

The Influence of Technology Use on the Spiritual Closeness of IAKN Kupang Students

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze and understand the influence of technology on the spiritual closeness of students at the Christian State Institute (IAKN) Kupang. The rapid development of digital technology has brought changes to various aspects of life, including the spiritual lives of Christian students. This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving active students of IAKN Kupang selected through purposive sampling. The findings indicate that technology has a significant influence on students' spiritual closeness, both positively and negatively. Positive impacts include easier access to devotional materials, digital Bibles, online worship services, and spiritual content that supports faith development. On the other hand, negative impacts are reflected in reduced prayer time, declining spiritual discipline, and increased distractions due to excessive social media use. This study concludes that technology can serve as a means of supporting students' spiritual growth when used wisely, in balance, and based on Christian values.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The digital era has brought about major changes in various aspects of human life, including education, communication, and spirituality. Rapidly developing technologies, such as the internet, social media, digital applications, and modern communication devices, have become an inseparable part of student life. Technology not only functions as a communication tool and source of information, but also influences mindsets, lifestyles, and how individuals live their spiritual lives. (Simanjuntak, Hutagalung, Hutapea, & Simatupang, 2025) Among students, the increasing use of technology raises questions about its influence on one's spiritual closeness.

Christian students studying at the State Christian Institute (IAKN) Kupang are immersed in an academic environment that emphasizes faith values and spiritual development. However, as part of the digital generation, students also live amidst rapid technological developments. The use of social media, digital entertainment platforms, online games, and various communication applications has become a daily activity. This situation presents two distinct sides: technology can be a means of faith

growth, but it also has the potential to become a source of disruption to students' spiritual lives (Shovmayanti, 2024).

The use of technology has a positive impact on spiritual life when utilized appropriately. Through technology, students can easily access digital Bibles, daily devotions, online worship services, spiritual music, and various Christian faith learning materials. Technology also opens up opportunities for students to broaden their theological horizons and build virtual spiritual communities (Langi, 2025). Thus, technology can be a tool that helps students deepen their understanding of faith and fosters their spiritual closeness to God.

On the other hand, excessive use of technology can negatively impact students' spiritual lives. Intense use of social media, digital entertainment, and dependence on technological devices can reduce time for prayer, Bible reading, and spiritual activities. Many students experience distractions due to uncontrolled technology use, resulting in a decline in spiritual discipline. (Telaumbanua, Natanael, & Zai, 2026) This situation demonstrates that technological developments present unique challenges for students in maintaining a balance between digital and spiritual life.

Several previous studies have shown that technology has a significant influence on the spiritual lives of the younger generation. Previous research has found that wise use of digital media can support worship activities, understand God's word, and develop spiritual character. However, other research has shown that excessive use of technology tends to reduce the quality of individual spiritual interactions due to increased distractions and decreased spiritual discipline. (Simanjuntak et al., 2025) This indicates that the influence of technology on spirituality is complex and requires more in-depth study.

At the local level, research on the influence of technology use on the spiritual closeness of IAKN Kupang students is still relatively limited. However, as a Christian higher education institution in East Nusa Tenggara, IAKN Kupang plays a crucial role in developing students who excel not only academically but also possess strong spiritual maturity. Therefore, this research is crucial to understand how technology influences students' spiritual closeness within the context of academic and social life at IAKN Kupang.

The objectives of this study are: (1) to describe the pattern of technology use among IAKN Kupang students; (2) to analyze the influence of technology use on students' spiritual closeness, both positive and negative impacts; and (3) to identify students' efforts or strategies in maintaining a balance between technology use and their spiritual life.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a library research design combined with field data collected through interviews. The qualitative approach was chosen because it aimed to deeply understand the influence of technology use on students' spiritual closeness, both from a theoretical perspective and from real-life experiences.

Literature reviews are used to examine various theories and previous research findings relevant to the topic, such as the use of digital technology, social media, and student spirituality. Data sources in literature reviews include secondary data obtained from credible and relevant books, scientific journals, and research articles.

