



Christian Digital Citizenship Formation: Integrating Liturgical Formation, Public Ecclesiology, and Christian Religious Education

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ABSTRACT

Digital popular culture has become a significant formative environment in which learners encounter values, identities, relationships, practices, and competing visions of the good life. Social media, entertainment platforms, communication applications, streaming services, and participatory media do not merely communicate information but also shape attention, desire, habits, and patterns of participation. This condition raises a significant concern for Christian Religious Education because faith formation increasingly occurs within digitally mediated environments beyond formal educational and ecclesial settings. This study aims to formulate a model of Christian digital citizenship formation by integrating insights from liturgical formation, public ecclesiology, and Christian Religious Education. The study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with thematic synthesis, following the PRISMA 2020 stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. The literature search used Scopus and Google Scholar, with Crossref as a supplementary source, and focused on scholarship concerning digital culture, digital religion, Christian formation, faith formation, digital church, liturgical formation, digital ecclesiology, public theology, and related concepts. The synthesis identifies five interconnected dimensions: digital-theological literacy, desire formation, digital-liturgical practices, ecclesial community, and public witness. The originality of the model does not lie in presenting these dimensions as entirely new constructs, but in their conceptual integration into an educational framework for Christian digital citizenship. The model contributes to Christian Religious Education by connecting critical digital learning with formation of desire, habitus, community, ethical participation, and public Christian witness. It positions religious educators, church-based educational communities, and Christian educational institutions as agents who intentionally form learners to inhabit digital culture critically, ethically, communally, and faithfully.

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ABSTRAK

Budaya populer digital telah menjadi lingkungan formatif yang signifikan, tempat peserta didik berjumpa dengan nilai-nilai, identitas, relasi, praktik, serta berbagai pandangan yang saling berkompetisi mengenai kehidupan yang baik. Media sosial, platform hiburan, aplikasi komunikasi, layanan streaming, dan media partisipatif tidak sekadar menyampaikan informasi, tetapi juga membentuk perhatian, keinginan, kebiasaan, dan pola partisipasi. Kondisi ini menimbulkan perhatian penting bagi Pendidikan Agama Kristen karena pembentukan iman semakin berlangsung dalam lingkungan yang dimediasi secara digital, melampaui ruang pendidikan formal dan lingkungan gerejawi. Penelitian ini bertujuan merumuskan model pembentukan kewargaan digital Kristen dengan mengintegrasikan wawasan dari formasi liturgis, eklesiologi publik, dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode Systematic Literature Review (SLR) dengan sintesis tematik, mengikuti tahapan PRISMA 2020 yang meliputi identifikasi, penyaringan, penilaian kelayakan, dan inklusi. Penelusuran literatur dilakukan melalui Scopus dan Google Scholar, dengan Crossref sebagai sumber tambahan, dan berfokus pada kajian mengenai budaya digital, agama digital, formasi Kristen, pembentukan iman, gereja digital, formasi liturgis, eklesiologi digital, teologi publik, serta konsep-konsep terkait. Hasil sintesis mengidentifikasi lima dimensi yang saling berkaitan, yaitu literasi digital-teologis, pembentukan keinginan, praktik liturgis digital, komunitas eklesial, dan kesaksian publik. Kebaruan model ini tidak terletak pada penyajian kelima dimensi tersebut sebagai konstruk yang sepenuhnya baru, melainkan pada integrasi konseptualnya ke dalam suatu kerangka pendidikan bagi pembentukan kewargaan digital Kristen. Model ini memberikan kontribusi bagi Pendidikan Agama Kristen dengan menghubungkan pembelajaran digital kritis dengan pembentukan keinginan, habitus, komunitas, partisipasi etis, dan kesaksian Kristen di ruang publik. Model ini menempatkan pendidik agama, komunitas pendidikan berbasis gereja, dan lembaga pendidikan Kristen sebagai agen yang secara intentional membentuk peserta didik agar mampu menghidupi budaya digital secara kritis, etis, komunal, dan setia kepada iman Kristen.

KATA KUNCI

Pendidikan Agama Kristen; budaya populer digital; formasi liturgis; eklesiologi publik; agama digital.

