



Contents lists available at Journal Global Econedu  
**Journal of Educational and Learning Studies**  
ISSN: 2655-2760 (Print) ISSN: 2655-2779 (Electronic)  
Journal homepage: <http://jurnal.globaleconedu.org/index.php/jels>



## Faith-based ethical formation in children: a conceptual framework of parental spirituality, guided digital literacy, and church partnership

Ridwan Tonny Hasiholan Pane<sup>1\*)</sup>, Urbanus Urbanus<sup>2</sup>, Karnodin<sup>3</sup>, Daniel Daniel<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,3,4</sup>Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Khatulistiwa, Sintang, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Institut Agama Kristen Negeri, Palangka Raya, Indonesia

### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received Sep 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Revised Sep 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026

Accepted Oct 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026

#### Keyword:

Children's ethical formation,  
Parental spirituality,  
Guided digital literacy,  
Church partnership,  
Faith-based ethical formation  
ecosystem

### ABSTRACT

This study examines parental practices in children's ethical formation and develops a conceptual framework integrating parental spirituality, guided digital literacy, and church partnership. A qualitative case study involved 15 Christian parents from the IFGF Tebelian Congregation. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Three interconnected dimensions emerged: parental spirituality establishes ethical foundations through role modeling and value habituation; guided digital literacy promotes ethical discernment through digital mediation and self-regulation; and church partnership strengthens parental capacity through educational and pastoral support. These findings informed the Faith-Based Ethical Formation Ecosystem, emphasizing the synergistic relationship between family spirituality, digital guidance, and institutional support. Children's ethical formation represents a relational, spiritually grounded, and context-sensitive process. The proposed framework offers a conceptual contribution to faith-based parenting and digital ethics, warranting further validation across diverse sociocultural contexts.



© 2026 The Authors. Published by Global Econedu.

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-SA license  
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0>)

### Corresponding Author:

Ridwan Tonny Hasiholan Pane,  
Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Khatulistiwa,  
Email: [ridwantonnypane@gmail.com](mailto:ridwantonnypane@gmail.com)

## Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technology, cultural globalization, and evolving family dynamics has fundamentally transformed children's ethical formation within Christian families (Shin & Lwin, 2022; Utami et al., 2022). Children's moral development increasingly occurs across interconnected environments, including families, schools, churches, and digital platforms that expose them to diverse values, behaviors, and social influences (Karimah et al., 2024). Although digital technologies facilitate learning and communication, they also introduce ethical challenges involving inappropriate content, cyberbullying, misinformation, and behavioral influences that may conflict with Christian principles (Boiliu et al., 2023; Sirait et al., 2023; Dennis et al., 2021). These challenges require parents to move beyond conventional moral instruction toward fostering critical judgment, ethical responsibility, and value-based decision-making in both physical and digital environments (Samosir et al., 2026; Withey, 2023). Within Christian Religious Education, ethical formation encompasses the internalization of spiritual values through parental modeling, relational engagement, and consistent moral

practices (Wati & Dewantara, 2021; Purba & Retno, 2023). Consequently, parents remain the primary agents of ethical development, while their spiritual authenticity and everyday conduct significantly influence children's understanding and application of Christian values (Ester et al., 2022; Dethan & Wanggai, 2025).

In Indonesia, increasing digital engagement among children, changing parenting patterns, and limited family interaction have intensified the challenges of faith-based ethical education (Putra et al., 2025). Digital environments simultaneously provide opportunities for spiritual learning and expose children to potentially conflicting moral perspectives, requiring parents to develop competencies in digital mediation, critical content evaluation, and responsible technological engagement (Rumondor et al., 2025; Sugihyono et al., 2025). However, parental responsibility cannot be separated from the broader ecclesiastical environment. Churches contribute to children's spiritual development by providing religious education, pastoral guidance, parenting support, and opportunities for community engagement (Rezeki et al., 2026). Effective ethical formation therefore requires collaborative relationships in which churches strengthen parental competencies while families consistently translate spiritual teachings into everyday practices (Rantung et al., 2025; Soares et al., 2026). This relationship is particularly relevant to the International Full Gospel Fellowship (IFGF) Tebelian Congregation, where the continuity between family-based spiritual practices and church ministry provides an important context for examining children's ethical development (Aritonang & Labeti, 2026; Sitanggang, 2023). Understanding this interaction is essential for developing contextually responsive approaches to Christian parenting amid contemporary digital transformations.

Previous scholarship has established the significance of parental involvement, spiritual leadership, and family relationships in children's faith development and character formation. Bulan and George (2024) emphasized parental participation in Christian Religious Education as an important foundation for spiritual growth and religious commitment, while Herawati et al. (2024) highlighted the Christian family's role as a primary environment for intergenerational faith transmission. Nevertheless, existing studies predominantly examine parental spirituality, digital parenting, and church-based family ministry as separate educational domains. Research on digital parenting frequently prioritizes technological supervision, online safety, and parental restrictions rather than examining how digital engagement contributes to children's ethical reasoning and spiritual development (Andreias, 2023). Similarly, studies of church-based education often emphasize institutional programs without adequately explaining their integration into everyday family practices. Archer (2024) further provides a basis for considering the contextual implementation of parental responsibilities and the relational dynamics underlying ethical formation. Consequently, a significant research gap remains concerning how parental spirituality, guided digital literacy, and church partnership interact as mutually reinforcing dimensions of children's ethical education, particularly within local Christian congregations in Indonesia.

