

From Tri Hita Karana to Buddhist Pancasila: The Role of Religious Values in Youth Environmental Responsibility

**Seng Hansen,^{1*} BMAS Anaconda Bangkara,¹
Lydia Darmiyanti,¹ Ika Bali,¹ Ivan Imanuel,¹ Prihartono,¹ Eddy T.
Sudjatmiko¹**

¹ President University, Bekasi, Indonesia

Abstract

This study examines how Buddhist, Balinese Hindu, and Christian communities in Indonesia address contemporary challenges, including youth identity crises and environmental degradation, through spiritual teachings and practices. Using a mixed-method approach, this research draws on interviews with religious leaders, observations of faith-based environmental initiatives, and questionnaire surveys targeting a younger generation. Findings reveal that while youth struggle with digital dependency and moral disconnection, religious traditions offer grounded pathways for identity formation and ethical behavior. In Buddhism, mindfulness and digital engagement are vital features. Balinese Hinduism fosters a sense of belonging through ritual and ecological participation. Christianity addresses spiritual disconnection through stewardship and self-discipline. Each faith frames environmental responsibility not merely as a civic duty, but as a sacred act integrated into daily worship and community life. This study concludes that interfaith collaboration and educational integration of spiritual values can empower youth to live with clarity, resilience, and ecological awareness, contributing meaningfully to a sustainable and morally grounded society.

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*Corresponding Author: Seng Hansen (seng.hansen@president.ac.id), President University, Bekasi, Indonesia, Jl. Ki Hajar Dewantara, Kota Jababeka, Cikarang Baru, Bekasi 17550 – Indonesia.

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana komunitas Buddha, Hindu Bali, dan Kristen di Indonesia menghadapi berbagai tantangan kontemporer, termasuk krisis identitas generasi muda dan degradasi lingkungan, melalui ajaran dan praktik spiritual. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran (mixed methods), penelitian ini mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara dengan para pemuka agama, observasi terhadap berbagai inisiatif pelestarian lingkungan berbasis keagamaan, serta survei kuesioner yang ditujukan kepada generasi muda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun generasi muda menghadapi tantangan berupa ketergantungan terhadap teknologi digital dan keterputusan dari nilai-nilai moral, tradisi keagamaan menawarkan landasan yang kuat bagi pembentukan identitas dan perilaku etis. Dalam agama Buddha, praktik kesadaran penuh (mindfulness) dan keterlibatan dalam ruang digital menjadi aspek penting. Hindu Bali menumbuhkan rasa memiliki dan keterikatan komunitas melalui pelaksanaan ritual keagamaan serta partisipasi dalam kegiatan pelestarian lingkungan. Sementara itu, agama Kristen mengatasi keterputusan spiritual melalui penguatan tanggung jawab terhadap lingkungan dan pengendalian diri. Setiap tradisi keagamaan memandang tanggung jawab terhadap lingkungan bukan sekadar sebagai kewajiban sosial, melainkan sebagai tindakan sakral yang terintegrasi dalam praktik ibadah sehari-hari dan kehidupan bermasyarakat. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kolaborasi lintas agama dan integrasi nilai-nilai spiritual dalam pendidikan dapat memberdayakan generasi muda untuk menjalani kehidupan dengan orientasi yang jelas, ketangguhan dalam menghadapi tantangan, serta kesadaran ekologis. Dengan demikian, upaya tersebut dapat memberikan kontribusi yang bermakna bagi terwujudnya masyarakat yang berkelanjutan dan berlandaskan nilai-nilai moral.

Keywords: Balinese Hindu; Buddhist; Christian; environmental; youth

Introduction

In the 21st century, young people around the world face increasingly complex challenges shaped by digital hyperconnectivity, environmental degradation, and shifting moral frameworks (Mappiasse, 2017; Wijzen, 2021; George & D. Uyanga, 2014). The digital landscape, while offering unprecedented access to information and communication, has also contributed to a surge in identity-related anxieties among youth (Golan, 2023). Social media platforms amplify peer comparisons, distort self-perception, and dilute meaningful face-to-face interactions, often leaving young individuals feeling disconnected, uncertain, and spiritually adrift

(Ma'rof & Abdullah, 2024). Parallel to this crisis of identity is the escalating environmental emergency, where unsustainable lifestyles and ecological neglect threaten the planet's future, yet fail to inspire widespread behavioral change among younger generations.

Against this backdrop, religious traditions remain vital resources in shaping youth resilience and responsibility. Unlike secular approaches that often separate technical solutions from ethical and spiritual considerations, religious communities offer holistic frameworks that fuse personal development with collective well-being. Through teachings, rituals, and mentorship, faith-based practices provide youth with tools to navigate internal dilemmas while encouraging outward acts of environmental stewardship (Harun, 2022). These moral blueprints are not abstract ideals, but are deeply rooted in lived community experiences and intergenerational knowledge transmission (Kalyanasundaram et al., 2024; Martinez et al., 2025).