Introduction

The development of digital technology has brought profound changes to human social and cultural life. Social media, video platforms, communication applications, streaming services, digital games, and various forms of new media have become part of everyday routines. These developments have affected not only how people obtain and disseminate information but also how they interact, construct their identities, understand themselves, and participate in communal life. In the context of religion, these developments have given rise to the field of *digital religion*, which examines the relationship between religious practices and digital media environments (Campbell & Tsuria, 2022).

Popular culture within these environments has likewise undergone significant transformation. Popular culture is no longer produced primarily through television, radio, film, music, or magazines but increasingly through social media, streaming services, podcasts, gaming, memes, influencer culture, and user-generated content. Users are no longer merely consumers of culture; they have also become producers and distributors of content. Digital popular culture can therefore be understood as a cultural environment in which people encounter, produce, repeat, and negotiate various conceptions of what constitutes a good life.

From this perspective, digital technology cannot be regarded merely as a neutral tool. Hjarvard (2011) demonstrates that media do not simply communicate information about religion but also shape how religious information and experiences are constructed according to media logics. Media have become an important dimension of the social and cultural processes that influence religion. Consequently, the digitalization of the church is not merely a matter of technological competence but also concerns how the logic of digital culture affects the life of faith.

Research in *digital religion* demonstrates that the development of digital media is connected to various dimensions of religious life, including ritual, identity, community, authority, and embodiment (Campbell & Tsuria, 2022). This body of research demonstrates that the relationship between religion and digital media must be approached critically because digital technologies have theological, ethical, and social implications, not merely technical consequences. Thus, Christians continue to undergo processes of faith formation while inhabiting digital spaces.

Campbell (2012) employs the concept of *networked religion* to explain transformations in religious life within networked societies. Five significant characteristics are identified: *networked community*, *storied identity*, *shifting authority*, *convergent practice*, and *multisite reality*. This framework demonstrates that religious identities and practices increasingly take place through networks that connect online and offline spaces. Faith is no longer shaped exclusively through formal religious institutions but also through social networks and digital media.

These developments raise significant questions for the church. Christians can access religious teaching from numerous digital sources, follow religious figures outside their own churches, participate in online communities, and construct religious identities through social media. Consequently, the church is no longer the only environment directly influencing an individual's process of faith formation. Campbell and Tsuria (2022) demonstrate that these changes are closely related to questions of authority, community, identity, ritual, and authenticity within digital religious life.

This issue becomes increasingly important because human beings are formed not merely by what they know but also by what they love and desire. Smith (2009) critiques approaches to Christian education that place excessive emphasis on worldview formation at the cognitive level. According to Smith, human beings are creatures who love and desire particular things; therefore, human formation takes place through practices that direct desire. Cultural practices consequently possess the capacity to shape people at a deeper level than the transmission of information alone.

The study by Lindemann and Schultz (2024) reinforces this perspective. They develop the concept of *heart-orientation* within worldview and identify four primary parameters: *worship*, *embodiment*, *symbols*, and *rituals*. Human heart orientation, therefore, is not merely a matter of what people think but is also shaped by practices, symbols, embodiment, and rituals repeatedly enacted. This finding is particularly relevant for understanding digital culture because many digital practices are repetitive and may shape people's orientations of the heart.

In the same study, Lindemann and Schultz (2024) explicitly connect their argument with James K. A. Smith's *Cultural Liturgies* project. They demonstrate that Smith emphasizes the relationship between cultural practices, habits, and the formation of the heart. Smith critiques understandings of worldview that focus primarily on how people think and instead directs attention toward how the human heart is shaped through what people do and love (Lindemann & Schultz, 2024).

Within digital popular culture, this argument has significant implications. Activities such as scrolling, liking, following, posting, reading comments, pursuing followers, and monitoring responses to posts are repeatedly performed practices. These

practices can shape people's attention and habits. Therefore, the church's question should not be limited to "What content do Christians consume?" but should also ask, "What kinds of habits and desires are being formed through these digital practices?"

Smith (2013) further demonstrates that human formation is connected to imagination. Liturgical practices shape how people imagine the good life. Smith (2016) subsequently emphasizes that people are formed by what they love and by the habits they repeatedly practice. This perspective provides a theological foundation for understanding that the church needs to form not only digital knowledge but also digital *habitus*.