To address this gap, the present study adopts Spiritual Formation Theory as its principal theoretical foundation, conceptualizing ethical development as a continuous transformation shaped by spiritual disciplines, interpersonal relationships, and everyday religious practices (Kristeno, 2023). This perspective recognizes that ethical values become meaningful when children actively internalize and apply them through lived experiences rather than merely acquiring normative knowledge (Sciaccia et al., 2022). Faith Development Theory further informs the understanding of children's progressive spiritual and moral development, while Family Systems Theory explains how reciprocal interactions among family members influence behavioral patterns and value formation (Weeland, 2021). These perspectives are complemented by Christian Parenting, Digital Parenting, and Family Ministry as applied conceptual approaches. Their integration establishes a theoretical basis for examining three interconnected dimensions: authentic parental spirituality, which provides moral foundations through consistent role modeling and spiritual habituation; guided digital literacy, which facilitates ethical discernment and responsible participation in digital environments; and family-church partnership, which reinforces parental capacities through educational, relational, and pastoral support.

The novelty of this study lies in synthesizing these dimensions into the proposed Faith-Based Ethical Formation Ecosystem, a conceptual framework that positions children's ethical development as a relational, context-sensitive, and spiritually grounded process. Unlike approaches that independently emphasize parental religious practices, digital supervision, or institutional religious education, this framework explains their complementary functions within an integrated educational environment. Authentic parental spirituality establishes the normative foundation of ethical formation, guided digital literacy translates spiritual values into responsible digital practices, and church partnership provides institutional and communal reinforcement. Importantly, the framework conceptualizes children as active participants in ethical learning who develop moral discernment through dialogue, reflection, modeling, and everyday experiences. By connecting spiritual formation with contemporary digital challenges and ecclesiastical support, the proposed ecosystem offers a more comprehensive perspective on how Christian families can cultivate ethical responsibility while responding to changing sociocultural conditions.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine parental practices in children's ethical formation and develop a conceptual framework integrating authentic parental spirituality, guided digital literacy, and church partnership within the IFGF Tebelian Congregation. Using a qualitative case-study approach, the research explores how these dimensions are enacted, interconnected, and reinforced through parents' experiences of spiritual guidance, digital accompaniment, and church engagement. Particular attention is directed toward understanding the relationship between parental spiritual commitments and everyday practices, the opportunities and challenges of digital technology, and the complementary responsibilities of families and churches. The study contributes to Christian Religious Education by proposing an empirically grounded conceptual synthesis that extends existing discussions of faith-based parenting beyond isolated educational practices. Practically, the framework offers a foundation for developing contextually appropriate parenting initiatives, digital ethics education, and collaborative family ministry, while providing directions for subsequent research across diverse Christian family and sociocultural settings.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative approach using an intrinsic case study design. This design was selected because the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular case considered unique and important to examine within its contextual setting, namely the practice of children's faith education within Christian families of the IFGF Sintang Congregation. The study was not intended to test hypotheses or produce statistical generalizations but rather to explore in depth the experiences, perceptions, and meanings attributed by informants to the practice of children's faith education within Christian family life. In this approach, the researcher served as the primary instrument in the processes of data collection, interpretation, and analysis, thereby enabling a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

### **Research Setting**

The study was conducted at the International Full Gospel Fellowship (IFGF) Tebelian Congregation, Sintang Regency, West Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. The research site was purposively selected because the congregation demonstrates particular attention to family and children's ministries and reflects diverse practices of faith education within its congregation. These characteristics made the IFGF Tebelian Congregation an information-rich case that was relevant to the study's focus on children's faith education within Christian families.

### **Informants and Sampling Technique**

Research informants were selected using purposive sampling. The primary informants consisted of 15 Christian parents who were active members of the congregation and actively involved in supporting their children's spiritual development. Supporting informants included the pastor, Sunday school teachers, and elders or leaders responsible for family ministry. Informants were selected based on their relevant experiences and knowledge concerning children's faith education within both the family and church contexts. The number of informants was not determined through statistical calculations but according to the principle of data saturation, which was reached when the information obtained revealed recurring patterns and no significant new information emerged.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Primary data were collected through in-depth semistructured interviews with the primary and supporting informants. The interviews were conducted to explore informants' experiences, perceptions, practices, and interpretations regarding children's faith education within Christian families. In addition to interviews, primary data were obtained through observations of faith-education activities within families and family development activities conducted by the church.

Secondary data were obtained from the Bible, scholarly literature on Christian Religious Education and family ministry, relevant journal articles, and internal congregational documents, including the church profile and family ministry programs. The use of multiple data sources was intended to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the context and practices of children's faith education.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The data were analyzed through an iterative thematic analysis process involving data familiarization, coding, categorization, theme development, and interpretation. The analysis began with repeated readings of the interview transcripts to develop a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences, perspectives, and practices related to children's faith and ethical formation. Relevant statements were then coded and grouped into categories based on similarities, differences, and recurring patterns, after which the categories were refined into broader themes. Such an iterative and systematic approach enables qualitative researchers to maintain a clear connection between empirical data, coding processes, and emerging interpretations (Lochmiller, 2021; Bingham,

2023). The emerging findings were subsequently organized thematically to facilitate comparison across participants and the three principal dimensions of the study: authentic parental spirituality, guided digital literacy, and church partnership. Particular attention was given to parental role modeling, spiritual communication, value habituation, digital guidance, and family church interaction. The relationships among the themes were then examined and continuously compared with the original interview data to verify the consistency of interpretations. Finally, the three dimensions were analyzed integratively to develop a conceptual understanding of how family spirituality, digital practices, and church support interact in children's faith and ethical formation. This integrative thematic process also supported the development of the proposed conceptual model from the empirical findings (Naeem et al., 2023; Saunders et al., 2023).