In Indonesia, a nation rich in religious and cultural diversity, faith communities play a particularly prominent role in both shaping identity and addressing environmental concerns. From the temples of Jakarta to the vihara of Karawang and churches in Bekasi, religious leaders are actively engaging youth through spiritual education, value-based counseling, and environmentally conscious initiatives. Their strategies reflect the adaptability of religious wisdom to contemporary contexts, offering context-sensitive solutions to crises that transcend material dimensions.

This study seeks to explore how three major religious traditions, namely Buddhism, Balinese Hinduism, and Christianity, offer integrated responses to youth identity crises and ecological degradation. Drawing on qualitative interviews with religious leaders and quantitative findings from community members, the research reveals how spiritual teachings have transformed into actionable guidance. The goal is to illustrate not only the relevance of religious values in modern society but also their capacity to promote ethical behavior, emotional resilience, and sustainable living among young people.

By illuminating the role of faith-based practices in addressing contemporary challenges, this research contributes to broader discussions on spiritual ecology, youth development, and culturally grounded environmentalism. It underscores that in an age dominated by digital distractions and environmental uncertainty, religion still holds the power to foster clarity, purpose, and collective responsibility.

Faith and Sustainability

In recent years, a growing body of scholarship has explored the intersection between religion, youth identity, and environmental responsibility. Scholars have increasingly acknowledged that faith-based values offer a distinctive ethical framework for guiding behavior in a rapidly changing and morally complex world (Chaudhary et al., 2025; Zhu, 2025). These values are particularly relevant for youth, who face dual challenges: the search for selfhood in an age of digital saturation and the moral imperative to respond to environmental degradation (Bingaman, 2023; Suda, 2019). While secular education often emphasizes technical knowledge and cognitive development, religion addresses the affective and ethical dimensions of personal and communal responsibility, which are essential for sustainable behavior (Oluwafemi Joseph & Afolurunso Olalekan, 2024).

The society tends to associate the digital era with identity instability among young people. Studies such as Bingaman (2023) and Golan (2023) emphasize that the digital environment can both empower and disorient adolescents, depending on how they navigate it. Social media has been linked to superficial self-presentation, peer pressure, and exposure to conflicting worldviews, often leading to anxiety and a weakened moral foundation (Agarwal & Jones, 2022). In this context, religious communities can play a stabilizing role. They offer structured rituals, mentoring, and values education that support youth in developing a coherent sense of identity and purpose. For instance, Buddhist teachings emphasize self-awareness and mental clarity, while Christian perspectives focus on spiritual discipline and moral decision-making.

Parallel to concerns about identity, scholars have also examined how religious worldviews contribute to ecological awareness and sustainable lifestyles. The concept of spiritual ecology, as outlined by Yulisinta, Murniati, and Eigenstetter (2024), posits that religious teachings often contain implicit ecological wisdom. In Bali, this implicit wisdom appears in the Tri Hita Karana philosophy, which harmonizes human behavior with cosmic order (Mildawani et al., 2024). In Buddhism, ethical precepts such as non-violence (ahimsa) and mindful consumption provide a moral basis for environmental stewardship (Neves-Pereira, Carvalho, and Aspesi 2018; Sarin, 2021). Christianity, meanwhile, promotes the concept of stewardship, emphasizing that humans are caretakers of God's creation and are accountable for the well-being of the Earth (Jackson, 2024). These frameworks not only guide individual behavior but also shape community practices around waste management, conservation, and sustainable living.

Furthermore, there is a growing interest in the role of interfaith and educational collaboration in promoting environmental ethics. Wijzen (2021) advocates for integrating spiritual principles into formal environmental education to foster behavioral change. Such approaches are particularly effective when supported by community involvement and religious institutions. Scholars such as Plante (2024) and Rüpke and Urciuoli (2023) also highlight the importance of adapting religious practices to urban realities while preserving their ethical core. Interfaith initiatives, like Muhammadiyah's Eco-Bhinneka (Manufa, 2024), demonstrate that shared environmental concerns can serve as a platform for cross-religious cooperation and policy engagement.

Despite these advancements, a gap remains in localized studies that document how religious leaders in multicultural societies, such as Indonesia, apply spiritual teachings to contemporary youth and ecological challenges. This study contributes to the existing gap by providing empirical insights into how Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian communities in Karawang, Jakarta, and Bekasi translate doctrine into action, guiding youth through identity development and ecological responsibility. By drawing from both global

literature and localized case studies, this research underscores the enduring relevance of religious values in shaping ethical, sustainable, and resilient generations.