At the same time, the church has a public calling. Christian formation does not end with private spiritual life but is oriented toward communal life. *Public ecclesiology* understands the church as a community possessing a public character and public responsibility. In digital contexts, this responsibility has become increasingly complex because the public sphere is increasingly mediated through digital platforms.

Heymann (2026) demonstrates that digital transformation is reshaping communication, participation, public opinion formation, and the character of the public sphere. Consequently, digital transformation also raises fundamental questions concerning the role, mission, and public character of the church. The church may be understood as an institution of moral formation, as a public, and as a participant in the public sphere.

Van Oorschot and Höhne (2026) likewise argue that the intersection of *public theology* and *digital theology* needs to consider the effects of digital transformation on society, the church, theology, and the digital public sphere. This perspective demonstrates that digitalization is not merely a matter of church technology but also concerns public participation, social relationships, and theological witness.

Christian digital citizenship formation therefore needs to bring together internal and external dimensions. *Liturgical formation* explains how people are shaped through practices, habits, symbols, embodiment, and desires, whereas *public ecclesiology* explains the public orientation of the community that has been formed. Integrating these two perspectives can produce a more comprehensive model than approaches that emphasize technological literacy alone.

Previous research on *digital faith formation* also demonstrates the need for such an approach. De Kock (2025) conducted a systematic literature review of research on *Christian digital faith formation* among young people and identified only 22 journal articles that met the review criteria. The study indicates that research on Christian digital faith formation remains relatively limited and occurs across diverse contexts, ranging from youth ministry and religious education to digital applications. The review also emphasizes the importance of healthy community in processes of digital faith formation.

Conceptual positioning is important because the central concepts of this study are related but not interchangeable. Religious education refers here to intentional educational practice through which learners are equipped to understand, interpret, and live their faith within changing cultural contexts. Christian or faith formation refers more broadly to the lifelong formation of Christian identity, character, desire, and practice. Liturgical formation provides a theological account of how people are shaped through practices, habits, symbols, imagination, worship, and embodied participation (Smith, 2009, 2013, 2016). Public ecclesiology directs this formation toward the communal and public vocation of the church, including participation in a changing public sphere (Heymann, 2026; van Oorschot & Höhne, 2026). Digital citizenship, in turn, concerns responsible and participatory life within digitally mediated environments. Christian digital citizenship formation therefore refers to the intentional educational and ecclesial process of forming Christian learners to interpret digital culture theologically, discern its

formative influence, cultivate Christ-oriented habits, participate in ecclesial community, and embody Christian witness in digital public life.

This constitutes the research gap addressed by the present study. Research on *digital religion* has extensively examined transformations in religious practices within digital media; Christian education research has addressed technology use and *digital faith formation*; while studies of *public ecclesiology* have examined the church's presence in public life. However, there remains a need for a model that explicitly brings together digital popular culture as a formative environment, *liturgical formation* as a theory of human formation, and *public ecclesiology* as an orientation toward the public life of the church.

The gap addressed by this study is therefore threefold. First, scholarship on digital religion has extensively described changes in religious practice, authority, identity, and community in digital environments, but these insights are not always translated into an integrated educational model for Christian digital citizenship. Second, Christian Religious Education and digital faith-formation studies address technology, evangelization, discipleship, and community, yet the formative relationship among digital practices, desire, habitus, and public participation remains insufficiently integrated. Third, public ecclesiology offers important accounts of the church's public vocation, but its implications for intentional educational formation in the digital public sphere require further development. This study responds to these gaps through a conceptual synthesis. Its originality is therefore located in the integration and educational reconceptualization of established insights rather than in claiming that each of the five dimensions is individually unprecedented.

Accordingly, the guiding research question is: How can insights from liturgical formation and public ecclesiology be integrated into a Christian Religious Education model that forms learners for responsible and faithful participation in digital popular culture?

Based on this research gap, this study aims to formulate a model of Christian digital citizenship formation in the era of digital popular culture through the perspectives of *liturgical formation* and *public ecclesiology*. The research question is: How can the literature on digital popular culture, *digital religion*, Christian formation, *liturgical formation*, and *public ecclesiology* be synthesized into a model of Christian digital citizenship formation?

Methods

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to examine literature related to digital culture, digital religion, Christian formation, liturgical formation, and public ecclesiology. The review was guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework (Page et al., 2021).