### Data Validity and Credibility

The credibility of the findings was strengthened through source triangulation by comparing information obtained from parent informants with supporting informants and relevant family-development documents maintained by the church. This process was conducted to assess the consistency of information across sources and to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. In addition, member checking was conducted by returning selected interpretations to participants for confirmation and clarification, ensuring that the researcher's interpretations accurately represented the meanings and experiences conveyed by the informants.

### Research Ethics

This study adhered to research ethics by obtaining voluntary informed consent from all participants before data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their involvement, and their rights as research participants. Their identities and personal information were kept confidential, and the data were used solely for research purposes. Participants were also free to decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty or negative consequences.

## Results and Discussions

In the results section, the authors present the findings of the study as empirical evidence to support the quality and credibility of the research.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of Research Informants

| Characteristics        | Description                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of informants   | 15 christian parents                                                                                                            |
| Status                 | Active members of the IFGF Tebelian Congregation                                                                                |
| Involvement            | Parents with children who are directly involved in the development of children's values and ethical education within the family |
| Gender                 | 8 females (53.3%) and 7 males (46.7%)                                                                                           |
| Age range              | 28–47 years                                                                                                                     |
| Educational background | Senior high school to Master's degree (M.Ed./M.A.)                                                                              |
| Family context         | Christian families that practice value habituation, parental modeling, spiritual communication, and child guidance              |

Source: Primary research data

Based on these characteristics, the diversity of the informants provides varied perspectives on children's ethical education practices, drawing on the experiences of both fathers and mothers from different backgrounds. The interview data indicate that mothers were more actively involved in accompanying children in their daily activities and developing value-based habits, whereas fathers tended to emphasize role modeling, responsibility, prayer, and guidance as components of spiritual leadership within the family. Nevertheless, all informants demonstrated a shared understanding that children's ethical education is a collective responsibility within the family.

**Table 2.** Empirical Findings on Children's Ethical Education through Authentic Parental Spirituality

| Emergent Theme                            | Key Empirical Finding                                                                                        | Observed Parental Practices                                                                      | Relevance to Children's Ethical Development                               |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Alignment between faith and daily conduct | Parents reported efforts to maintain consistency between the Christian values communicated to their children | Modeling honesty, responsibility, compassion, forgiveness, and discipline in daily interactions. | Provides children with direct and observable examples of ethical conduct. |

| Emergent Theme                            | Key Empirical Finding                                                                                                                                                                               | Observed Parental Practices                                                                                                                     | Relevance to Children's Ethical Development                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                           | and their own everyday conduct.                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                           |
| Parental role modeling                    | Role modeling emerged as a prominent pattern across the interviews. Parents emphasized that children learn values not only through verbal instruction but also through observing parental behavior. | Demonstrating appropriate behavior, maintaining positive habits, using respectful language, and responding constructively to everyday problems. | Supports children's acquisition of ethical values through observation and behavioral imitation.                           |
| Emotional and spiritual engagement        | Parents described involving children in shared spiritual experiences and conversations about faith and everyday life.                                                                               | Praying together, reading the Bible, discussing faith experiences, and talking about moral or everyday concerns.                                | Creates opportunities for children to connect Christian values with interpersonal relationships and everyday experiences. |
| Openness to parental growth               | Parents acknowledged that ethical and spiritual development is also an ongoing process for themselves.                                                                                              | Acknowledging mistakes, apologizing to children, discussing personal shortcomings, and reflecting on experiences together.                      | Model humility, accountability, and willingness to learn from mistakes.                                                   |
| Value habituation through family routines | Ethical education was embedded in recurring family activities rather than limited to formal instruction.                                                                                            | Praying before meals and bedtime, participating in worship, reading the Bible, and reinforcing positive behavioral routines.                    | Facilitates the repeated practice and internalization of Christian values in everyday life.                               |
| Challenges in maintaining consistency     | Some parents reported difficulties in consistently implementing ethical and spiritual practices within the family.                                                                                  | Managing limited time and competing demands related to employment, family responsibilities, and church ministry.                                | Indicates the need for practical strategies and supportive environments to sustain family-based ethical education.        |

Source: Primary research data

**Table 3.** Empirical Findings on Children's Ethical Education through Guided Digital Literacy

| Emergent Theme                                         | Key Empirical Finding                                                                                                                   | Observed Parental Practices                                                                                         | Relevance to Children's Ethical Development                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Understanding children's digital environments          | Parents described efforts to understand the digital platforms, applications, games, and content accessed by their children.             | Identifying applications, social media platforms, games, and digital content used by children.                      | Enables parents to provide guidance that is responsive to children's actual digital experiences.               |
| Guided technology use                                  | Parents emphasized accompanying children in their use of technology rather than relying solely on prohibition or restriction.           | Accompanying children when accessing digital content and discussing appropriate and inappropriate uses.             | Encourages children to develop responsibility in making digital choices.                                       |
| Transforming digital risks into learning opportunities | Digital technology was viewed not only as a potential source of risk but also as a medium for reinforcing family-based value education. | Using Bible applications, Christian digital music, educational videos, and discussions of selected digital content. | Creates opportunities for Christian values to be practiced and discussed within contemporary digital contexts. |
| Development of digital wisdom                          | Parents emphasized the importance of helping children evaluate, select,                                                                 | Encouraging critical thinking, discernment, self-control, and responsible decision-making.                          | Supports children's capacity to make ethically informed                                                        |

| Emergent Theme                                       | Key Empirical Finding                                                                                                                            | Observed Parental Practices                                                                                                  | Relevance to Children's Ethical Development                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Integration of Christian values in digital practices | and respond appropriately to digital content.<br>Parents connected children's digital behavior with values already emphasized within the family. | Discussing love, responsibility, honesty, respect, self-control, and appropriate behavior in relation to digital activities. | decisions in digital environments.<br>Extends ethical learning from the family environment into children's everyday digital interactions. |

