

Religious Education and Spirituality From Student's Perspectives In The Digital Era: Theory, Perception, And Understanding

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ABSTRACT

Spirituality in education has recently become an interesting topic and discussion in the field, demanding theory, practice, and even appreciation and real action. Education in Indonesia, especially religious education and Spirituality, as early as possible becomes the foundation and dimension of life with a fragmented understanding of experience and encounters with religious traditions. This article aims to investigate students' understandings, both theory and perception, of Spirituality and religious education in the context of education. In-depth, structured, and semi-structured interviews were conducted for 120 students using a qualitative research design. They were led in this situation by using a Google form as a lens to gauge their comprehension of the research focus. The research results have shown some points. First, Spirituality and religious education are ill-defined abstract concepts. Second, there is a correlation between Spirituality and religious instruction. Third, religion and Spirituality are like an esophagus, an oasis in the digital age. Spirituality and religious education are polarized contextually.

Keywords: Religious Education, Spirituality, Perception and Understanding

A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian national education is based on Pancasila and the UUD 1945 Constitution. It is grounded in religious principles and national culture and is adaptable to the needs of contemporary society. National education in Indonesia works to build capacities and mold the civilization and character of a dignified nation (Alfiyanto et al., 2023). The basic objective is to help students realize their potential as individuals who will believe in and revere God Almighty, have a noble character and healthy life, be a knowledgeable, creative, independent person, and behave responsibly as citizens of a democratic society (Catholic, 2013; Asrori, 2016). Regarding the foundation of this national education, Indonesian religious education has a structured and sustainable program that adheres to curriculum guidelines to assist students in developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and a more devoted way of life (Alfiyanto, 2020; Mangunjaya et al., 2021).

The article explores the interconnectedness of religious education and spirituality, emphasizing their significance in the Indonesian education system. It highlights that religious education, viewed as a pedagogical and interactive component, contributes to moral progress by emphasizing thinking, practicing, and acting rather than mere memorization. The close connection between religious education and religiosity is discussed, with religiosity encompassing spiritual expressions beyond formal religion and serving as a foundation shaped by religion. The term "Spirituality" is traced back to its origin, emphasizing its anthropological context and role in fostering an urge to assist others emanating from God. The integration of Spirituality in Indonesian high schools is noted, anchored in the national education system's norms, including Pancasila and the UUD 1945 Constitution.

The article proposes the integration of Spirituality in education for its dynamic impact on success and morale, highlighting its role in societal and personal identity. The essay advocates for the intertwining of religious education and Spirituality in educational practices for holistic development. In the digital era, students perceive religious education and Spirituality theoretically, transcending abstract boundaries and involving sacred exploration. The evolving role of the digital era is emphasized, providing opportunities for knowledge exchange and fostering creativity and conversation. The article underscores the importance of exploring the sophisticated digital environment for religious and spiritual education.

Lastly, the article discusses student knowledge elements in relation to religiosity, emphasizing the holistic relationship between religious education and spirituality. The complexity, plurality, and diverse perspectives in education and spirituality contribute to varied

perceptions and understandings of diversity, requiring a broad and open theoretical framework for contextual religious education and spirituality.

B. METHOD

The State University of Malang's Ph.D. program in educational technology supports a researcher's scientific exploration in religion and spirituality education. The program emphasizes the research's mandatory nature for completion, intending to set a benchmark for scientific research in educational institutions, high schools, religious teachers, and education observers. Recognizing religion and spirituality as fundamental aspects of human life expressed through diverse methods, the research is deemed crucial, particularly for young students, serving as a benchmark for future educators.

Qualified and continuously learning teachers are highlighted as essential contributors to theoretical and practical educational knowledge. The study advocates for achievable spirituality and religious education through assessments, revisions, partnerships, pedagogical adjustments, and technological advancements, emphasizing accessibility for all ages without restrictions. The research involves 120 students from three high schools, categorized based on school name, religion, gender, and age. The study aims to gather valuable responses and insights, providing a foundation for further exploration and understanding in the realm of religion and spirituality education.