This study employed a multiple case study approach to investigate how religious teachings from Buddhism, Balinese Hinduism, and Christianity are applied to guide youth in addressing identity crises and environmental challenges. The first sequence is qualitative, followed by a quantitative method. The qualitative method was ideal for this study due to its capacity to explore complex social phenomena through rich, descriptive narratives and contextual insights. Rather than focusing on measurable variables, it emphasizes the lived experiences, interpretations, and values expressed by religious leaders in Indonesia, particularly in Karawang, Jakarta, and Bekasi.

The first sequence of this research employed purposive sampling to select key informants who possess direct experience and moral authority within their respective religious communities. The participants included a Buddhist scholar (Romo Pandita) from Vihara Buddha Guna in Karawang, a Hindu temple administrator at Pura Aditya Jaya in East Jakarta, and a senior Christian pastor in Bekasi. These individuals were selected based on their active involvement in youth mentorship, spiritual education, and environmental initiatives. Their roles within both religious and civic structures placed them in a uniquely positioned to provide nuanced insights on the intersection of faith, youth development, and ecological responsibility.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews with three groups of students from President University. The interviews were guided by open-ended questions that focused on two major themes: (1) the role of religion in shaping youth identity and moral behavior in the digital age, and (2) the integration of spiritual teachings into environmental practices such as waste management and ecological stewardship. Each interview session was conducted face-to-face, recorded with the participant's consent, and transcribed for analysis. Visual documentation complemented the interview data.

The collected data from interviews underwent thematic analysis. The process involved familiarization with transcripts, coding key statements, and identifying recurring themes across the three cases (Dearnley, 2005). Common themes included spiritual mentoring, youth engagement, the ethical use of technology, waste management practices, and the perception of environmental care as a moral duty. By comparing the patterns across Buddhist, Balinese Hindu, and Christian contexts, the analysis revealed both unique religious expressions and shared values underpinning youth empowerment and ecological awareness.

Meanwhile, the second part of this research involved student participants in incorporating direct perspectives from young people on their digital dependency, sense of disconnection, identity formation, and actual motivations for participating in environmental activities. The interview findings were used to develop a questionnaire survey, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences in the digital era and their perspectives on environmental care. The survey consists of six questions in the demographic information section, five in the digital dependency section, five in the sense of disconnection section, five in the identity formation section, five in the environmental responsibility section, and five in the intergenerational & value-based learning section.

This study specifically aims to understand the perspectives of the younger generation within the educational context of President University, a global campus with a diverse student body from diverse backgrounds (nationality, ethnicity/race, and religion). Because the study focuses on the dynamics of digital dependency, a sense of disconnection, and identity formation among university students, internal sampling is most relevant. The survey was distributed to President University students from November 17 to 21, 2025.

In this study, each statement in the questionnaire (except the demographic information section) was on a 5-point Likert scale. A Likert scale allows respondents to express their level of agreement gradually, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (point 1) to "Strongly Agree" (point 5). This scale is

the most balanced and least burdensome for respondents, making it suitable for use with university students as the research subjects.

Data obtained from the Likert scale produces graded scores that can be analyzed quantitatively. Descriptive statistics, including calculation of the mean, median, and standard deviation (SD), were applied to describe the data. Furthermore, to ensure that each construct studied, such as digital dependency, sense of disconnection, and identity formation, was measured consistently, reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha. This test aims to assess the extent to which statement items within a construct are interrelated and have good internal consistency. The results of the analysis were presented in tables and diagrams.

Discussion

Youth Identity and Digital Era Challenges

In the context of Buddhism, the interviewed Romo Pandita highlights a pressing issue among youth today: the erosion of self-confidence and shallow engagement with religious teachings. According to him, many young individuals lack a profound understanding of their faith, often following religious practices out of habit or social expectation rather than genuine conviction. This detachment from spiritual grounding leaves them vulnerable to the chaotic and often misleading nature of digital platforms. However, the interviewed Romo Pandita asserts that social media itself is not inherently harmful. Instead, it is a neutral tool whose impact depends on how it is used. He encourages the development of critical thinking and digital discernment among youth, skills that can help them navigate the flood of online information and resist negative influences while reinforcing a sense of purpose and moral clarity (Shiferaw et al., 2025).

From the Christian perspective, particularly in the case of the pastor interviewed in Bekasi, digital technology presents both an opportunity and a profound challenge. The pastor expresses concern over what he terms "modern idolatry," where digital devices and platforms, especially social

media, begin to take precedence over spiritual practices and relationships with God. He observes that many Christian youths are becoming increasingly detached from church communities and are instead immersed in digital interactions that often lack depth and spiritual value. This digital dependence, he warns, can distort identity, promote superficial values, and weaken the spiritual disciplines needed for personal growth and communal engagement. The Church, therefore, must respond by fostering spiritual formation that emphasizes self-control, meaningful engagement, and the re-centering of faith in daily life.