Source: Primary research data

**Table 4.** Empirical Findings on Church Partnership in Children's Ethical Education

| Emergent Theme                            | Key Empirical Finding                                                                                                                              | Forms of Church Support                                                                                     | Relevance to Family-Based Ethical Education                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Clarity of parental and church roles      | Parents viewed the family as the primary setting for children's ethical education, while the church was expected to provide complementary support. | Reinforcing values and practices introduced by parents rather than replacing the family's educational role. | Maintains parental responsibility while strengthening the broader support system for children's ethical development. |
| Mutual respect and non-judgmental support | Parents expressed the need for church support that recognizes family challenges without creating feelings of judgment.                             | Pastoral accompaniment, open communication, and supportive interaction with families.                       | Strengthens trust and creates a supportive relationship between parents and the church.                              |
| Parental empowerment                      | Parents identified a need for additional knowledge and skills to address contemporary parenting and digital challenges.                            | Christian parenting seminars, digital parenting training, and educational resources.                        | Strengthens parents' capacity to provide consistent ethical guidance at home.                                        |
| Complementary church programs             | Church-based activities were perceived as complementary to ethical education already taking place within families.                                 | Sunday School, small groups, family worship, and family development programs.                               | Reinforces values introduced in the home through additional communal learning experiences.                           |
| Pastoral accompaniment                    | Parents indicated that families may require additional support when facing difficulties in children's education and development.                   | Family counseling and spiritual accompaniment.                                                              | Provides families with relational and spiritual resources for addressing educational challenges constructively.      |
| Two-way communication                     | Parents valued opportunities to communicate their challenges, concerns, and educational needs to church leaders and ministry workers.              | Dialogue involving parents, pastors, and church ministry personnel.                                         | Enables church services and programs to respond more appropriately to the contextual needs of families.              |

Source: Primary research data

**Table 5.** Integration of the Three Dimensions of Children's Ethical Education

| Model Component                 | Position within the Model | Core Elements                                                          | Educational Mechanism                                         | Expected Contribution                               |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Authentic parental spirituality | Foundational dimension    | Integrity, role modeling, spiritual involvement, and continuous growth | Role modeling, value habituation, and spiritual communication | Establishes the relational and moral foundation for |

| <b>Model Component</b>                 | <b>Position within the Model</b> | <b>Core Elements</b>                                                              | <b>Educational Mechanism</b>                                                     | <b>Expected Contribution</b>                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Guided digital literacy                | Adaptive dimension               | Digital awareness, parental guidance, discernment, and digital wisdom             | Dialogue, content evaluation, guided technology use, and ethical decision-making | children's ethical development. Enables children to apply ethical values within digital environments. |
| Church partnership                     | Supporting infrastructure        | Parental empowerment, complementary ministry, pastoral support, and communication | Family development, accompaniment, resource provision, and community support     | Strengthens the continuity and capacity of family-based ethical education.                            |
| Role modeling and value communication  | Integrative mechanism            | Behavior, dialogue, reflection, and habituation                                   | Parent-child interaction and family-church communication                         | Connects Christian values with children's everyday experiences and practices.                         |
| Children's ethical education ecosystem | Integrative model                | Interaction among parental spirituality, digital literacy, and church partnership | Collaboration among family, digital environment, and church community            | Provides a contextual, integrated, and sustainable framework for children's ethical education.        |

Source: Primary research data and conceptual synthesis of the findings

**Table 6. Conceptual Model of Faith-Based Children's Ethical Education**

| <b>Model Stage</b>   | <b>Core Component</b>                     | <b>Process Identified</b>                                                                                          | <b>Conceptual Output</b>                                                    |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Foundation           | Authentic parental spirituality           | Parents embody Christian values in their own lives before communicating them to their children.                    | Parental role modeling and moral credibility.                               |
| Value transmission   | Role modeling and spiritual communication | Christian values are communicated through everyday family interactions, dialogue, and shared spiritual practices.  | Children's understanding and habituation of ethical values.                 |
| Contemporary context | Guided digital literacy                   | Parents accompany children in understanding and using digital technology responsibly.                              | Digital wisdom and ethically informed decision-making.                      |
| External support     | Church partnership                        | The church empowers parents, provides pastoral accompaniment, and offers complementary educational resources.      | Strengthened parental capacity and continuity of ethical education.         |
| Integration          | Family-digital environment-church         | The three dimensions operate in a complementary and mutually reinforcing relationship.                             | An integrated ecosystem for children's ethical education.                   |
| Conceptual outcome   | Faith-based children's ethical education  | Christian values are applied consistently across family life, digital environments, and church-supported contexts. | Contextualized, integrated, and sustainable ethical education for children. |

