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Digital Collaboration in Christian Education: Synergy of Family, Church, and School in the Age of Technology

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Abstract. The development of digital technology has not only transformed educational systems and methods in general, but also challenged the paradigm of Christian education based on relationships and spiritual values. In the fast-paced and connected digital era, collaboration between families, churches, and Christian schools is key to maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of faith education. This study aims to identify the main challenges faced in implementing technology in these three domains, explore emerging synergistic opportunities, and formulate practical strategies that can support digital collaboration based on Christian values. The research method used was a descriptive qualitative approach using literature studies and direct interviews with stakeholders from various backgrounds—pastors, evangelical teachers, and Christian religious leaders. The results indicate that the targeted and valuable use of technology can strengthen communication, expand access to faith learning, and create a more inclusive and collaborative Christian education ecosystem. However, supervision, human resource training, and contextual content design remain urgently needed to prevent technology from becoming a barrier to spiritual growth. This study provides practical and conceptual contributions for educators, churches, and families in integrating technology wisely for the faith growth of today's generation.

Keywords: Christian Education, Digital Technology, Collaboration, Christian School, Digital Synergy.

1. Introduction

Christian education is a process of developing the whole person, encompassing not only intellectual aspects but also character and spirituality, based on the light of Christ's truth [1]. Since 2022, Indonesia has implemented the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes flexible and contextual learning. This reform was further reinforced through the policy of the Minister of Elementary and Secondary Education Regulation Number 13 of 2025, which officially adopted the Deep Learning Approach (PPM) as the primary pedagogical principle at all levels of education, from early childhood education (PAUD) to high school (SMA). This approach emphasizes meaningful, reflective, conscious, and holistic learning, encompassing the development of thought, feeling, heart, and physical activity. This aligns closely with the Christian educational approach, which pursues not only cognitive knowledge but also character and spirituality [2].

In Christian Religious Education and Character Education, an in-depth approach provides a significant opportunity to connect Christian faith to the context of everyday life [3]. However, in practice, religious instruction in schools often fails to effectively shape children's character without the support of family and church. Therefore, the active involvement of families and churches is crucial to achieving integrated faith education, as affirmed in Deuteronomy 6:6-7, which states that parents should teach God's word "when you sit in your house, when you walk by the road, when you lie down, and when you rise."

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The rapidly evolving digital transformation is increasingly opening up opportunities for collaboration between families, churches, and Christian schools [4]. Technology can bridge the limitations of time and space, and serve as a medium to strengthen synergy in children's faith and character education [5]. Unfortunately, many Christian educational institutions have not optimally utilized this technology for cross-institutional collaboration. Lack of coordination, limited digital literacy, and the absence of an integrated communication system have resulted in fragmented child education [6].

In this context, the family, church, and Christian school play a central role as three main pillars that are jointly responsible for forming the foundation of faith and morals in students. These three pillars complement each other and must work synergistically so that faith education can produce optimal results, forming a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also strong in faith [7]. In today's rapidly developing digital era, new challenges have emerged that force these three pillars to adapt and optimize technology as an educational and communication medium. Digital technology offers various innovative opportunities such as online learning, spiritual social media, and interactive platforms that can expand the reach of Christian education [8] . However, the synergy between the family, church, and Christian school cannot be effective without planned collaboration and the integration of strong faith values in the use of technology [9].

The challenges faced are not only limited to the availability of digital facilities and infrastructure, but also include limited understanding and digital literacy skills among families, educators, and church ministers [10]. In addition, the digital divide between generations and social groups can hinder access and optimal use of technology in Christian education. Furthermore, the integration of faith values into technological media is a crucial issue so that technology is not merely a mechanical tool, but truly supports the formation of a complete Christian character [10]. Another problem that arises is the lack of coordination and effective communication between families, churches, and Christian schools in utilizing technology together. This results in the implementation of informa l and formal education being fragmented and lacking continuity, so that the potential of technology to support holistic faith growth is not maximized [11]. In addition, there is also concern that technology that is not properly supervised can reduce the quality of togetherness in families and church communities, so wisdom and supervision are needed in its use [12].

Therefore, digital collaboration between families, churches, and Christian schools is no longer an option, but rather a strategic necessity that must be developed systematically [13]. This study aims to examine the challenges and opportunities for such collaboration, while also formulating strategies that can strengthen the synergy of these three pillars through digital technology [14]. With this approach, it is hoped that Christian education can remain relevant, effective, and effective in shaping the character and spirituality of future generations.

