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The Role of Pela Gandong Culture-Based Christian Education Teachers in Shaping Ethical Digital Literacy

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the role of Pela Gandong's culture-based Christian Religious Education teachers in shaping ethical digital literacy in students at SMP Negeri 5 Ambon. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The results of the study show that Christian Religious Education teachers play an important role as educators, role models, guides, and facilitators in instilling Christian values while integrating Pela Gandong cultural values such as brotherhood, mutual respect, solidarity, and social responsibility in the use of digital technology. Through a local culture-based approach, students are guided to not only have technical skills in utilizing digital media, but also to be able to use technology wisely, politely, honestly, and responsibly in accordance with the values of the Christian faith and local wisdom of Maluku. The synergy between teachers, schools, families, and local culture is an important foundation in forming a digital generation that is intelligent, characterful, and able to use technology to strengthen the values of brotherhood and harmonious social life.

Keywords: christian religious education; digital ethics; digital literacy; pela gandong

Introduction

The digital era has brought great changes in human life, including in the field of education. Students today live in an environment full of information technology, where access to the internet, social media, and various digital applications is part of their daily lives. This condition provides great opportunities for self-development, but it also presents serious challenges related to the ethics of using technology. The development of information and communication technology in today's digital era has brought major changes in various aspects of life, including the world of education. The presence of the internet, social media, and various digital applications offers easy access to information and communication without space and time limits. For students, especially the younger generation, the digital world has become an integral part of daily life.

The real condition that appears today is that almost all students in elementary school to college are familiar with digital devices, both through smartphones, tablets, and computers. Social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are the most accessed platforms, even more dominant than textbooks. This situation often makes students more interested in digital

entertainment than formal learning. Not infrequently, learning time is displaced by online activities that are consumptive in nature.

According to We Are Social (2024) data, internet users in Indonesia have reached more than 221 million people, or around 79% of the population. Of these, teenagers and young people dominate as active users. However, a survey by the Central Statistics Agency (2023) shows that most internet use among students is still more directed to entertainment (86.65%) than learning (27.46%). In addition, phenomena such as cyberbullying, the spread of hoaxes, and low awareness of digital ethics further strengthen the importance of education that is able to instill moral and spiritual values in the use of technology.

In addition, students now face serious risks in the use of technology. The phenomenon of cyberbullying among teenagers is increasing, the spread of negative content is so easily accessible, and the habit of copy-pasting without understanding the content shows the low ethics in digital literacy. In fact, the instant culture in obtaining information makes some students tend to be less critical and easily influenced by hoaxes. This condition confirms that digital literacy cannot only be understood as a technical skill, but must be based on moral and ethical values.

This is where Christian Religious Education finds its relevance. Christian education not only functions as a teaching of faith, but also as a means of forming Christian character in the midst of the rapid flow of digitalization. The values of love, honesty, responsibility, and self-control taught in Christian Religious Education are needed to guide students to be able to use technology correctly. Through Christian Religious Education, students can be directed to see the digital world not just as an entertainment space, but as a means to learn, build positive relationships, and spread kindness.

In addition, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum provides space for more contextual learning and is rooted in local culture, including in strengthening students' digital literacy. This condition opens up opportunities for Christian Education teachers to present a learning process that not only focuses on teaching Bible texts, but also integrates Pela Gandong cultural values as the local wisdom of the Maluku people in facing the dynamics of the digital world. The values of brotherhood, solidarity, mutual respect, and social responsibility contained in Pela Gandong can be an ethical basis in guiding students to use digital technology wisely and with dignity. Thus, Christian Religious Education not only plays a role in improving digital literacy skills, but also shapes the character of students to remain faithful, ethical, and uphold human values in the midst of increasingly rapid technological developments.

Thus, research on the role of Pela Gandong's culture-based Christian Religious Education teachers in shaping ethical digital literacy is important to be carried out. This research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how the integration of Christian values and local culture can guide students to become a smart, critical, responsible digital generation, and able to build harmonious social relations in the digital space and real life.

Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of describing the role of Christian Religious Education in shaping ethical digital literacy in students. The subjects of the study were students of SMP Negeri 5 Ambon who were selected purposively, while additional informants included Christian Religious Education teachers and parents to enrich the data. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies related to the practice of using digital technology by students at the school. The collected data was analyzed using Miles & Huberman's interactive

model which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses the triangulation technique of sources and methods, so that the results of the research can be scientifically accounted for.

Findings and Discussion

Christian Religious Education

Christian Religious Education is a conscious, planned, and systematic effort to guide students to experience the growth of faith in Christ and to be able to apply Christian values in daily life. Christian education is not only a teaching of the content of the Bible, but also a process of character building and forming the whole human being in the light of God's word. In the context of formal education in schools, Christian Religious Education is one of the subjects that is not only cognitive (knowledge of religion), but also affective (attitudes, values, and morals) and psychomotor (tangible actions that reflect faith). Christian education helps students to know God, understand themselves, and be responsible for others and the environment based on the Christian faith.

Christian Religious Education has several important functions, including: first, Religious Function: Helping students experience a personal relationship with God through prayer, God's word, and daily life of faith. Second, Educational Function: Guiding students to develop their potential in the light of God's word, so that they are able to think critically, ethically, and creatively. Third, Social Function: Forming a person who cares about others, is ready to serve, and is a blessing to the environment. Fourth, Moral and Ethical Function: Internalizing biblical values so that students are able to make the right and ethical decisions in their lives.

The Relevance of Christian Education in the Modern Era

The presence of PAK is increasingly relevant in the midst of modern-day challenges. Students now live in a world characterized by globalization, religious pluralism, technological developments, and the very rapid flow of information. This condition often leads to identity crises, moral degradation, and individualistic lifestyles. Through Christian Religious Education, students are equipped to face these realities with firm faith. They are encouraged to not only be academically intelligent, but also have strong character, integrity, and be able to maintain the Christian faith in the midst of a changing world. In other words, Christian Religious Education plays a role as a pillar for the formation of a generation that is not only knowledgeable, but also faithful and moral.

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy is a person's ability to use digital technology, understand the information obtained, evaluate its validity, and create useful content while still paying attention to ethical aspects. Gilster (1997) defines digital literacy as the ability to understand and use information in various formats derived from computers and digital media. UNESCO (2021) emphasizes that digital literacy is not only a technical skill, but also includes aspects of critical thinking, ethics, and responsibility in using technology. This means that digital literacy does not stop at the ability to "operate a gadget," but also at understanding how technology impacts a person's social, economic, and spiritual life.

The digital age has brought major changes in human lifestyles. Almost all aspects of life, from education, work, communication, to entertainment, now depend on digital technology. According to We Are Social (2024) data, internet users in Indonesia reach more than 221 million people, or around 79% of the total population. This figure shows how big the role of digital technology is in the daily lives of the Indonesian people. For learners, digital

literacy is essential because: first, Access to Information: Students can quickly access various sources of knowledge through the internet. Second, 21st Century Skills Development: Such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. Third, Improving the Quality of Learning: Technology facilitates online learning, discussions, and virtual collaboration. Fourth, Future Resiliency: Digital literacy is an important provision to face the modern world of work that is all digital.

According to UNESCO (2019), digital literacy has several main dimensions: first, Access. The ability to find and use digital devices and internet networks. Second, evaluation. the ability to assess the credibility and accuracy of the information found. Third, creation. The ability to create and publish digital content creatively and responsibly. Fourth, Communication. the ability to interact with others through digital platforms with the right ethics. Fifth, Security. The ability to protect personal data, maintain privacy, and avoid digital threats.

Digital Literacy Challenges Among Students

Although the younger generation is often referred to as "digital native," the reality is that many students do not have mature digital literacy. The challenges faced include: Dependence on digital entertainment. The BPS survey (2023) shows that 86.65% of students aged 5-24 years use the internet for entertainment, while only 27.46% use it for learning, including: first, The spread of hoaxes and false information: Many students have difficulty distinguishing between valid information and fake news. Second, Cyberbullying and online violence: Research in Jakarta (Sari Pediatri, 2020) noted that almost 48.2% of students aged 12-15 years have experienced or been involved in cyberbullying. Third, Lack of awareness of digital ethics: Many students do not understand the importance of respecting privacy, copyright, and manners in communicating in cyberspace.