Table 1. Number of respondents by school name, religion, age, and gender

No	School/respondent	Religion		Age			Sex	
		Catholic	Protestant	16 years	17 years	18 years	male	Female
1	School (A)/ 40.	23	17	16	22	2	12	28
2	School (B) /40	19	21	17	19	4	19	21
3	School (C) /40	25	15	21	14	5	15	25
	Total 120							
Note: The average age of senior high school (SMA) students in Indonesia is between 15 -18 years								

The researchers conducted a qualitative-grounded theory study involving respondents from three schools to explore Spirituality. The interview schedule was structured for schools A, B, and C, with 40 respondents in each group. Structured and unstructured interviews over three weeks aimed for detailed and honest responses. Questions, shared through Google forms,

addressed Spirituality awareness, definitions, and views on religious education in the digital age. Researchers, diverse in backgrounds, aimed for respondent comfort. Using a constructivism-based qualitative approach, grounded theory (GT) involved systematic data analysis. Primary data included observations, field notes, and photographs, while secondary data came from internet sources and educational institutions. In-depth interviews, individually conducted, aimed for continuous information collection on religious education and Spirituality. Themes were categorized, and responses were structured, coded, and grouped based on religion, age, and gender. Analyzing similarities generated emerging patterns within and between categories, employing categorization strategies.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This investigation discovered that every respondent selected and identified as an "anonymous student name" (name, school origin, religion, age, gender). The table below illustrates it.

Table 2. The definition of religious education and Spirituality by gender.

No	School name/student name	Religious	Knowing the definition of religious education by gender		Knowing the definition of Spirituality by gender		Doubtful (definition of religious education)		Doubtful (definition of Spirituality)		No answer (definition of religious education)		It does not answer the definition of Spirituality	
			M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
1	School (A) Number of respondents 40	40	12	28	8	14	-	-	10	7	-	-	1	-
2	School (B) Number of	40	19	21	11	20	-	-	4	2	-	-	1	2

	respondents 40													
3	School (C) Number of respondents 40	40	15	25	16	21	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	-
	Number of respondents	120	46	74	35	55	-	-	15	9	-		4	2

The table above can be explained as follows:

All students numbered 120 (both Catholic and Protestant)

2) The number of students who know the education definition M 46, W 74.

3) The number of students who know the definition of Spirituality M 35, W 55.

4) Number of students who answered doubtfully (definition of religious education) M (-), W (-)

5) Number of students who answered doubtful (definition of Spirituality) M 15, W 9

6) The number of students who did not answer the interview questions M 4, W 2.

7) Additional information M/Men (male), W/Women (female)

These findings are obtained from structured interview data, unstructured interviews, and the google form.

Spirituality of Abstract Reality, Hard to Define?

The researchers conducted interviews with 120 students, all of whom were familiar with the terms "religious education" and "Spirituality." Consistent with existing studies, religious education is recognized as a pedagogical element crucial for understanding religion and strengthening faith in schools (Robben et al., 2021). During the interviews, students provided diverse perspectives on Spirituality, relating it to concepts like God, divinity, abstraction, and intangibility. These responses align with existing literature emphasizing the abstract and sublime nature of Spirituality (Engbretson, 2003; Fuertes & Dugan, 2021). Spirituality is associated with serving, working, and the spirit itself, often felt or narrated rather than explicitly discussed.

The researchers uncovered various and unique concepts through students' responses, revealing Spirituality's dynamic and abstract nature. Spirituality is perceived as a social process influenced by education levels, age, habits, and mentoring, contributing to ongoing education and support. It is compared to a "string of red otters," weaving through different places and eras, essential for self-development and shaping moral and intellectual routes. The foundation of religious instruction is rooted in Spirituality, deepening the understanding of religion and belief in the true God. Spirituality serves as an experiential bridge between subjective and objective reality, influencing attitudes, decisions, thoughts, and daily actions. From an etymological perspective, Spirituality is linked to the soul or spirit, emphasizing holiness and one's relationship with God, driving believers to integrate all aspects of life into a better way of living.

Correlation between Religious Education and Spirituality

Religious education and spirituality in the Indonesian education system, emphasizing their planned actions to enhance students' faith and devotion. The curriculum includes these aspects, aiming to promote harmony and national unity while respecting other religions. The relationship between religious education and spirituality is explored through student perspectives. Group C views spirituality and religion as educational tools that serve as links, emphasizing the importance of upholding religious principles for increased benefits. Group B distinguishes religion as a belief system with theory and practice, while spirituality is seen as an outcome that increases worth, emphasizing the need for religious education. Group A suggests that spirituality and religious education are acquired through various practices, including the human-God relationship, cultural traditions, and community.