In the Balinese Hindu context at Pura Aditya Jaya in East Jakarta, the discussion around youth identity is addressed less through critique of digital behavior and more through proactive community participation. While not explicitly labeling identity crisis as a central concern, temple practices focus on cultivating a sense of belonging and purpose through religious rituals and environmental stewardship. Youth are encouraged to participate in cultural and ecological activities, such as composting offerings and assisting with temple maintenance. These tangible practices, rooted in spiritual tradition, create a rhythm of life that reinforces identity through collective service and sacred duty. In a highly urbanized environment where young people often experience alienation and disconnection, the temple offers a grounding experience that reconnects them with their cultural and spiritual heritage.

Taken together, these three religious traditions recognize the disruptive influence of the digital era on youth identity, while offering distinct yet complementary solutions. Buddhism emphasizes inner awareness and critical reflection; Christianity underscores spiritual discipline and community reconnection; and Balinese Hinduism fosters embodied engagement through ritual and ecological participation. Despite their theological differences, all three traditions advocate for the restoration of selfhood through structured moral guidance, communal belonging, and the mindful use of technology. These responses not only help youth reclaim their identity in a confusing digital world but also strengthen their capacity to live with purpose and integrity (Oluwafemi Joseph & Afolunso Olalekan, 2024).

Environmental Responsibility as Spiritual Practice

Buddhism places a profound emphasis on the interconnectedness of all living beings and the importance of living in harmony with nature. This principle emerges in the teachings of Romo Pandita in Karawang, who integrates the Buddhist Pancasila moral code into practical environmental actions. Among the five precepts, simplicity, non-violence, and mindful living stand out as guiding principles for ecological responsibility. The Romo Pandita considers environmental negligence not merely a lapse in civic duty but a breach of spiritual discipline. During religious events, his community practices organized waste management (recycling, sorting, and reusing materials), thereby transforming mundane acts like trash separation into exercises in spiritual awareness and moral refinement. These practices are also embedded in youth programs, where cleanliness and mindfulness are taught as everyday manifestations of inner discipline and respect for life.

In the Balinese Hindu tradition, particularly at Pura Aditya Jaya in East Jakarta, environmental stewardship is structured around the philosophical concept of Tri Hita Karana, which advocates for balance between the divine (*Parahyangan*), social relationships (*Pawongan*), and the natural world (*Palemahan*) (Mildawani et al., 2024). This triadic balance forms the ethical foundation for the temple's waste management practices. Biodegradable materials used in rituals, such as coconut leaves and flowers, are composted onsite, while inorganic waste is sorted for recycling (Figure 1). The temple also emphasizes intergenerational education, with students and young visitors participating in eco-friendly practices and learning the spiritual significance of respecting the Earth. Large trees within the temple grounds are wrapped in sacred cloths, not for worship, but as symbols of reverence. Environmental responsibility, therefore, is not an add-on to religious life but a core expression of devotion and cultural continuity.

From the Christian perspective, the concept of stewardship, rooted in the biblical command to "till and keep the earth" (Genesis 2:15), provides a theological foundation for environmental care. The pastor interviewed in Bekasi highlights how many churches, despite limited institutional resources,

are slowly cultivating a culture of ecological awareness. Activities such as tree planting, waste sorting, and promoting reusable goods are emerging as concrete steps toward sustainability. These actions are often small and community-driven, yet they carry profound spiritual implications. Within Christian teaching, caring for creation is viewed as an act of gratitude and obedience to God, who entrusted the Earth to humankind. Even though comprehensive environmental programs may not yet be widespread within Christian congregations, there is growing recognition that ecological neglect is inconsistent with Christian values of love, moderation, and responsibility.

Figure 1. Yellow metal bin for inorganic waste at Pura Adhitya Jaya



(Photo: Christian et al. 2025)

Across all three faiths, environmental responsibility is elevated beyond functional necessity; it becomes a spiritual imperative. Waste management and ecological care are reinterpreted as sacred acts: in Buddhism, through mindful living and moral clarity; in Balinese Hinduism, through the ritual expression of cosmic harmony; and in Christianity, through the moral duty of stewardship. These frameworks: Buddhist Pancasila, Tri Hita Karana, and Stewardship, transform sustainability from a technical agenda into a lived, value-driven practice. Each tradition weaves environmental ethics into daily

spiritual life, reminding adherents that caring for the Earth is an expression of inner discipline, collective harmony, and reverence for the sacredness of life.