2. Literature review

2.1 Christian Education

The primary goal of Christian education is to shape students who grow holistically in knowledge, character, and faith. This education not only transfers knowledge, but also shapes individuals based on strong Christian values rooted in everyday life [15]. The family, church, and Christian schools, as the three main pillars of education, play a central, complementary role. The family is the first environment that forms the foundation of faith and morals from childhood, providing an atmosphere of love and deep informal learning [16]. The church functions as a spiritual community that strengthens faith

through ongoing teaching and worship practices [17]. Christian schools provide formal education that is systematic, structured, and directed in order to prepare students to face the challenges of the times while developing Christian character [18]. However, in the field, it is often found that these three pillars do not optimally work together synergistically. The fragmentation of roles between family, church, and school causes faith education to be carried out separately, which ultimately weakens the impact of character formation [19]. This phenomenon is increasingly complex with modern dynamics that change patterns of social interaction and communication, especially among the younger generation who are already highly dependent on digital technology [20]. This demands more effective and innovative collaboration to respond to the challenges of the times without sacrificing the values of faith that are at the core of Christian education [21].

2.2 Technology in Education

The development of digital technology has brought fundamental changes to educational practices, including Christian education. Technology offers a variety of new, more flexible methods, such as online learning, hybrid models combining face-to-face and online learning, and the use of social media as a platform for disseminating spiritual values [22]. These opportunities enable Christian education to reach a wider audience and provide more diverse and accessible learning resources [23]. However, in practice, the use of this technology does not always run smoothly. Some families, teachers, and church ministers experience difficulties in mastering technology and integrating it effectively into the learning process [24]. Furthermore, there are concerns that technology that is not properly monitored and directed can erode the quality of interpersonal relationships, especially togetherness within families and church communities, which are the primary medium for character and faith formation [25]. The digital content circulating does not necessarily always contain supportive Christian values, so strict supervision and content design that is spiritually and socially responsible are needed [26].

2.3 Digital Collaboration

Digital collaboration between families, churches, and Christian schools is a strategic solution to address these challenges. This collaboration requires a strong shared vision and structured communication to ensure effective and beneficial use of technology for strengthening faith [27]. Digital platforms such as educational apps, online forums, and social media can be utilized as a means of cross-institutional coordination and communication to support formal and informal learning [28].

However, many challenges remain in the field, such as a lack of skilled human resources in technology, a lack of awareness of the importance of collaboration, and a lack of regulations and guidelines for the use of technology in the context of Christian education [29]. Therefore, digital collaboration must be designed with a holistic approach that integrates technical, spiritual, and social aspects in order to be able to bridge the roles of family, church, and school synergistically [30]. In this way, Christian education can remain relevant and impactful in shaping the character of students in the fast-paced and complex digital era.

3. Method

3.1 Types of research

This research is a descriptive qualitative study using a case study approach. This approach was chosen because the research aims to deeply understand the experiences

and perspectives of Christian education practitioners regarding the application of digital collaboration in real-life contexts. The research focuses on how families, churches, and schools interact through digital technology to strengthen faith education. By using case studies, researchers can contextually explore how digital collaboration occurs, what challenges it faces, and what strategies and opportunities emerge within the practice. This approach also allows researchers to explore relational meanings and dynamics that cannot be explained through numbers or surveys, but rather through narratives of the experiences and reflections of practitioners in the field.

3.2 Research Location and Subjects

This research was conducted in Dairi Regency, North Sumatra Province, known for its dynamic Christian education and ministry activities, both in formal schools, churches, and within the family environment. This location was chosen based on the presence of various Christian educational institutions and church communities actively using digital technology in faith learning and cross-generational communication. The research subjects consisted of three main groups representing the pillars of Christian education: Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers, church ministers or Christian religious counselors, and parents who accompany their children in the technology-based learning process. These three groups represent the digital collaboration expected to occur between families, schools, and churches.