The interview delves into the intricate connection between spirituality and religious education, highlighting the multidisciplinary nature of spirituality and the importance of dialogue and experiential aspects in understanding them holistically. Spirituality is portrayed as a primal human experience beyond traditional religious responses, influencing the connection between individuals, the environment, and intangible aspects of existence. The interviews suggest that religious education is an act of faith, providing hope and spiritual nourishment in the face of modern challenges. Professional teachers play a crucial role in ensuring the effectiveness of religious education. Religious literacy becomes essential in the current era, shaping attitudes in the pursuit of education. The digital age has led to a distinction between spirituality and religion, with spirituality viewed as an interior exploration of interpersonal interactions.

Despite the complexity of the discussion, parallels exist between the definitions of religion and spirituality, emphasizing attributes of relationship, connectedness, transcendence, and a focus beyond the self. The spiritual dimension is seen as a means of helping individuals create a meaningful framework for their lives, influencing decisions, actions, and the interpretation of life experiences. Both religion and spirituality are intertwined with rationality, identity, connectedness, experience, religious response, and tradition.

Religious Education and Spirituality "New Oasis and Aeropagus" in the Digital Age

The challenges and opportunities of integrating religion and spirituality into official schooling in the digital age. It acknowledges the difficulties, such as varying opinions on instrumentalization and the encounter perspective, where the digital world is seen as a space for new encounters between humans and culture. The importance of enlivening religious and faith encounters in the digital world is emphasized. The introduction of technology has altered the conditions of the educational system, with the digital realm viewed as an inspirational space for learning. The essay suggests that socially focused educational media, collaborating with other sciences, can enhance skills, curriculum frameworks, personal growth, and professional understanding. Digital technology is seen as crucial for concise and proper communication of information.

The researcher explores the opinions of students in Group C and Group B regarding religious education in the digital age. Group C emphasizes a modern learning strategy that goes beyond traditional methods, utilizing digital tools to encourage creativity. Group B highlights the accessibility of religious education through media like Google and the creative potential of digital tools, such as creating educational videos. In summary, the essay concludes that studying religion and spirituality in the digital age presents both challenges and opportunities. It emphasizes the positive impact of social media and digital tools on learning and relationships, considering them as spaces for experimentation and innovation in religious education. The importance of fostering spirituality at a young age for personal growth and life quality is emphasized. The essay also underscores the role of parental support and the school setting in maintaining relevance and upholding spiritual and moral principles in the digital era.

Polarizing Religious Education and Spirituality Contextually

Religious education and spirituality's significance is a subject of ongoing debate. A study in England revealed varied perspectives on religious education, emphasizing the need for inculcating values and exploring religious ideas in daily life for students' future development. Hill and Woolley also stress the importance of a substantive understanding of religious and nonreligious traditions, highlighting the teacher's role in effective religious education.

In Indonesia, the curriculum places religious education prominently, emphasizing its connection with spirituality. While religious education is integrated into the curriculum, spirituality is nurtured through habits and coaching outside of school hours. Zinnbauer and Pargament emphasize the interconnectedness of religion and spirituality, with spirituality being the essence of religion. Both concepts touch on various aspects of human existence, encompassing the sacred and the profane. Religious education and spirituality, contextualized in real-world experiences, coaching, and participatory action, require a critical attitude to adapt to changes. Transforming teachers into facilitators and mediators helps connect theory and practice, fostering a deeper understanding for students. Contextual spirituality, implemented in a context-based manner, aligns with the changing educational landscape.

Despite diverse religious backgrounds, students in the school context exhibit passion and tolerance. Religious education and spirituality contribute to courteous, polite, and ethically disciplined behavior, emphasizing the social aspect of education. Pope Francis underscores the importance of love in education, considering it a fundamental condition for judging human life's worth. While Catholic religious learning may be rooted in the Christian faith, it incorporates various approaches, experiences, dialogues, interpretations, narratives, and religious literacy. The spirit of religious learning extends beyond theory, emphasizing activities and actions in understanding and practicing spirituality (Casson & Cooling, 2020; Florisan et al., 2009). Based on these results and analysis, it was determined that students' theories, perceptions, and understandings of religion and Spirituality were both similar and different. In the following table, they are briefly identified and described in 4 points:

Table 3. Students' Theories, Perceptions, and Understandings of Religion and Spirituality

School	The difference	The similarities
School Identity (A, B, and C)	Compared to Schools B and C, School A exhibits more reluctance to respond to spirituality-related interview questions. Six people did not answer the questions about male and female Spirituality (Table 2). Since more women attended schools A, B, and C, they responded to interview questions more frequently.	Catholic and Protestant students attend schools A, B, and C together. There are 40 responses in total, with 40 in each of schools. Based on gender, each student is aware of what religious education means. Catholic schools (SMAK) A, B, and C are in Malang, Indonesia.