Source: Primary research data and conceptual synthesis of the findings

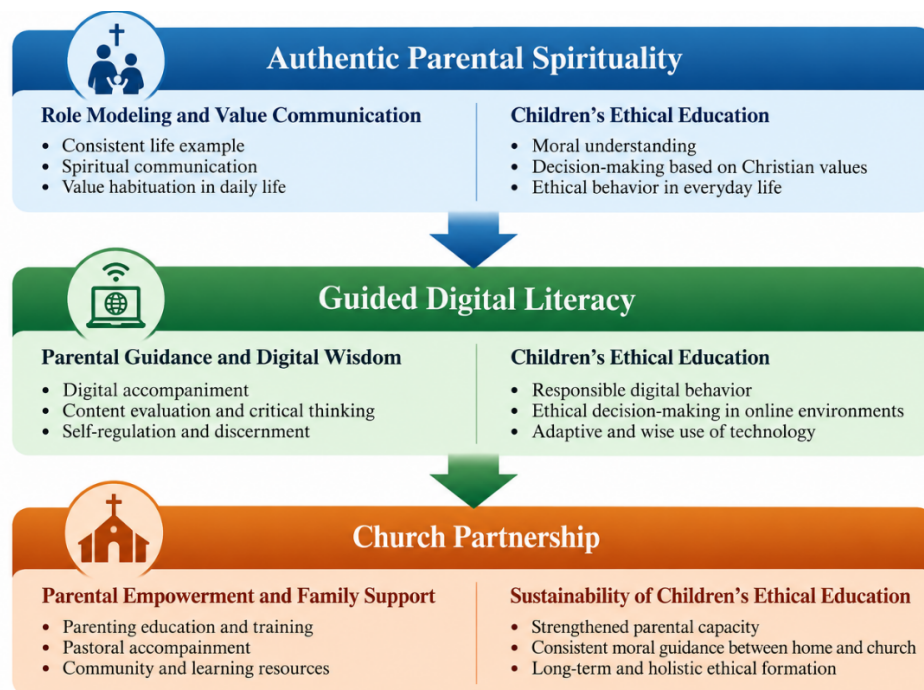


**Figure 1.** Conceptual Model of Children Ethical Education

The findings demonstrate that authentic parental spirituality constitutes the foundational dimension of children's ethical formation, operating through the consistency between religious beliefs, parental behavior, and everyday family interactions. Rather than functioning merely as religious instruction, parental spirituality provides an experiential foundation through which children observe, interpret, and internalize Christian ethical values. This finding reinforces previous research emphasizing parental role modeling and spiritual engagement as essential mechanisms of moral development (Boloje, 2024; Nurmawati, 2025; Høeg, 2020). Ethical values such as honesty, compassion, responsibility, and forgiveness become meaningful when consistently demonstrated through parental communication, conflict resolution, and daily decision-making (Muzekki et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2025). Furthermore, supportive parent–child relationships facilitate moral reflection, emotional security, and opportunities for ethical learning, consistent with relational perspectives on character development (Sari et al., 2026; Fristyarini et al., 2025). Importantly, parental authenticity also involves acknowledging mistakes, demonstrating accountability, and engaging children in reflective dialogue rather than relying exclusively on authoritative moral instruction (Buaya, 2024). These findings extend conventional interpretations of Christian parenting by positioning spirituality not simply as a personal religious attribute but as a relational and pedagogical mechanism that transforms theological commitments into observable ethical practices. Consequently, children's ethical formation emerges through repeated interactions involving parental modeling, value communication, experiential learning, and spiritual habituation.

The second dimension concerns guided digital literacy as an adaptive mechanism through which Christian ethical values are translated into children's increasingly digital experiences. The findings suggest that parental spirituality alone may be insufficient to address contemporary ethical challenges unless parents possess the competencies required to understand digital environments and guide children's technological engagement (Anorica, 2025). Guided digital literacy therefore extends beyond technological supervision and restrictive mediation toward critical content evaluation, ethical dialogue, responsible participation, and the development of children's self-regulation. This interpretation aligns with research demonstrating that active parental mediation and supportive parent–child communication contribute to more constructive digital engagement and greater parental awareness of children's online experiences (Liu et al., 2023; Geržičáková et al., 2023). Moreover, digital parenting should be understood as a dynamic relational process involving negotiation, trust, and adaptation to children's developmental needs rather than a fixed set of technological restrictions (Laftona et al., 2024). Within Christian ethical education, this approach enables parents to connect spiritual principles with practical digital dilemmas, including online communication, misinformation, inappropriate content, and responsible technology use. The findings therefore extend existing digital parenting perspectives by emphasizing the integration of ethical discernment and spiritual guidance, positioning digital literacy as a context-sensitive educational practice rather than merely a protective or technical competence.

The third dimension highlights family–church partnership as an essential supporting infrastructure that strengthens parental capacity and sustains children's ethical formation. The findings indicate that effective church involvement depends not on replacing parental responsibilities but on empowering families through spiritual guidance, parenting education, reciprocal communication, and pastoral accompaniment. This interpretation supports previous scholarship emphasizing the importance of connecting church-based family ministry with everyday faith formation within the home (Mermilliod, 2021; Hafashimana, 2022). Collaborative relationships among parents, churches, and religious educators can strengthen continuity between institutional religious instruction and family-based ethical practices, particularly when communication and parental participation are actively encouraged (Tarihoran et al., 2024). Furthermore, contemporary digital challenges require churches to provide practical resources that enable parents to navigate children's technological experiences while maintaining coherent Christian ethical orientations (Muyapa, 2026). The findings reinforce research identifying parental involvement and collaborative ministry as central to children's spiritual development (Andreias, 2023; Trisnawati et al., 2026). However, the present study extends these perspectives by conceptualizing church partnership as an enabling structure characterized by role clarity, reciprocal communication, parental empowerment, and continuity of ethical formation across home and church environments. Accordingly, church effectiveness should be understood not exclusively through participation in religious programs but also through its contribution to parents' capacity to cultivate ethical values consistently within everyday family life.