3.3 Data collection technique

The data in this study were obtained primarily through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and field documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted directly with key figures, such as Rev. Seni Iman Zai, Rolinduat Lumban Gaol, and Maslon Simatupang, who have direct experience in implementing faith education in the digital era. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing informants to openly express their views on the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for digital collaboration they experienced. In addition to interviews, participant observation was conducted by participating in digital-based learning and service activities in schools and churches, to directly observe the collaborative practices taking place in the field. Field documentation was used to record activities, reflections, and important statements throughout the research process.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions . In the data reduction stage, researchers selected and grouped information from interviews and observations into three major themes: challenges of digital collaboration, opportunities for digital collaboration, and collaborative strategies. The data presentation stage was carried out by organizing the results of the reduction into a narrative description that illustrates the interrelationships between the pillars of Christian education. Meanwhile, the conclusion drawing stage was carried out by interpreting the data inductively, namely from facts and field experiences to formulating a more conceptual understanding of the role of technology in building faith collaboration in the digital era.

Throughout the analysis process, researchers engaged in repeated reflection to ensure that the resulting interpretations remained true to the empirical data obtained. This interpretive approach enabled researchers to understand the meaning behind informants' statements, such as when Rev. Seni emphasized "digital wisdom" or when Rolinduat linked technology to human resource readiness. Analysis was conducted

simultaneously during the data collection process, allowing any new findings to be immediately verified and deepened.

3.5 Data Validity Test

To ensure the validity of the research results, four criteria were used according to Lincoln and Guba: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through member checking, which involved reconfirming the interview results with the informants to avoid misinterpretation. Transferability was achieved by providing detailed contextual descriptions so that the findings could be applied to the context of Christian education in other similar areas. Dependability was maintained through systematic and transparent recording of the research process, including the interview, observation, and analysis stages. Confirmability was achieved by comparing the observation and interview results to ensure the objectivity of the researcher's interpretation.

3.6 Comparative Approach

In addition to being descriptive, this study also uses a comparative approach to examine the alignment and differences between the field findings and those of other studies in similar contexts. This approach helps strengthen the validity of the results by examining the extent to which the informants' views align with general trends found in Christian education practices in the digital age. The comparison is not intended to generalize, but rather to enrich interpretation and demonstrate the position of this study's findings among similar studies. In this way, the research produces a more comprehensive understanding of how digital collaboration can be implemented effectively, contextually, and grounded in deep Christian values.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Digital Collaboration Challenges

Rev. Seni Iman Zai emphasized that technology is neutral and its use depends on wisdom and supervision to prevent it from damaging the quality of togetherness, especially within families. The interview results are as follows:

> *"Technology can be good or bad, depending on the user. Therefore, it requires oversight and wisdom, so that technology doesn't erode the quality and quantity of togetherness with others, especially family."*

Rev. Seni highlighted the ethical dimension of technology use, particularly within the family sphere, a key pillar of faith education. This demonstrates that technology should not replace the personal interactions essential to shaping Christian character. The digital wisdom required is the ability to manage technology to support communication and togetherness, not undermine them. In other words, technology integration should strengthen, not weaken, relationships between family members.

Rolinduat Lumban Gaol, a Bible teacher at the Indonesian Methodist Church, added that technology greatly assists informal and non-formal education, but requires competent human resources and strict supervision:

> *"Technology can help implement informal and non-formal education, but it requires supervision and human resources capable of providing it." (September 17, 2025)*

This dialogue highlighted the gap between technological potential and the readiness of educational practitioners in the field. Unprepared human resources will limit the effectiveness of technology, making investment in training and mentoring essential.

This indicates that Christian education must prioritize digital competency development as a strategic priority for optimal digital collaboration.

4.2 Digital Collaboration Opportunities

Maslon Simatupang, a civil servant and Christian religious instructor at the Dairi Regency Ministry of Religious Affairs Office, stated that technology can be a key tool for collaborating with families, churches, and Christian schools:

> *"Technology can be a facility that collaborates families, churches, and Christian schools in implementing informal and formal education."*

This opinion emphasizes technology as a strategic medium capable of bridging the functional divide between the pillars of Christian education. With digitalization, interactions are no longer limited by space and time, enabling more effective and responsive synergy. However, challenges remain in ensuring all parties can use technology effectively and communicate consistently with each other.