<p>The Spirituality of Abstract reality is difficult to define.</p>	<p>The overall interview's findings demonstrate that students from school B are more vocal and critical when providing and composing responses, "without neglecting the responses from schools A and C." Examples of student responses include: Spirituality is the pursuit of a pious life. Even if it is abstract," to control and arouse one to conduct piously, and spiritually in the world. Religion is a system of teachings and values developed by humanity (MacKiclay, 2022)</p>	<p>One popular response is that religious education increases people's faith in God, love of others, and appreciation of the world around them. According to this perspective, people are endowed with a spirit from God that is representative of Spirituality, purity, service or activity, and community within a personal relationship with God.</p>
<p>Correlation of religious education and Spirituality.</p>	<p>According to preliminary observations, school B is more adaptable, efficient, intelligent, and critical. The responses are not rote; they result from reasoning based on participation in diverse religious and social activities.</p>	<p>Overall, it demonstrates how closely related and interdependent Spirituality and religion are. Religious ideas are taught through religious pedagogy. A spirit is Spirituality. Even though religion has structure and laws, it cannot exist without Spirituality. There needs to be ongoing training.</p>
<p>In the digital era, religious education and spirituality "New Oasis</p>	<p>The solutions come from schools A, B, and C. However, the responses from school B demonstrate how students can use digital tools as learning tools that foster their creativity. Digital is viewed as a medium that conveys information about "religion and</p>	<p>For students, religion and Spirituality are encounter models. Religious learning is not limited to theories or concepts taught in class but the teachings of 'life' in the digital era.</p>

and Aeropagus.”	Spirituality and facilitates interactions between students and people worldwide.	
polarizing religious education and Spirituality Contextually	The three schools opt for religious education. Schools need to implement Spirituality more.	There is no difference in the answers in Polarizing religious education and Spirituality contextually in schools A, B, and C.

The use of Euro-Western theories in analyzing religious education and spirituality, emphasizing their scientific validity and applicability in the context of research in Indonesia. Scholars adopt these theories as they have been proven scientifically and are considered useful for investigating spirituality and religious education. The essay advocates for the practical application of theories accepted in the classroom to be implemented in the field, with students' experiences being shaped by theory, perception, and understanding. The philosophical stance suggests that spirituality and religious education should not remain theoretical but should be grounded in practice. Drawing on Dewey's perspective on children's education, it is argued that religion is not merely a matter of theory but involves appreciation and a spirit that propels individuals forward.

In a different context, the essay highlights the growth of contextual religious education and spirituality in the school environment, incorporating complex and multidimensional ideas and concepts. Despite the diversity of religions and faiths, it emphasizes the importance of ingrained moral values, open-minded thinking, and respectful behavior. The assumption that spirituality is specific to those who engage in worship, attend church, and follow school rules is considered acceptable, encompassing religious behavior, enthusiasm, a positive relationship with God, transcendence, and the pursuit of deep personal meaning. In summary, the essay underscores the application of Euro-Western theories in Indonesian research on spirituality and religious education. It advocates for the integration of theoretical knowledge into practical

contexts and emphasizes the multidimensional nature of contextual religious education and spirituality in schools.

D. CONCLUSION

This paper explores Spirituality and religious education in Indonesian secondary schools, emphasizing the complexity of defining Spirituality. The study, conducted in a Catholic environment, reveals challenges in teaching religious and spiritual values, especially in the digital age. Key findings include the teacher's pivotal role in introducing Spirituality and religious education, highlighting their significance as the foundation for religious and belief development in Indonesia. The concept of Spirituality, considered "universal," is recognized as individualized and subjective, shaped by personal experiences, social involvement, and faith. The paper stresses the importance of respecting students' diverse views on religion and Spirituality, fostering open dialogue, and creating an environment conducive to spiritual growth. The readiness of educational institutions for collaborative efforts in this regard is questioned.

Respondents express pride in participating in various extracurricular and character-building activities, emphasizing the development of fundamental religious and spiritual qualities. The study underscores the aim of advancing intangible components and values rather than promoting specific religions or beliefs. The research focuses on the relationship between religious education and Spirituality, aiming to contribute theoretical insights for broader educational practices nationally and internationally, emphasizing values, attitudes, reflection, and adaptable models.

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