Implications for Interfaith and Youth Education

The findings from this study highlight the untapped potential of religious communities in shaping environmentally conscious and morally grounded young people. Across Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian traditions, spiritual teachings are already being applied in meaningful ways to guide young people through identity formation and ecological responsibility. These practices offer context-sensitive models that can be adopted more broadly through collaborative efforts between educational institutions, faith-based organizations, and policy stakeholders.

One of the most immediate opportunities lies in pedagogical integration. Schools, both secular and religious, can benefit from embedding spiritual values into environmental education (Bowling, 2022). Rather than treating ecological issues as purely scientific or technical problems, curricula can incorporate ethical discussions grounded in the moral traditions of various faiths. For example, Buddhist concepts of mindfulness and non-violence, Balinese Hindu principles of cosmic balance, and Christian teachings on stewardship can enrich science lessons with spiritual significance. This multidimensional approach helps students not only understand environmental challenges intellectually but also relate to them emotionally and ethically.

Furthermore, faith-based youth programs offer a unique space for personal development that formal education systems often overlook (Zhu, 2025). As seen in the case studies, religious communities are already engaging youth in ways that foster a sense of belonging, resilience, and purpose. Through rituals, mentoring, and service activities such as temple composting or church-led cleanups, youth are empowered to connect their spiritual beliefs with real-world action. These programs create safe, supportive environments for identity exploration, moral reflection, and leadership

development, especially crucial in a digital age marked by isolation and identity confusion.

On a broader scale, there is strong potential for policy collaboration between religious communities and environmental stakeholders (Ali Ridho & Mahfuzah Saniah, 2023). Religious leaders, who often command deep trust and influence within their communities, can serve as effective cultural mediators for environmental initiatives (Das et al. 2025; Sabir et al., 2025; Saroglou et al., 2025). Governments and NGOs working on sustainability can improve their outreach and impact by engaging these leaders in planning and communication strategies. By recognizing the spiritual dimensions of environmental responsibility, policymakers can foster more inclusive and culturally relevant programs that resonate with local values and traditions.

Table 1 presents the comparative analysis of religious values as obtained from this study. In essence, it illustrates that religious teachings are not limited to places of worship; they are living frameworks capable of guiding youth through the dual crises of identity loss and ecological neglect. By strategically integrating these teachings into education, community development, and policy, interfaith collaboration can become a transformative force for shaping a more ethical, resilient, and sustainable generation.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of religious values

Dimension	Buddhism	Balinese Hinduism	Christianity
Youth Identity & Digital Era Challenges	Emphasizes loss of self-confidence due to superficial belief; promotes critical engagement with social media as a neutral tool; encourages mindfulness and digital discernment.	Addresses identity formation indirectly through community rituals and environmental service; fosters a sense of belonging through hands-on spiritual practices.	Highlights "modern idolatry," where digital media supplants spiritual reflection, and advocates for stronger spiritual discipline, genuine engagement with real life, and faith-centered living.

Dimension	Buddhism	Balinese Hinduism	Christianity
Environmental Responsibility as Spiritual Practice	Applies Buddhist Pancasila values to integrate mindfulness, cleanliness, and moral living with environmental care, promoting the organized separation of waste at religious events.	Follows Tri Hita Karana to balance divine, human, and natural relationships; composts biodegradable offerings; educates youth on ecological ethics.	Centers on biblical stewardship, promoting small-scale activities such as tree planting and recycling, and frames sustainability as obedience to God's command.
Educational Implications	Encourages the integration of spiritual values (e.g., mindfulness, non-harming) into environmental education and supports youth mentorship through religious programs.	Offers a strong model for cultural-ecological education; rituals provide hands-on ecological learning experiences; intergenerational engagement reinforces core values.	Provides space for moral reflection and ecological awareness; potential for collaboration with schools and NGOs to scale up values-based environmental programs.
Common Themes	Mindfulness, spiritual awareness, ethical use of technology, and youth mentoring.	Ritual-based engagement, ecological ethics, cultural continuity.	Moral responsibility, self-control, stewardship, and faith formation.
Interfaith & Policy Potential	It can serve as a foundation for community-based environmental initiatives, fostering inner discipline and civic values.	Strong framework for intergenerational sustainability programs; adaptable to multicultural urban settings.	Opportunity for collaboration with governments and NGOs; faith leaders can act as cultural mediators in promoting ecological justice.

Younger Generation's Perspective

After gaining perspectives from religious leaders through interviews, the next step was to analyze the quantitative findings obtained through a questionnaire survey of President University students. This survey aimed to capture general patterns of young people's perceptions regarding digital dependency, experiences of social disconnection, the process of identity formation in the digital age, environmental responsibility, and value-based learning. Using a 5-point Likert scale, each respondent was asked to rate their level of agreement with several statements representing the five constructs. Overall, the response rate was relatively high, indicating that these issues are relevant and closely related to students' daily experiences. Table 2 shows the demographic profile of the survey respondents.