The literature was identified through Google Scholar, Scopus, and Crossref using keywords related to *digital culture*, *digital religion*, *Christian formation*, *digital faith formation*, *Christian Religious Education*, *liturgical formation*, *public ecclesiology*, and *digital theology*. The initial search produced 1,240 records, consisting of 40 records from Google Scholar, 200 from Scopus, and 1,000 from Crossref.

The review primarily considered recent literature published between 2021 and 2026, while selected earlier works were retained because they provide important theoretical foundations for understanding digital religion, media, worship, cultural formation, and Christian identity (Campbell, 2012, 2013; Helland, 2005; Hjarvard, 2011; Smith, 2009, 2013, 2016).

The literature was selected based on its relevance to the main research themes. Studies addressing digital culture, digital religion, Christian formation, religious

education, worship and liturgical practices, ecclesial community, worldview, or the public role of the church were considered relevant. Studies that were not sufficiently related to these themes or focused mainly on technical aspects of digital technology without theological or educational relevance were excluded.

The selected literature was analyzed through thematic synthesis. Relevant concepts and findings were identified, compared, and grouped into broader themes. The themes were then interpreted in relation to Christian formation in digital culture, particularly through the perspectives of liturgical formation and public ecclesiology.

The analysis resulted in five interconnected dimensions of Christian digital citizenship formation: (1) digital-theological literacy, (2) desire formation, (3) digital-liturgical practices, (4) ecclesial community, and (5) public witness. These dimensions were integrated into a conceptual framework for understanding Christian formation in digital culture. The framework emphasizes that Christian formation is an ongoing process in which digital participation, worship, community, and public engagement continually shape theological understanding, desires, practices, and witness.

Results and Discussion

1 Digital Popular Culture as a Formative Educational Environment

From a Christian Religious Education perspective, this means that digital culture must be treated as a learning and formation environment, not simply as a technological context. Learners encounter formative messages before, during, and beyond formal educational settings; therefore, educators need to help them identify how digital environments shape attention, values, identity, relationships, and participation. This shifts the educational task from merely teaching digital skills toward cultivating critical and theological discernment.

The synthesis of the literature indicates that digital popular culture is better understood as a formative environment rather than merely a collection of technologies. Digital media provide a context in which people see, hear, interact, choose, and allocate attention. Hjarvard (2011) demonstrates that mediatization processes have increasingly integrated media into social life, thereby influencing religious experiences as well.

Within the field of *digital religion*, Campbell and Tsuria (2022) demonstrate that digital media are connected to various dimensions of religious life, including ritual, identity, community, authority, and embodiment. Digitalization therefore affects the broader structures of religious life rather than merely transferring religious information to the internet.

Digital popular culture forms people through mechanisms of attention and repetition. Algorithms select the content that appears before users, while users repeatedly engage in practices such as opening applications, scrolling, responding, following accounts, and producing content. Such repetition generates habits that can influence an individual's orientation toward the world.

Consequently, the church needs to regard digital media not merely as “ministry tools.” It needs to understand the formative ecology within which Christians live. The critical question is not simply whether a technology can be used for ministry but how its use shapes attention, relationships, and habits.

2 Christian Religious Education and the Formation of Desire

The perspective of *liturgical formation* makes an important contribution to understanding this process. Smith (2009) argues that people are formed by what they love and desire. Formation, therefore, cannot be understood merely as the transfer of knowledge. Christian education must attend to practices that shape the orientation of the heart.

Lindemann and Schultz (2024) reinforce this framework by identifying *worship, embodiment, symbols, and rituals* as parameters within the dimension of *heart-orientation*. The formation of the heart's orientation is therefore closely connected to what people concretely and repeatedly do.

Within digital culture, this can be observed through the culture of popularity. Likes, followers, views, and comments can function as forms of social recognition that gradually influence how individuals perceive their own worth. Influencer culture can likewise present particular narratives concerning success, beauty, productivity, wealth, and happiness.

The issue is not that every use of social media is necessarily harmful but that such practices can be formative. A person may consciously believe that their worth does not depend on popularity while unconsciously developing habits of continually seeking digital affirmation.

Therefore, Christian digital citizenship formation needs to address the dimension of desire. The church needs to help Christians ask: What am I seeking in digital spaces? Why do I need recognition? What makes me feel valuable? Who determines my understanding of the good life?

