. By allowing AI to handle routine quiz grading, attendance taking, or grade data recapitulation, teachers gain quality "free time."

This liberated time capacity is then reinvested to focus on soul formation, character development, and building authentic relationships with students (Kock, 2024; Latifah & Nurhikmah, 2024). Herein lies the positive paradox: automation technology, often accused of killing humanity, is utilized precisely to liberate humans to become more human in their interactions.

In the context of faith-based education, face-to-face interaction and personal guidance are the core of irreplaceable value transfer. Both schools recognize that spiritual and moral formation requires direct modeling, eye contact, and heart-to-heart dialogue. This process of character "contagion" demands the full *presence* of the teacher, undistracted by piles of administration.

This strategy enables teachers to be more responsive to students' emotional and spiritual needs. Teachers can detect changes in student behavior, provide counseling to those in trouble, and minimize disruptive behavior through intensive and compassionate personal approaches. Such subtleties often escape the detection of digital analytical systems (Pargmann, Berding, Rebmann, & Riebenbauer, 2025; Shaikh, 2026).

This maneuver is also a critical response to the phenomenon of "transactional distance" often emerging in digital learning. As technological mediation increases (as in Zoom or e-learning), the risk of alienation and the loss of emotional bonds between teacher and student rises significantly. Students feel they are facing a screen, not an educator.

The schools realize the danger that if teachers function merely as conveyors of cognitive material, their roles are easily replaceable by AI or instructional videos. Therefore, the automation of technical tasks becomes a means to reclaim humanist spaces threatened by digitalization. Teachers focus on what machines cannot do: touching hearts (Chernenko, Karabanov, & Kostenko, 2025). Consequently, the role of the teacher undergoes a profound theological re-orientation. At SMA Katolik Frater Don Bosco, the teacher can be more intensely "present" as a shepherd who knows their sheep individually, calls them by name, and cares for the salvation of their souls.

Meanwhile, at MAN Model Manado, the teacher strengthens their position as a *murabbi* (educator of the soul) and *uswah hasanah* (good role model), reinforcing the transformational dimension of human interaction (Dewi, Mujiono, & Kholis, 2025; Nurdi & Ahmad, 2025; Safrilsyah et al., 2024). Both roles demand an inner presence and spiritual commitment that cannot be simulated by any algorithm. Thus, AI integration in these schools does not lead to the replacement of teachers by machines, but to a redefinition of the teacher's role. The teacher shifts from being a mere "source of knowledge" to a "facilitator of wisdom."

The teacher no longer primarily serves as a conveyor of information a task performable faster by machines but returns to their primordial function as a character builder and spiritual guide. This strategy of "re-humanizing through automation" proves that in the hands of theologically conscious educators, even the most advanced tools can be subjugated to serve the most traditional and noble purposes.

Addressing Challenges: Integrity, Justice, and the Essence of Humanity

The integration of AI into the classroom presents universal challenges compelling educational institutions to re-examine their foundational values. Issues such as academic integrity, equity of access, and philosophical questions regarding the nature of intelligence have now become real testing grounds for the relevance of religious education (Kohout-Diaz, 2026; Tang, Cooper, Rappa, & Edwards, 2026). These challenges are not merely technical matters of gadget regulation but touch upon the moral core and character formation of the student (Puntí Brun et al., 2026).

Schools must respond to the temptation of "shortcuts" offered by technology such as the ease of copy-pasting or automated essay generation with the cultivation of stronger values. This challenge serves as a momentum for schools to prove whether the religious values taught are merely rote memorization or truly serve as behavioral guides in the digital world.

Regarding the prevalence of AI-based plagiarism threatening academic honesty, both schools respond with distinctive theological language (Elom, 2025). SMA Katolik Frater Don Bosco views the use of AI to deceive as a failure to fulfill the mandate of seeking Truth and a denial of the intellectual integrity bestowed by God. Stealing a machine's work and claiming it as one's own is a form of talent degradation.

Meanwhile, MAN Model Manado frames this issue as a serious violation of the principle of *siddiq* (honesty). Furthermore, reliance on instant AI answers is regarded as a neglect of the obligation of *tabayyun* (verification/clarification), which is highly emphasized in Islamic epistemology (Meerangani, Nor, Hamid, Yusof, & Ariffin, 2025).