4.3 Collaborative Strategy

Some key strategies that can be implemented to optimize digital collaboration include:

> *"...it also requires content design that contributes well, and can be accessed by mobile phone."*
>
> *"Training and mentoring are the keys to successful implementation of technology in education."*
>
> *"The integrated platform facilitates information exchange and cross-institutional collaboration."*

4.4 Discussion

Based on the perspective of Rev. Seni Iman Zai, digital collaboration in Christian education requires technology to be positioned as a neutral tool and must be managed wisely so as not to damage the quality of togetherness, especially within the family sphere, a key pillar of faith education. Technology does facilitate access to information and interaction, but without wise oversight, it can easily erode the intimacy and depth of human relationships. In line with Yankouskaya et al. [31], uncontrolled use of technology risks creating social alienation and reducing the quality of interpersonal relationships. This means that the integration of digital devices and platforms should not replace direct interactions that shape character, but rather strengthen the rhythm of encounters, communication, and faith practices at home, school, and church. In this context, "digital wisdom" becomes a key competency: the ability to select, filter, organize time, and design the use of technology to contribute to spiritual and ethical formation, not the other way around.

The next challenge is the dimension of human resource (HR) readiness. Rolinduat Lumban Gaol emphasized that new technologies will help informal and non-formal education if accompanied by competent human resources and consistent supervision. emphasized that training and capacity building are key prerequisites, because without adequate digital literacy, technology tends to become a "useless tool" in the practice of learning and faith accompaniment. Real challenges in the field include the varying digital capabilities of teachers, educators, parents, and church ministers; the availability of infrastructure and device access; and content and time management that maintains a balance between online activities and offline togetherness. Without an adequate competency ecosystem, the potential of technology is fragmented and not integrated into the goals of Christian education.

On the other hand, opportunities for digital collaboration are wide open. Maslon Simatupang positions technology as a "connecting facility" that connects families, churches, and schools, allowing the roles of each pillar to synergize beyond the boundaries of space and time. In line with Adjin-Tette and Kwofie [32], digital platforms expand the reach of participation, enable more inclusive communication, and accelerate the exchange of information and faith-based learning materials. If carefully designed, digitalization can create responsive collaborative spaces: shared activity calendars, faith materials accessible via mobile phones, regular parent-teacher-pastor discussions, and reflective assignments that invite the involvement of all family members. This opportunity presents a new paradigm: Christian education is no longer a single institutional project, but an orchestration of three pillars that reinforce each other through digital channels.

To realize these opportunities, a comprehensive collaborative strategy is needed. First, the design of faith-based digital content should emphasize Christian values that are relevant, creative, and easily accessible via mobile devices, while also encouraging shared activities (family prayer, reflection, and the practice of love). Rev. Seni's emphasis on content that "contributes well" and is device-friendly aligns idea that content with strong values and interactivity increases learning interest and engagement. Second, digital literacy training for teachers and parents, as emphasized, is key to ensuring effective technology management: from the ability to select platforms, curate content, moderate interactions, to monitor screen time appropriately. Third, the development of an integrated communication platform across pillars, as directed, can reduce coordination gaps and ensure a clear, secure, and sustainable flow of information. Fourth, a regular monitoring and evaluation mechanism—based on the principle of "digital wisdom"—needs to be formulated so that technology consistently nourishes relationships and advances the goals of faith education, rather than simply adding to online activities.

When compared with the findings of previous relevant research, the above analysis demonstrates strong consistency. Studies on the impact of technology on families have found a dual pattern: technology facilitates communication but can reduce intimacy if not managed; this aligns warning and Rev. Seni's emphasis on the risk of "eroding togetherness." Research on the role of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers in the digital era also highlights the significant need for digital literacy and pedagogical preparedness: without training, teachers struggle to integrate spiritual values with safe and meaningful digital practices—much as. On the opportunity side, research on platform-based collaboration demonstrates increased participation and social connectedness when the design is inclusive, accessible, and allows for two-way interaction; this supports Maddix and Estep [33] notion of technology as a bridge to the synergy of the three pillars. In other words, empirical evidence confirms that the success of digital collaboration in Christian education rests on three things: the quality of faith content, human resource capacity, and an integrated communication architecture—all underpinned by an ethos of digital oversight and wisdom.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that digital technology has great potential to strengthen Christian education through synergistic collaboration between families, churches, and schools. However, this potential can only be realized if technology is used wisely, with supervision, and based on Christian faith values. Effective digital collaboration requires three main elements: designing relevant and inspiring spiritual content, increasing human resource capacity in digital literacy, and strengthening communication across the

pillars of Christian education to create a unified vision and direction for faith formation. Christian churches and schools are advised to establish a Spiritual Digital Content Development Team to design and manage faith-based learning materials that are creative, easily accessible, and capable of strengthening collaboration between families, churches, and schools in the digital era.

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7. Declaration

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