In addition, this study also uses primary data obtained through in-depth interviews with several students at the State Christian Institute (IAKN) Kupang. Informants were selected purposively, based on the criteria of students actively using digital technology and being involved in spiritual activities. Interviews were conducted semi-structured to explore students' experiences, views, and interpretations regarding the influence of technology on their spiritual lives, such as worship, prayer, and relationships with God. Data collection techniques were carried out in two stages, namely: (1) literature search to obtain a theoretical basis, and (2) interviews to obtain empirical data. Data from both sources were then combined to produce a more comprehensive analysis.

This study also adheres to research ethics, including voluntary consent from informants, maintaining confidentiality, and allowing informants the freedom to withdraw at any time. With this approach, the study is expected to provide a deep and comprehensive understanding of the influence of technology use on the spiritual closeness of IAKN Kupang students, both theoretically and empirically.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study found that the use of digital technology has an ambivalent effect on the spiritual closeness of IAKN Kupang students. Based on in-depth interviews with 10 second- to fourth-semester students from the Christian Religious Education study program, most respondents (7 out of 10) stated that technology facilitates access to spiritual materials. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and digital Bible apps allow them to listen to sermons, follow daily devotionals, and join online prayer communities. However, this ease of access is often accompanied by a decline in the quality of deep spiritual interactions. Students tend to multitask, such as listening to sermons while browsing other social media, resulting in reduced concentration and spiritual appreciation.

The second finding indicates a disruption to traditional spiritual practices. Respondents reported that intensive mobile phone use has reduced time for personal prayer, physical Bible reading, and face-to-face fellowship. Several students admitted to experiencing "spiritual fatigue" due to the flood of unfiltered spiritual information, resulting in boredom and a shallow faith experience. A literature review supports this finding, as Warfield's (2023) concepts of "technological determinism" and "digital distraction" explain how technology shifts human attention patterns from deep attention to shallow attention.

On the positive side, technology can also act as a catalyst when used wisely. Five respondents active in online spiritual communities reported increased motivation and theological knowledge. Class WhatsApp groups and Zoom Bible Study sessions helped maintain spiritual togetherness amidst academic busyness and geographical distance (Marsaulina, Sos, & PAK, 2025). Overall, the results of this study illustrate that technology is not the primary determining factor, but rather a tool whose influence depends heavily on the students' own spiritual awareness and discipline.

Discussion

The findings of this study are consistent with the results obtained by a number of other researchers who stated that technology itself is neutral, but how it is used determines its influence on a person's spiritual life. Based on interviews and data collection from ten (10) second to fourth semester students at IAKN Kupang, it was revealed that social media has a significant impact on the

spiritual aspects of students. Most respondents admitted that social media has become an inseparable element of their daily lives, both for academic purposes, communication, entertainment, and spiritual development. The research findings show that students who use social media to access spiritual content, such as daily devotions, Bible verses, sermons, testimonies of faith, and religious discussions, feel an increase in spiritual understanding and encouragement to carry out religious activities. This finding supports the theory of Wardani & Wenerda (2025), which explains that users actively choose media that can meet their needs.

In this study, students utilized social media platforms to fulfill their spiritual needs through quick and easy access to religious information. Furthermore, the results of this study align with the theory of Digital Religion, which suggests that religious practices today not only occur in physical locations but also thrive in digital spaces. According to Rahmawati, Puspita, Azis, & Fadhil (2025), social media serves as a new platform for students to express their beliefs, gain spiritual learning, and connect with religious communities. From the perspective of Spiritual Well-Being theory, positive social media use can help students strengthen their bond with God, increase their spiritual awareness, and build better social relationships with others.