For Christian Religious Education, the educational implication is that formation cannot be reduced to transferring correct information. Learning must also provide guided practices of reflection, prayer, discernment, and conversation through which learners can examine what they love, seek, and value in digital environments. The educator therefore serves not merely as an instructor of digital rules but as a formator who helps learners connect digital experience with Christian discipleship.

3 Liturgical Formation and the Formation of Digital Habitus

Smith (2013) demonstrates that liturgy has the capacity to shape imagination. Liturgical practices help people imagine the world and the good life within a particular framework. Smith (2016) further emphasizes that human beings are formed by what they love and by the habits they repeatedly practice.

From this perspective, digital culture can be understood as an environment containing formative practices. Checking one's phone immediately after waking, opening social media when bored, following particular trends, sharing personal experiences, and monitoring public responses are habits that train attention.

Lindemann and Schultz (2024) explicitly situate Smith's work (2009, 2016) within the development of scholarship on heart formation. They note that Smith connects cultural practices with the formation of the heart through the power of habit and calls Christian education to attend to what believers do, not merely what they think.

The implication is that the church cannot simply offer seminars on the "dangers of social media." It needs to cultivate alternative practices. These may include *digital Sabbath*, device-free periods, prayer before responding to digital conflicts, disciplined notification management, reflection before posting content, and practices of examining one's motives before using digital media.

In educational practice, these counter-formative activities can become intentional learning experiences. Learners can reflect on their patterns of attention, practice periods of digital restraint, discuss online conflicts, and evaluate the relationship between digital habits and Christian worship. Such practices make liturgical formation visible within Christian education because learners are not only taught about faith but are formed through repeated practices.

Such practices are not intended as a rejection of technology. Rather, their purpose is to cultivate habits through which technology remains subject to the orientation of faith rather than becoming a determining force in people's lives.

4 From Digital Content to Formation-Oriented Christian Education

Wise (2014) argues that churches need to approach digital communication strategically and in relation to ministry objectives. Social media and digital communication can help churches reach people who were previously difficult to reach. However, the effectiveness of communication cannot be measured solely by the number of followers or engagement. Wise demonstrates that churches need to connect their use of digital media with the church's purposes and mission.

Crosby (2019) likewise understands communication as an important dimension of community life. Communication can create space for relationships, activities, celebration, and testimony concerning God's work within the community. He emphasizes the importance of storytelling and audience context in church communication.

This means that digital ministry needs to move from content production toward formation-oriented communication. Content is not the ultimate goal but part of a process of cultivating relationships, community, learning, and witness.

This principle also applies to Christian Religious Education. Digital educational content should be evaluated by its formative purpose: whether it enables learning, reflection, dialogue, mentoring, practice, and participation in community. A successful digital educational activity is therefore not necessarily the one with the largest reach but the one that contributes to the formation of Christian understanding, character, relationships, and practice.

Consequently, the evaluation of digital ministry needs to be expanded. Churches should not ask only, "How many people watched?" but also, "Are people experiencing faith formation?", "Are they becoming connected to a community?", and "Are they becoming more capable of embodying Christ's love in public life?"

5 Ecclesial Community and Digital Faith Formation

Christian formation cannot be separated from community. De Kock (2025) demonstrates that research on *Christian digital faith formation* remains relatively limited and is distributed across various contexts. One significant finding is the importance of a healthy community culture in processes of digital faith formation.

This is consistent with the development of *networked religion*. Campbell (2012) demonstrates that religious life in networked societies is characterized by networked communities and multisite realities. Faith life can therefore take place through networks connecting different places and communities.

Nevertheless, churches should avoid assuming that digital communities can automatically replace embodied communities. Christian formation requires relationships, presence, shared practices, service, and communal life. A more appropriate approach is therefore hybrid formation, integrating digital and physical spaces.

Digital spaces can be used for communication, learning, mentoring, prayer, and discussion. At the same time, physical communities remain essential spaces for embodied practices of faith, including worship, communion, service, friendship, and shared life.

6 Public Ecclesiology in the Digital Public Sphere

The formation of Christians does not end with personal or internal church life. The church has a public calling. Within digital spaces, Christians participate in public conversations concerning politics, education, culture, morality, human dignity, and various social issues.