Table 2. Profile of the Survey Respondents

Profile	Number	%	Profile	Number	%
Age			Nationality		
16-18 years old	14	32.6%	Indonesia	39	90.7%
19-21 years old	27	62.8%	Iran	1	2.3%
22-24 years old	1	2.3%	Myanmar	2	4.7%
25-27 years old	1	2.3%	Timor Leste	1	2.3%
Total	43	100%	Total	43	100%
Gender			Religiosity		
Male	22	51.2%	Buddhism	2	4.7%
Female	21	48.8%	Christianity	9	20.9%
Total	43	100%	Hinduism	1	2.3%
Study Program			Islam	30	69.8%
Actuarial	1	2.3%	Others	1	2.3%
Civil Engineering	41	95.3%	Total	43	100%
Industrial Engineering	1	2.3%			
Total	43	100%			

Table 3 shows students' perceptions of digital dependency. The analysis shows that students' digital dependency levels range from moderate to high, with an overall mean of 3.55 and a standard deviation of 0.89. This number indicates that dependence on digital devices is quite significant and relatively widespread among respondents.

The item with the highest score was "I rely on digital media for emotional comfort when stressed or bored" (mean 3.79). This choice of item illustrates that digital use is not only instrumental but also emotional. Digital devices serve as a means of escape and self-regulation. This finding reinforces the notion that technology has become an integral part of students' daily lives, serving as a coping mechanism for them.

Conversely, the item with a relatively lower score was "I often scroll aimlessly even when it is not necessary" (mean 3.37). Although still in the moderate category, this value indicates that mindless scrolling behavior varies significantly among respondents.

The consistent median of 3 indicates a balanced distribution: the majority of respondents fell into the "neutral to agree" category. With SDs below 1 for almost all indicators, the variation in responses was relatively stable.

Table 3. Perceptions on Digital Dependency

No	Indicators	Mean	Median	SD
1	I feel the urge to check my phone or social media very frequently.	3.51	3	0.86
2	I find it difficult to stay away from digital devices even when I intend to.	3.47	3	0.83
3	I often scroll aimlessly even when it is not necessary.	3.37	3	0.95
4	I rely on digital media for emotional comfort when stressed or bored.	3.79	4	0.97
5	I believe digital media has become a major part of my daily identity.	3.60	4	0.85
Overall		3.55	3	0.89

Overall, these findings suggest that President University students are aware of their digital dependency, particularly in relation to their emotional well-being and self-identity. These findings align with the existing literature on the relationship between excessive mobile phone/social media use, its role as a tool for emotional regulation, and its impact on psychological well-being (Arini & Nur, 2025; Fitri & Eriza, 2021; Giansanti, 2025). Students' digital use appears to be multifunctional; in addition to assisting with academic tasks and communication, digital media also serves as a source of emotional well-being.

Table 4 shows students' perceptions of a sense of disconnection. This construct had an overall mean of 3.06, indicating a moderate level of social disconnection. However, fluctuations in item prices are worth noting. The indicator with the highest mean was mental exhaustion due to excessive online use (mean 3.79). This number suggests that, despite the younger generation's familiarity with the digital world, they still experience significant digital fatigue. This pattern is consistent with research on digital/social media fatigue: exposure to information and the pressure of online interactions can trigger cognitive and emotional exhaustion even when technical connectivity remains high (Giansanti, 2025).

Table 4. Perceptions on Sense of Disconnection

No	Indicators	Mean	Median	SD
1	I sometimes feel disconnected from people around me despite being active online.	2.70	3	0.99
2	Spending too much time online makes me feel mentally tired or emotionally drained.	3.79	4	1.10
3	I sometimes struggle to be fully present during real-life conversations.	2.81	3	1.24
4	I feel more isolated when I spend long periods immersed in digital platforms.	2.93	3	1.22
5	Social media makes me compare myself to others and feel inadequate.	3.05	3	1.27
Overall		3.06	3	1.22

Table 5. Perceptions on Identity Formation in the Digital Era

No	Indicators	Mean	Median	SD
1	My online presence influences how I see myself as a person.	2.74	3	1.00
2	I am aware of how digital culture shapes the way people expect me to think or behave.	3.35	3	0.90
3	I try to balance online influences with my personal beliefs or cultural values.	3.74	4	0.88
4	Participating in communities (religious, cultural, academic) helps strengthen my identity.	3.88	4	0.82
5	I think young people today need guidance or mentorship to navigate digital challenges.	4.16	4	0.81
Overall		3.58	3	1.01

The item with the lowest mean was difficulty being fully present in face-to-face conversations (mean 2.81). The result suggests that the inability to focus in face-to-face interactions is not felt equally and may be influenced by individual personality or communication habits. The indicator of the tendency to feel isolated when spending too much time on digital platforms (mean 2.93) also fell into the moderate category. It reflects an ambivalent dynamic: digitalization provides connectedness, but simultaneously creates feelings of loneliness or a lack of emotional closeness.