However, this study also shows that the impact of social media on students' spiritual aspects is not always positive. Among the 10 participating students, several revealed that excessive social media use often interfered with their time for prayer, reading scriptures, and engaging in community activities. The main factors influencing the impact of social media are the duration of use, the type of content viewed, self-regulation skills, and the social and academic environment students face. Students who can manage their social media usage wisely tend to experience greater positive impacts than those who surf social media without clear time limits. Furthermore, the type of content consumed also plays a significant role (Hidayah, Syafiq, Fahreza, & MZ, 2025). Students who more frequently access educational and spiritual content tend to have a better spiritual life compared to students who spend more time on entertainment content. Self-regulation skills are also a very significant element. Several respondents admitted that they often lose concentration and spend hours on social media without a clear purpose (Ramadhan, Urbasari, Sabirah, Rahma, & Nasution, 2025). This situation reduces time for personal reflection and spiritual activities. On the other hand, the IAKN Kupang campus environment serves as a supportive factor, helping students maintain a balance between technology and spirituality. Various spiritual activities held on campus, such as worship services, student fellowships, prayer groups, and Christian character development, provide opportunities for students to continue growing in their faith despite the rapid advancement of digital technology.

The results of this research are consistent with several previous studies, both domestically and globally. Several studies in Indonesia have revealed that social media platforms have the potential to be powerful tools in disseminating religious values and shaping the character of the younger generation (Zein, 2019). These studies indicate that students who actively follow spiritual accounts tend to have a higher spiritual fervor than those who do not use social media for this purpose. Similar findings have been identified in international studies on digital religion, which indicate that young people use social media as a channel to learn about religion, interact with faith communities, and develop their religious identity. Furthermore, these studies also emphasize the risks of social media misuse, such as digital addiction, a decline in the quality of in-person social interactions, and reduced participation in traditional religious activities. The findings of this study, involving 10 second- to

fourth-semester students at IAKN Kupang, further corroborate the results of previous studies. Most respondents indicated that social media facilitates easier access to spiritual information, but at the same time, they recognize the challenge of maintaining spiritual discipline amidst abundant digital distractions. Therefore, the results of this study have significant practical implications for students and Christian educational institutions. For students, it is important to be aware of the wise use of social media by selecting content that strengthens their faith and avoiding excessive use. Students should also strive to develop personal discipline in managing their time so that social media use does not interfere with their academic studies or spiritual lives (Pasmawati et al., 2025). Meanwhile, for IAKN Kupang, as a Christian educational institution, the results of this study emphasize the need to develop a digital-based spiritual development program. Campuses can utilize social media as a means of education, service, and spiritual guidance for students by providing content relevant to the needs of the younger generation.

Although this study successfully illustrates the impact of social media on the spiritual lives of IAKN Kupang students, there are several limitations that need to be considered. First, the number of participants in this study consisted of only 10 students in their second to fourth semesters, so the findings cannot be generally applied to all IAKN Kupang students or students from other Christian educational institutions. Second, this study utilized a method that relies on the experiences and views of respondents, which may contain an element of subjectivity in the responses given. Third, this study did not explore in detail how each social media platform, such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp, affects students' spiritual lives. Furthermore, further research could be directed at the effectiveness of digital spiritual content in shaping Christian character and the role of digital communities in supporting the spiritual growth of the younger generation (Rahmah, Handayani, Hutasuhut, & Romandiah, 2024). Thus, the results of future research are expected to contribute more broadly to the development of Christian education and mentoring students' spiritual lives in the digital era.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a study of 10 second-fourth semester students at IAKN Kupang, it can be concluded that the use of technology has a significant impact on students' spiritual closeness. Technology has become an important part of students' daily lives, both as a means of learning, communication, entertainment, and religious activities. The results show that technology provides positive benefits when used to access digital Bibles, daily devotions, online sermons, spiritual songs, and various content that supports faith growth. The presence of technology also makes it easier for students to connect with spiritual communities and access spiritual learning resources more quickly and widely.

On the other hand, excessive technology use can negatively impact students' spiritual lives. Excessive social media use often reduces time for prayer, Bible reading, and attending worship and fellowship activities. This situation suggests that technology's influence on spiritual closeness is not determined by the technology itself, but rather by students' usage patterns and self-control. Therefore, a balance is needed between digital and spiritual activities so that technology can be utilized as a tool that supports spiritual growth in accordance with Christian values.

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