Digital Literacy in an Educational Perspective

In the world of education, digital literacy is seen as a key competency of the 21st century. Teachers are required not only to teach subject matter, but also to guide students to use technology wisely. Digital literacy helps students: Utilize technology as a means of learning, build a critical and analytical mindset, develop creativity through positive content production, maintain ethics and morals in digital interactions. In addition, digital literacy must also be combined with religious and moral values so that students are not only technically intelligent, but also wise and responsible in digital life.

For Christian Religious Education, digital literacy is a new space to proclaim the Gospel and instill Christian values. Students can be directed to use social media, the internet, and digital technology as a means of spreading love, truth, and peace. Christian Education teachers can integrate faith learning with digital literacy through: the use of digital Bibles and devotional applications, discussions of digital ethics in the light of God's word, and creative projects based on digital media that have educational and spiritual value. Thus, digital literacy framed by Christian values will help students not only be proficient in using technology, but also be able to use it for the glory of God and the good of others.

The Role of Christian Education Teachers in Digital Literacy

Christian Religious Education teachers at SMP Negeri 5 Ambon not only carry out the function of teachers, but also as spiritual guides who guide students to live according to Christian values in the midst of rapid digital flows. Based on the results of the interviews, Christian Religious Education teachers try to integrate teaching materials with actual issues, such as reminding students not to spread hoaxes, keeping words on social media, and

respecting the privacy of others. Christian Religious Education teachers have a strategic role in guiding students to be able to face the challenges of the digital world with a wise, critical, and ethical attitude. This role is not only limited to teaching teaching materials according to the curriculum, but also extends to efforts to instill Christian values that are relevant to the development of information technology. In the digital era, when students are in contact with gadgets, the internet, and social media almost every day, Christian Religious Education teachers are called to be role models as well as facilitators in forming healthy digital characters.

First, Christian Religious Education teachers play the role of value educators. Students need to be equipped with a strong foundation of faith so that they are not easily influenced by the flow of negative information. Through Christian Religious Education lessons, teachers can instill the principles of honesty, responsibility, and love for others as guidelines in the use of technology. For example, teachers remind the importance of avoiding plagiarism when taking information from the internet, as well as accustoming students to express their opinions in polite and constructive language on social media. Thus, digital literacy is not only understood as a technical ability, but also as an ethical attitude born from the value of faith.

Second, Christian Religious Education teachers play a role model. Students tend to imitate their teachers' behavior, including in how to use technology. Teachers who show positive habits, such as mentioning reference sources when displaying digital materials, using digital Bible applications wisely, or maintaining polite communication on online platforms, will set a real example for students. This example makes students learn that Christian values can be realized practically in their daily digital activities.

Third, Christian Religious Education teachers play the role of digital learning facilitators. This means that teachers use digital technology to support the learning process of Christian Religious Education, for example by using spiritual videos, Bible applications, or relevant online reading resources. In this way, students can see that technology is not only used for entertainment, but also to deepen faith and enrich insights. This is in line with the goals of digital literacy according to UNESCO (2021) which emphasizes the ability of students to access, evaluate, and utilize digital information productively.

Fourth, Christian Education teachers act as moral guides. The presence of teachers is not only to teach technical skills in accessing technology, but also to help students understand the moral consequences of any digital action. For example, teachers can invite students to discuss the impact of hate speech, cyberbullying, or the spread of hoaxes. By framing these issues from the perspective of the Christian faith, Christian Religious Education teachers equip students with the reflective ability to make the right decisions in digital interactions.

Finally, the role of Christian Education teachers is also as an agent of social transformation. Through teaching and life examples, teachers help students become a digital generation that is not only intelligent, but also characterful. Ethical digital literacy is not only beneficial for students, but also for the surrounding environment, because students are able to be role models in their digital communities. Thus, Christian Religious Education is an important instrument in producing a generation that is able to live in the digital era without losing its Christian identity.