With the highest standard deviation of 1.27, this construct exhibited the most significant variation in response among the variables. The number suggests that the experience of social disconnection is highly dependent on personal circumstances and is not uniformly experienced.

Table 5 concerns students' perceptions of identity formation in the digital age. This construct had an overall mean of 3.58, indicating that students' identity formation process is significantly influenced by digital presence. The highest score was for the item "I think young people today need guidance or mentorship to navigate digital challenges" (mean 4.16), indicating the younger generation's awareness of the need for direction in navigating digital culture. The finding is consistent with the results of interviews with religious leaders regarding the need for guidance on values in the digital age.

The lowest-scoring item was the influence of online presence on self-perception (mean 2.74), indicating that while digital influences identity, not all students consider online perceptions central to their identity formation. Meanwhile, the indicator related to the role of community in strengthening identity (mean 3.88) indicates that communities (whether religious, cultural, or academic) continue to play a significant role as anchors of identity.

With a consistent median of 3–4, these findings suggest that students acknowledge digital influence but strive to balance it with their personal and cultural values. Literature on identity formation in the social media era shows that online platforms play a significant role as an arena for identity experimentation, providing opportunities for adolescents/college students for self-actualization, but also giving rise to social comparison pressures that can lower self-esteem (Fu et al. 2020; Vogel et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2025).

Table 6 shows students’ perceptions of environmental responsibility, which scored the highest among all variables, with an overall mean of 4.19 and a median of 4. This construct indicates a high level of environmental awareness and responsibility among students.

Table 6. Perceptions on Environmental Responsibility

No	Indicators	Mean	Median	SD
1	I believe caring for the environment is part of being a responsible individual.	4.44	5	0.70
2	I try to reduce waste and recycle whenever possible.	3.88	4	0.88
3	I participate or am willing to participate in environmental programs (cleanup, tree planting, etc.).	3.98	4	0.96
4	I feel motivated when environmental actions are connected to moral or spiritual values.	4.16	4	0.84
5	I think young people should take a more active role in protecting nature.	4.47	5	0.70
Overall		4.19	4	0.85

The items with the highest scores were “I believe caring for the environment is part of being a responsible individual” (mean 4.44) and “I think young people should take a more active role in protecting nature”

(mean 4.47). The finding indicates a strong moral drive within the participants to engage in pro-environmental activities.

Furthermore, the indicator regarding motivation when environmental action is linked to moral and spiritual values (mean 4.16) demonstrates that an ethics-based approach (including religious/spiritual values) has a strong resonance in encouraging environmental behavior.

The standard deviation scores were relatively low (0.70-0.96), indicating consistency and uniformity in students' attitudes regarding environmental concern. Overall, students demonstrate a strong understanding that ecological responsibility is an integral part of personal and social morality. These results are in line with previous studies that found a positive relationship between religiosity/value commitment and pro-environmental intentions/behaviors; the literature suggests that aspects of values, social norms, and behavioral control mediate the influence of religiosity on pro-environmental actions (Karimi et al. 2022; Ki-moon 2016; Mancha & Yoder 2015; Sabir et al., 2025).

Finally, Table 7 shows students' perceptions of intergenerational and value-based learning. This construct also had an overall mean of 4.19, equivalent to the construct of environmental responsibility, indicating that students highly value the role of moral values, traditions, and intergenerational learning.

The highest-ranking items were mindfulness and self-discipline as a means of reducing unhealthy digital habits (mean 4.23) and encouraging young people to use technology ethically (mean 4.37). The result confirms that students view ethical and spiritual values as important tools in navigating the digital world. Research on mindfulness confirms its ability to reduce the likelihood of problematic mobile phone use; therefore, mindfulness practices linked to spiritual teachings could be a relevant intervention (Aldbyani et al., 2025).

Indicators of learning from older generations (mean 4.19) and inter-community collaboration (mean 4.09) also indicate that students consider social support, traditional values, and moral guidance as essential foundations

for environmental engagement and digital ethics. With low standard deviations (approximately 0.8-0.95), student responses were relatively consistent, indicating broad acceptance of values-based learning. Studies on intergenerational learning and environmental education show that the transfer of values between generations (e.g., through family, religious leaders, and community practices) is effective in encouraging changes in pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors, including when students become agents of change in their communities (Lawson et al., 2018; Martinez et al., 2025; Powell et al., 2025).