For both traditions, the purpose of education extends beyond mere academic results or high grades. Its goal is to form honest and virtuous individuals capable of accounting for their work before God and humanity. The integrity of the process is valued more highly than manipulative instant results (Peters, 2025; Rosdiana, Khuzaini, Zamrudi, Zainul, & Zuana, 2024; Subiyantoro, Rohmadani, & Achadi, 2026).

Beyond integrity, the challenges of justice and equity are also paramount concerns. Both traditions respond to the risks of algorithmic bias and the digital divide, which can exacerbate social inequality. There is an awareness that AI trained on biased data can

discriminate against certain groups, and expensive technological access can marginalize poor students (Effendi, Suriagiri, & Mudhiah, 2025; Murtiningsih & Sujito, 2025; Qasserras, 2024).

Catholic social theology, with its "option for the poor," and the Islamic principle of justice (*'adl*), drive schools to ensure that technology does not become a tool of exclusion. Justice demands that technological progress be enjoyed collectively, not become the privilege of a few. This is reflected in school policies auditing application usage to ensure accessibility for all students without discrimination. Schools strive to provide facilities or select inclusive platforms, ensuring that technological progress does not leave behind those who are economically and socially disadvantaged.

However, the deepest and most original theological contribution of these schools emerges in their response to the definition of intelligence itself. In the face of AI that increasingly excels in functions of rationality and logic (*'aql*), both traditions independently undertake an epistemological shift. They no longer compete with machines in the cognitive realm.

Contemporary Christian theology now emphasizes aspects of relationality, vulnerability, and love as primary markers of the *Imago Dei*. In this view, being human is not about processing information faster than a computer, but about the capacity to love, sacrifice, and build meaningful relationships. Concurrently, Islamic thought asserts a fundamental difference between artificial intelligence and human intelligence. Although AI possesses extraordinary data processing capacity, it lacks *qalb* (heart) the center of sacred intention (*niyyah*) and spiritual wisdom. In Islamic epistemology, true knowledge must be guided by sincere intention and God-consciousness.

Thus, the direction of education in these schools is recalibrated to nurture dimensions unreplicable by machines: empathy, moral wisdom, creativity rooted in love, and spiritual consciousness. The *qalb* is where the connection with the Divine occurs, something impossible for a machine to possess. This is the final fortress of humanity strictly guarded by faith-based education in the age of artificial intelligence. Both schools assert that intelligence without heart is merely an empty simulation, and education without the formation of the heart is merely data transfer (Freire, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study uncovers a distinct finding: the existence of an identical practical convergence between two doctrinally distinct theological traditions *Imago Dei* and *Tawhid* in their response to AI. This finding challenges the prevailing assumption that religious institutions are inherently rigid or ill-equipped to confront modernity. Conversely, the evidence demonstrates that faith-based schools engage in astute "pedagogical manoeuvres" rather than rejecting technology, they employ a strategy of automation for re-humanization. AI is intentionally leveraged to assume administrative burdens solely to enable teachers to refocus on their pastoral and *murabbi* functions. This strategy inverts the common narrative that AI threatens the existence of the teacher; here, AI is instead subjugated to reinforce the teacher's role as an architect of character.

Theoretically, this study makes a significant contribution by challenging the dominance of secular-Western AI ethical frameworks, which frequently overlook metaphysical dimensions. This research introduces the model of "Faith-Based Algorithmics," a framework positing the "wisdom of the heart" (*qalb*) rather than cognitive rationality as the primary differentiating variable between human and machine. This contribution enriches the literature on Religious Education by demonstrating that classical theology possesses the resilience and sophisticated relevance necessary to address futuristic challenges. Furthermore, these findings provide a novel empirical foundation for policymakers to integrate spiritual values into national technological governance, complementing the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Pancasila Student Profile) framework with a substantive dimension of digital ethics.

Notwithstanding the novel insights offered, this study is not without limitations. The research is confined to two institutions within a single geographic context (Manado), with data captured during a specific temporal cross-section (2023); thus, generalizing these results to Indonesia's pluralistic educational landscape must be approached with caution. Moreover, the focus on the perspectives of leadership and teachers implies that the voices of students and parents remain underrepresented. Consequently, further research incorporating larger sample sizes, a broader variety of educational levels, and the inclusion of student perspectives is imperative. Future studies are also recommended to examine the long-term effectiveness of these AI restriction policies on the quality of graduates in the digital age.

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