This practice is in line with Gilster's (1997) view of digital literacy which emphasizes critical thinking skills, ethics, and responsibility in accessing and using information. Christian Religious Education teachers not only provide theories, but also exemplify how to use technology correctly, for example by showing how to include digital sources when citing. Thus, students learn that digital literacy is not only about "being able to use" devices, but also about "how to use them wisely."

Attitudes and Responses of Students

The results of observations show that most students are aware of the benefits of digital technology for learning, but they also face great temptations to use it inappropriately, such as excessive gaming, accessing unlimited entertainment content, or copying assignments from the internet without understanding the content. This data is in line with a UNICEF survey (2022) which stated that 64% of Indonesian teenagers admitted that they had used the internet for no purpose of studying, but more for entertainment. However, through the guidance of Christian Religious Education teachers, some positive changes began to be seen. Students become more aware to cite sources when taking information from the internet, be more careful in commenting on social media, and learn to control themselves in the use of online time. This shows that the approach to Christian values given by Christian Religious Education teachers is able to be a filter for students to be ethical in the digital world.

The Challenge of Christian Education Teachers in Shaping Ethical Digital Literacy

Although Christian Education teachers have an important role in shaping ethical digital literacy, practice in the field shows that there are various challenges that are quite complex. This challenge arises both in terms of students, the family environment, and the very rapid development of technology. Here are some of the main challenges found in SMP Negeri 5 Ambon: first, the dominance of the use of technology for entertainment. The majority of students use digital technology more for entertainment, such as playing online games, watching videos, or using social media, than for the sake of learning. Observations at SMP Negeri 5 Ambon show that many students still have difficulty controlling the time to use gadgets so they neglect schoolwork. This condition makes Christian Education teachers have to work extra hard to direct students to use technology more effectively.

Second, lack of awareness of digital ethics. Students often do not understand the moral impact of their actions in cyberspace. There are still students who use abusive language on social media, share information without verification, or copy assignments from the internet without citing sources. This challenge is in line with the findings of UNICEF (2022) which shows that 40% of adolescents in Indonesia have engaged in unethical behavior digitally, both as perpetrators and victims.

Third, the Influence of Social Environment and Peers. The peer environment has a huge influence on students' digital behavior. Not a few students follow negative trends on social media just because of peer pressure, such as participating in creating inappropriate content or engaging in online bullying. Christian Education teachers face the great challenge of building awareness that Christian values must remain fundamental, even in a digitally stressful society.

Fourth, limited learning time. Christian Religious Education lesson hours in schools are relatively limited, so there is still minimal space to discuss digital literacy issues in depth. Christian Religious Education teachers must divide their time between delivering curriculum materials and providing moral direction on the use of digital technology. This condition often makes discussions about digital ethics can only be done briefly and not in depth.

Fifth, differences in family background. Not all parents at SMP Negeri 5 Ambon are able to accompany their children in the use of technology. Some parents are busy working, others do not understand technological developments, so students are left free to access the internet without supervision. This difference in background has an impact on the quality of students' self-control. Christian Religious Education teachers face the challenge of closing these oversight gaps through value education in schools. Sixth, Technological Development That Is Too Fast. Christian Religious Education teachers often lag behind in keeping up with the latest digital applications, platforms, or trends that students are more likely to master. This sometimes makes it difficult for teachers to provide direction that is relevant to the context of

the digital world of students. Teachers are required to continue to learn and adapt in order to provide guidance that is in accordance with the needs of the times. From the challenges above, it can be seen that PAK teachers cannot work alone. There needs to be cooperation between schools, parents, and the government to build a system that is able to support ethical digital literacy among students.

Strategy for the Formation of Ethical Digital Literacy and Cultural Values of Pela Gandong

The strategy for the formation of ethical digital literacy in Christian Religious Education at SMP Negeri 5 Ambon is not only oriented to mastery of technology, but also to the formation of students' character through the integration of Christian values and local culture of Pela Gandong. In the context of the Maluku people, Pela Gandong is a cultural heritage that emphasizes brotherhood, solidarity, mutual respect, help, and shared responsibility. These values are relevant in building student ethics in the digital space which is often filled with hate speech, cyberbullying, and the dissemination of irresponsible information. Therefore, Christian Religious Education teachers have a strategic role in integrating local faith and cultural values as the basis for the formation of humanist and moral digital literacy.