Integrating these findings, the proposed Faith-Based Ethical Formation Ecosystem conceptualizes children's ethical development as an interconnected process involving authentic parental spirituality, guided digital literacy, and family–church partnership. Its principal theoretical contribution lies in explaining the complementary functions of these dimensions rather than treating them as independent determinants of ethical formation. Parental spirituality establishes the normative foundation through which Christian values are embodied and communicated, consistent with evidence emphasizing intergenerational religious transmission and parental involvement in children's spiritual development (Gemar, 2023; Amanit & Willyam, 2025). Guided digital literacy facilitates the contextual application of these values through active parental mediation and ethical reflection, while church partnership provides institutional and relational support that reinforces parental engagement. This interpretation is consistent with research highlighting the importance of integrating parental example, communication, and everyday spiritual practices in Christian character education (Halawa et al., 2024; Kalensang et al., 2025). Furthermore, the framework supports the centrality of the family as the primary environment for ethical formation while recognizing the complementary contributions of religious institutions and digital environments (Aritonang & Labeti, 2026). Unlike fragmented approaches that emphasize religious instruction, technological restriction, or church-based programming independently, the proposed ecosystem identifies the relationships through which spiritual commitments are translated into ethical practices. Its conceptual significance therefore resides in positioning children's ethical formation as a relational, adaptive, and context-sensitive process sustained through continuous interaction among family spirituality, digital guidance, and ecclesiastical support.

The integrated framework also suggests that ethical formation develops through reciprocal relationships rather than a predetermined linear sequence. Parental spirituality informs ethical guidance in digital environments, emerging technological challenges encourage reflection on parenting practices, and church support strengthens families' capacity to respond to changing educational and spiritual needs. These reciprocal processes emphasize children's active participation in moral learning through observation, dialogue, reflection, and repeated ethical practice. Nevertheless, the framework should be interpreted within the methodological boundaries of the present qualitative case study. Because the findings were derived from the perspectives of 15 Christian parents within a single congregation, they provide a contextually grounded conceptual interpretation rather than evidence of causal relationships or broad generalizability. The absence of direct children's perspectives and longitudinal observations also limits conclusions regarding the actual internalization and sustained behavioral expression of ethical values. Future research should therefore examine the proposed framework across diverse congregational and sociocultural settings, incorporate children's and church leaders' perspectives, and investigate how the three dimensions interact over time. Despite these limitations, the study contributes to Christian Religious Education by offering an integrated conceptual foundation for understanding how parental spirituality, guided digital literacy, and church partnership may collectively support children's ethical formation within contemporary Christian families.

## Conclusions

This study concludes that children's ethical formation within Christian families is shaped by the interconnected roles of authentic parental spirituality, guided digital literacy, and church partnership. Based on a qualitative case study involving 15 Christian parents from the IFGF Tebelian Congregation, the findings highlight parental

spirituality as the foundation of ethical values through role modeling and daily practices, guided digital literacy as a means of fostering responsible digital engagement, and church partnership as essential support for strengthening parental capacity. The integration of these dimensions produces the Faith-Based Ethical Formation Ecosystem, a conceptual framework that positions the family as the primary environment for children's ethical development. This framework contributes to Christian Religious Education by conceptualizing ethical formation as a relational, spiritually grounded, and context-sensitive process. Although grounded in a single congregational context, the proposed framework provides a foundation for further research across diverse sociocultural settings.

## References

- Amanit, J. S., & Willyam, V. (2025). Didaskalia: Pendidikan Kristen di dalam keluarga bagi anak berakar, bertumbuh dan berbuah di era digital. *DIDASKO: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen*, 5(2), 167–179. <https://doi.org/10.52879/didasko.v5i2.175>
- Andreias, T. (2023). Family involvement: An attempt to synergize parents and church on youth ministry in the post-pandemic era. *Veritas: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan*, 22(1), 81–96. <https://doi.org/10.36421/veritas.v22i1.617>
- Anorico, H. C. (2025). Rediscovering faith and family connections: A study of university students' engagement in online catechesis. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2025.2550945>
- Archer, B. (2024). Moving from faith development to faith engagement in Christian schools: A scoping review. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 17(1), 136–154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19397909231196583>
- Aritonang, J. I. P., & Labeti, U. C. S. (2026). Peran orang tua dalam Pendidikan Agama Kristen di keluarga jemaat Gereja Keluarga Allah Klaten. *Didaktik: Jurnal Ilmiah PGSD STKIP Subang*, 12(3), 325–338. <https://doi.org/10.36989/didaktik.v12i03.17347>
- Bingham, A. J. (2023). From data management to actionable findings: A five-phase process of qualitative data analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231183620>
- Boiliu, N. I., Wiryadinata, H., Hidayat, U. F., & Purba, S. (2024). Peran orang tua sebagai pendidik iman dengan pembentukan moral dan pembentukan iman di Gereja Kristen Jawa se-Klasik Banyumas Selatan. *Jurnal Teologi Berita Hidup*, 6(2), 442–461. <https://doi.org/10.38189/jtbh.v6i2.705>
- Boloje, B. O. (2024). Parenting, family guidance and spiritual education: Proverbs 1:8–9 and its wisdom ethos for children's moral development. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 45(1), 3285. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v45i1.3285>
- Buaya, D. W., & Kolibu, D. R. (2024). The integration of technology in family Christian religious education in the digital era. *ENDLESS: International Journal of Future Studies*, 7(1), 90–103. <https://doi.org/10.54783/endlessjournal.v7i1.248>
- Bulan, S. E., & George, A. (2024). Shema and Christian Religious Education in the family in Deuteronomy 6:4–9: The Bible and the quest for the development of children's character. *MODERATE: Journal of Religious, Education, and Social*, 2(1), 67–84. <https://doi.org/10.46362/moderate.v2i1.14>
- Dennis, M., & Harrison, T. (2021). Unique ethical challenges for the 21st century: Online technology and virtue education. *Journal of Moral Education*, 50(3), 251–266. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2020.1781071>
- Dethan, V. O., & Wanggai, F. F. I. (2025). Peran keteladanan orang tua dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen bagi anak dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. *REAL DIDACHE: Journal of Christian Education*, 5(2), 96–111. <https://doi.org/10.53547/scw00t11>
- Ester, E., Rini, W. A., Triyanto, Y., Widiyanto, M. A., & Fernando, A. (2022). The influence of Christian Religious Education in family and parenting styles on adolescent character formation. *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat*, 6(1), 76–83. <https://doi.org/10.46445/ejti.v6i1.470>
- Fristyarini, A., Raihana, S. N., & Muliani, M. (2025). Dynamics of moral and ethical development in children through religious-based education. *Journal of Family Sciences*, 10(1), 99–113. <https://doi.org/10.29244/jfs.v10i1.63071>
- Gemar, A. (2023). Parental influence and intergenerational transmission of religious belief, attitudes, and practices: Recent evidence from the United States. *Religions*, 14(11), 1373. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14111373>
- Geržičáková, M., Dedkova, L., & Mýlek, V. (2023). What do parents know about children's risky online experiences? The role of parental mediation strategies. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 141, 107626. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2022.107626>
- Hafashimana, G. (2022). Determining parental involvement in the Sunday School of Burundi Free Methodist Church in Buterere Parish. *Journal of Service Science and Management*, 15(1), 279–291. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2022.1012026>