Table 7. Perceptions on the Intergenerational & Value-Based Learning

No	Indicators	Mean	Median	SD
1	I believe learning from older generations (teachers, religious leaders, community elders) helps build good environmental habits.	4.19	4	0.82
2	Rituals, religious practices, traditions, or cultural practices can teach meaningful lessons about caring for nature.	4.07	4	0.96
3	Mindfulness and self-discipline are useful for reducing unhealthy digital habits.	4.23	5	0.95
4	Youth should be encouraged to use technology ethically for social and environmental good.	4.37	5	0.76
5	Collaborations between communities (religious groups, NGOs, schools) can strengthen youth environmental engagement.	4.09	4	0.81
Overall		4.19	4	0.86

The survey results above reinforce the findings of interviews with leaders from three religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity) regarding the challenges facing young people in the digital age and environmental responsibility. Religious leaders highlighted students' tendency to become emotionally and behaviorally dependent on technology, a trend clearly reflected in the survey data, where the construct of digital dependency fell within the medium-high category (mean 3.55). The survey findings that

students use digital media to seek emotional comfort and experience mental exhaustion due to excessive digital use strongly resonate with religious leaders' concerns about the increasing psychological vulnerability of young people. At the same time, the variation in the sense of disconnection, with some students feeling isolated despite being active online, confirms the religious leaders' view that digital connections do not replace the quality of relational presence within traditional religious communities.

The survey findings regarding identity formation also align with the interviews. Religious leaders emphasized the importance of moral guidance in the identity-discovery process of young people, as reflected in high scores on the item "young people need guidance or mentors in facing digital challenges" (mean 4.16). Students acknowledged that while digital media influences self-perception, community values, spiritual teachings, and traditions still play a significant role in strengthening their moral and social identity. The acknowledgement aligns with survey indicators showing that religious, cultural, and academic communities help them strengthen their identity (mean 3.88), suggesting that offline spaces and intergenerational values remain anchors of identity amidst the digital tide.

Consequently, integrating values-based approaches (such as religious teachings and moral traditions) with digital education is crucial to addressing the needs of the younger generation. High scores on the constructs of environmental responsibility and value-based learning (mean 4.19) indicate significant opportunities to incorporate spiritual ethics, mindfulness, and intergenerational learning as strategies for balancing technology use and character development. These findings suggest that a collaborative approach among religious leaders, educational institutions, and communities can provide a solid foundation for equipping students with digital ethical literacy, while also fostering their ecological awareness and spirituality (Giansanti, 2025; Powell et al., 2025). This integration of quantitative and qualitative insights confirms that value reinforcement is a key element in shaping a resilient, ethical, and responsible young generation in the digital and sustainable era.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the religious traditions in Indonesia, namely Buddhism, Balinese Hinduism, and Christianity, offer robust, value-driven responses to some of the most pressing challenges facing young people today: identity crises and environmental degradation. Through spiritual teachings, ritual practices, and community engagement, these faiths guide young people in cultivating self-awareness, ethical behavior, and ecological responsibility. Rather than positioning environmentalism or personal development as isolated endeavors, each tradition weaves them into a larger moral and spiritual framework, providing youth with both a sense of belonging and a purpose grounded in service to others and the natural world.

The integration of religious values into youth and environmental education holds immense promise for fostering more holistic and sustainable development. Faith-based models of character formation, rooted in moral discipline, compassion, and interdependence, can complement formal education and policy efforts, especially when adapted to local cultural contexts. As the digital age continues to disrupt identity formation and consumerist lifestyles threaten ecological stability, religious communities emerge not as relics of the past but as active, transformative agents. Strengthening collaboration between religious leaders, educators, and policymakers can help ensure that future generations grow not only in knowledge and skill but also in wisdom, empathy, and environmental consciousness.

While this study successfully demonstrates how intergenerational spiritual and ethical values can shape the digital behavior and environmental concerns of young people, it has limitations that need to be acknowledged. It does not further explore the role of broader socio-economic and political structures, factors that, in many contexts, determine the ability of individuals and communities to implement ethical values in practice. The complexities of public policy, access to resources, digital inequality, and institutional power dynamics are important dimensions that fall outside the scope of this analysis.

HANSEN, S., BANGKARA, B. A., DARMIYANTI, L., BALI, I., IMANUEL, I., PRIHARTONO, & SUDJATMIKO, E. T.

Therefore, future research should delve deeper into how religious ethics interact with broader socio-economic and political conditions in shaping the digital, ecological, and moral behavior of young people. Such an approach would provide a more holistic understanding and enrich the discourse on the role of spiritual values in building sustainable and empowered societies.

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HANSEN, S., BANGKARA, B. A., DARMIYANTI, L., BALI, I., IMANUEL, I., PRIHARTONO, & SUDJATMIKO, E. T.

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