Based on the results of the research, Christian Religious Education teachers at SMP Negeri 5 Ambon applied several strategies in forming ethical digital literacy. First, teachers set an example in the use of digital technology. Teachers show a polite, thoughtful, and responsible attitude when using digital media so that students can learn through real examples. This example is in line with the values of Pela Gandong which emphasizes the importance of maintaining fraternal relations and respecting others, including in digital communication. By looking at teacher behavior, students are invited to understand that technology is not only a communication tool, but also a means of building healthy and harmonious social relationships.

Second, teachers build critical discussions about the positive and negative impacts of digital media. In the learning process, students are invited to have a reflective dialogue about the use of social media, the spread of hoaxes, cyberbullying, and communication ethics in cyberspace. This strategy helps learners to not only become technology users, but also individuals who are able to think critically and take responsibility for their every digital action. This approach is in line with the spirit of Pela Gandong which teaches deliberation, togetherness, and concern for life together in the community.

Third, teachers associate biblical values with students' digital lives. The teacher instilled teachings such as Colossians 4:6 about loving speech, Proverbs 12:22 about honesty, and John 13:34 about love for others as ethical guidelines for using digital media. These biblical values are combined with the principles of Pela Gandong so that students are encouraged to use technology politely, honestly, not spread hatred, and be able to maintain brotherhood in the digital space. Thus, local culture and Christian faith values complement each other in shaping students' digital characters.

The learning strategy is in line with the view of UNESCO (2021) which emphasizes that ideal digital literacy does not only focus on technical skills, but must also integrate cognitive, affective, and ethical aspects. In this context, Pela Gandong's culture-based Christian Education can be an important bridge in shaping students to be not only "digitally literate," but also have digital ethics based on love, brotherhood, and social responsibility.

Implications

The results of this study show that Christian Religious Education based on Pela Gandong culture has important implications in the formation of students' digital character in

the modern technological era. Christian Religious Education teachers not only function as teachers of religious materials, but also as moral and cultural coaches who help students understand the responsible use of technology. The integration of Christian values with the Pela Gandong culture provides a strong ethical basis for students to build mutual respect, maintain brotherhood, and avoid negative behaviors in the digital space such as hate speech, cyberbullying, and the spread of false information.

Another implication can be seen in strengthening contextual learning in the Independent Curriculum. The value of Pela Gandong can be used as a relevant learning resource to connect students' lives with the challenges of today's digital world. Through this approach, students not only understand the concept of digital literacy theoretically, but are also able to apply it in daily life based on the values of solidarity, love, and social responsibility. Thus, PAK learning becomes closer to the reality of students' lives and is able to build awareness that technology must be used to strengthen social relations and create a harmonious life. In addition, this research also has implications for the importance of synergy between schools, families, churches, and communities in forming a healthy digital culture. Pela Gandong's values that emphasize togetherness and brotherhood can be the foundation in creating an educational environment that supports the development of students' digital ethics. When all elements of education have the same vision in instilling local moral and cultural values, it will be easier for students to build their identity as a digital generation that is intelligent, critical, faithful, and characterful.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the role of Pela Gandong's culture-based Christian Religious Education teacher has a significant contribution in shaping ethical digital literacy in students at SMP Negeri 5 Ambon. In the midst of the rapid development of digital technology, Christian Religious Education teachers play the role of educators, role models, moral guides, facilitators, as well as transformation agents who instill Christian values and local culture of Maluku in the use of digital media. The integration of Pela Gandong's values such as brotherhood, solidarity, mutual respect, and social responsibility with biblical teachings is able to guide students to use technology wisely, honestly, critically, and compassionately. Through contextual and reflective learning, students not only have technical digital literacy skills, but are also able to demonstrate ethical behavior in the digital space. Thus, Pela Gandong-based Christian Religious Education is a relevant approach in forming a digital generation that is intelligent, characterful, faithful, and able to maintain social harmony in the midst of the challenges of the digital era.

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