- Halawa, D. T., Stevanus, K., & Yulianto, T. (2024). Pendekatan Pendidikan Agama Kristen anak: Parenting anak dalam keluarga Kristen di era teknologi digital. *HARVESTER: Jurnal Teologi dan Kepemimpinan Kristen*, 9(1), 92–105. <https://doi.org/10.52104/harvester.v9i1.186>
- Herawati, J. P., Sinaga, E. J., Butar-butur, M. L. E. F., & Sinurat, P. (2024). Dari mimesis menjadi mandiri: Pembiasaan sebagai pedagogi teologis keluarga dalam pembentukan karakter anak usia dini. *KURIOS*, 10(3), 851–863. <https://doi.org/10.30995/kur.v10i3.1044>
- Høeg, I. M. (2020). Religious parental transmission and the importance of authenticity. *Mission Studies*, 37(3), 416–434. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15733831-12341739>
- Kalensang, P. C., Arifianto, Y. A., & Triposa, R. (2025). Peran orang tua dalam membentuk karakter Kristus dalam diri anak di era digital. *EDULEAD: Journal of Christian Education and Leadership*, 6(2), 147–157. <https://doi.org/10.47530/edulead.v6i2.288>
- Karimah, I. S., Hendriani, A., Ningtyas, P. M., Kusnadi, U., Hendrawan, B., Putra, Y. P., Mulyana, A., & Herlambang, Y. T. (2024). Kecerdasan buatan (Artificial Intelligence) dalam pendidikan. *Naturalistic: Jurnal Kajian dan Penelitian Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*, 8(2), 193–204. <https://doi.org/10.35568/naturalistic.v8i2.4702>
- Kristeno, M. R., & Tarihoran, E. (2023). Children's faith development through faith formation activities. *Mysterium Fidei: Journal of Asian Empirical Theology*, 1(3), 146–151. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10603088>
- Laftona, T., Wilhelmsena, J. E. B., & Holmarsdottir, H. B. (2024). Parental mediation and children's digital well-being in family life in Norway. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2023.2299956>
- Liu, J., Wu, L., Sun, X., Bai, X., & Duan, C. (2023). Active parental mediation and adolescent problematic Internet use: The mediating role of parent–child relationships and hiding online behavior. *Behavioral Sciences*, 13(8), 679. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13080679>
- Lochmiller, C. R. (2021). Conducting thematic analysis with qualitative data. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(6), 2029–2044.
- Mermilliod, E. P. (2021). A synthesis of academic research related to church-based family ministry. *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry*, 18(3), 406–423. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739891320974383>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Muyapa, L. (2026). Digital parenting: The role of parents in faith formation of children at Kingmi Edoutou Congregation, Nabire Classis. *Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence Journal*, 5(4), 1250–1265. <https://doi.org/10.31763/iota.v5i4.1083>
- Muzekki, M., Zulkifli, Z., Erlina, E., Hijriyah, U., & Irfani, B. (2024). Children's rights in worship and morality education: An Islamic perspective on the role of parents. *TARBIYA ISLAMIA: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Keislaman*, 14(2), 124–135. <https://doi.org/10.36815/tarbiya.v14i2.3572>
- Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K., & Ranfagni, S. (2023). A step-by-step process of thematic analysis to develop a conceptual model in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789>
- Nurmawati, M., & Kurniawan, M. A. (2025). The role of parents in moral education of children aged 0–5 years. *Al-Manarah: Journal of Education and Islamic Studies*, 1(02), 78–86.
- Purba, N. D., & Retno, P. (2023). The role of parents in Christian Religious Education in the family towards shaping the character of Generation Z children in facing the industry 5.0 era. *Journal Didaskalia*, 6(1), 11–22. <https://doi.org/10.33856/didaskalia.v6i1.297>
- Putra, Y. P., Ocsis, B., Saputra, W., & Fauzi, R. A. (2025). Kajian studi literatur: Perspektif budaya dan pendidikan di Indonesia. *Jurnal Pedagogik Indonesia: Yayasan Lembaga Pendidikan dan Pelatihan Ksatria Siliwangi*, 3(2), 233–239. <https://doi.org/10.67025/jpi.v3i2.60>
- Putri, A., Arisha, D., Salsabilah, A., Salimah, R., & Pradana, S. (2025). The family's role in early childhood moral and spiritual development. *SocioSphere: Interdisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1(2), 93–102.
- Rantung, D. A., Sianipar, D., Limbong, M., Silvanita, K., Widiarty, W. S., & Kaliey, I. M. (2025). Capacity building in Christian Religious Education, family education, and entrepreneurial spirit development: Strengthening services and growth of congregation at Toraja Church in Kuala Lumpur. *International Journal of Asia Pacific Community Service*, 2(2), 52–57. <https://doi.org/10.71131/nfrx9a23>
- Rezeki, S., Putra, Y. P., & Wahid, R. (2026). Implementation of religious habits in forming the religious character of elementary madrasah students. *Journal of Future Education*, 3(2), 24–31. <https://doi.org/10.67025/journaloffutureeducation.v3i2.59>
- Rumondor, M. Y. Y., Mawikere, M. C. S., & Raintung, A. (2025). Following Christ, not trends: Christian ethical formation for adolescents in the digital age. *International Journal of Education, Information Technology, and Others*, 8(3.A), 128–139.

- Samosir, C. M., Boiliu, N. I., Lewankoru, M. L., Ribka, R., & de Fretes, E. A. (2026). Pemahaman teologis orang tua Kristen tentang formasi iman anak dalam keluarga di Gereja Protestan Maluku. *Manna Rafflesia*, 12(2), 514–527. [https://doi.org/10.38091/man\\_raf.v12i2.664](https://doi.org/10.38091/man_raf.v12i2.664)
- Sari, D. A., Baharuddin, B., & Mubarrok, A. H. (2026). The dynamics of family education models in developing children's spirituality and creativity. *Berkala Ilmiah Pendidikan*, 6(2), 81–95. <https://doi.org/10.51214/bip.v6i2.2012>
- Saunders, C. H., Sierpe, A., von Plessen, C., Kennedy, A. M., Leviton, L. C., Bernstein, S. L., et al. (2023). Practical thematic analysis: A guide for multidisciplinary health services research teams engaging in qualitative analysis. *BMJ*, 381, e074256. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj-2022-074256>
- Sciacca, B., Laffan, D. A., Norman, J. O. H., & Milosevic, T. (2022). Parental mediation in pandemic: Predictors and relationship with children's digital skills and time spent online in Ireland. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 127, 107081. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.107081>
- Shin, W., & Lwin, M. O. (2022). Parental mediation of children's digital media use in high digital penetration countries: Perspectives from Singapore and Australia. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 32(4), 309–326. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2022.2026992>
- Sirait, J. E., Cibro, R. C. K., Sugiono, S., & Hardori, J. (2023). Strategi Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam keluarga untuk membangun attitude anak 6–12 tahun. *Edukasi: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 14(2), 112–121. <https://doi.org/10.47562/edk.v14i2.519>
- Sitanggang, M. H. (2023). Spiritual education for children as a shared responsibility between parents and the church. *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat*, 7(1), 80–88. <https://doi.org/10.46445/ejti.v7i1.630>
- Soares, F., Schuenke-Lucien, K., & Boothby, N. (2026). Activating systems of care for whole child development in fragile contexts: A case study from Haiti using the qualitative impact protocol. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X261428293>
- Sugihyono, S. (2025). The role of Christian education in developing responsible digital literacy among adolescents. *JURNAL TRANSFORMASI: Jurnal Teologi Dan Kepemimpinan*, 4(1), 50–58. <https://doi.org/10.66551/jt.v4i1.77>
- Tarihoran, E., Firmanto, A. D., & Kurniawan, A. Z. (2024). Improving the quality of children's faith formation through catechesis for First Communion preparation in the parish with a holistic approach. *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama dan Keagamaan*, 22(1), 125–136. <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v22i1.1696>
- Trisnawati, M. I., Setiyaningtiyas, N., Wijoyoko, G. D., & Jelahu, T. T. (2026). The family as the domestic church: An empirical study of Christian spirituality formation in early childhood within a parish pastoral framework. *International Perspectives in Christian Education and Philosophy*, 3(2), 08–15. <https://doi.org/10.61132/ipcep.v3i2.546>
- Utami, K., Apriliya, S., & Saputra, E. (2022). The urgency of digital literacy and ethics for parents in educating children in the digital age. *Jurnal Kependidikan*, 8(1), 58–67. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v8i1.4605>
- Wati, O., & Dewantara, A. W. (2021). Peran orang tua sebagai pendidik iman anak di tengah perkembangan teknologi digital. *CREDENDUM: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.34150/credendum.v3i2.1251>
- Weeland, J., Helmerhorst, K. O., & Lucassen, N. (2021). Understanding differential effectiveness of behavioral parent training from a family systems perspective: Families are greater than “some of their parts”. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 13(1), 34–57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12408>
- Withey, S. (2023). Rethinking the place of the family in the post-Covid church in the UK: An exploration of families' engagement with church during and after Covid. *Practical Theology*, 16(6), 642–654. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2023.2221587>