Heymann (2026) demonstrates that digitalization transforms who can speak, who can participate, what is considered important, and how public opinion is formed. These transformations directly affect the public character of the church.

In such a context, every Christian who participates in social media potentially carries a Christian identity into the public sphere. Digital formation must therefore cultivate the ability to engage in dialogue, listen, evaluate information, regulate emotions, respect differences, and communicate Christian convictions without resorting to verbal violence.

Van Oorschot and Höhne (2026) argue that *public theology* and *digital theology* converge in their attention to the public dimensions of religion and the effects of digital transformation on society, the church, and theology. They emphasize the importance of considering the digital public sphere as a new space for participation and theological reflection.

The purpose of Christian digital citizenship formation, therefore, is not merely to produce “good media users” but public citizens whose character is shaped by the Christian faith.

For religious educators, this public orientation means preparing learners not only to avoid harmful online behavior but also to participate constructively in public conversations. Digital ethics includes truthfulness, responsible communication, attentiveness to others, respect across differences, emotional self-regulation, and discernment regarding information and influence. Public witness is therefore an educational outcome as well as an ecclesiological vocation.

7 Digital-Theological Literacy and Digital Ethics

Within this model, digital literacy is not limited to the ability to operate technological devices. Christians need the capacity to interpret digital culture theologically.

Such literacy includes understanding how platforms function, how algorithms influence attention, how influencer culture shapes aspirations, how information is produced and circulated, and how media affect emotions and relationships.

Soukup and Glader (2020) demonstrate that religious education needs to account for transformations in digital culture rather than merely adding technology to existing educational patterns. Díaz (2021) likewise demonstrates that the use of technology in Christian religious education needs to be approached reflectively so that technology genuinely serves the goals of Christian education.

Accordingly, digital-theological literacy may be defined as the capacity to understand, evaluate, use, and inhabit digital technologies according to Christian faith while remaining conscious of the formative power of digital culture.

This literacy also has an ethical dimension. Christian learners need to consider not only whether they can use a platform but how their participation affects other people, communities, and public discourse. Digital ethics therefore belongs within digital-theological literacy and should be cultivated through critical inquiry, theological reflection, case discussion, and guided practice.

8 A Model of Christian Digital Citizenship Formation

Based on the synthesis of the literature, this study proposes five primary dimensions.

Table 1. Model of Christian Digital Citizenship Formation

Dimension	Focus	Formative Practices	Intended Outcome
Digital-theological literacy	Understanding digital culture	Media analysis, algorithms, influencer culture, information literacy	Critical Christian citizenship
Desire formation	Recognizing the orientation of the heart	Reflection, prayer, <i>discernment</i>	Desires oriented toward Christ
Digital-liturgical practices	Cultivating habits	<i>Digital Sabbath</i> , attentional disciplines, prayer	Christian <i>habitus</i>
Ecclesial community	Forming shared identity	Worship, small groups, mentoring, hybrid communities	Ecclesial maturity
Public witness	Embodying faith in public life	Dialogue, service, public communication	Ethical Christian witness

These five dimensions should not be understood as isolated stages but as interconnected processes:

Digital Culture → Literacy → Discernment → Practice → Habitus → Community → Public Witness → Ongoing Formation

The model is educationally oriented because each movement in the sequence can become a formative learning process. Literacy provides understanding; discernment develops critical interpretation; practice cultivates habits; community sustains identity and accountability; and public witness expresses the formation in concrete digital participation. The process is recursive rather than linear because ongoing participation in digital culture continually creates new situations for learning and discernment.

First, Christians need to understand their digital environment. Second, this understanding needs to develop into *discernment*, namely the capacity to recognize how digital culture shapes the heart. Third, discernment is translated into practice. Fourth, repeated practices form *habitus*. Fifth, *habitus* is sustained within the church community. Sixth, the character that has been formed is expressed through public witness.

9 Integrating Liturgical Formation and Public Ecclesiology

The model's main contribution is therefore integrative and educational. It does not claim to replace existing accounts of liturgical formation, public ecclesiology, digital religion, or Christian Religious Education. Rather, it places these bodies of scholarship in a single formative sequence so that the question of how Christians are formed can be connected directly to the question of what they are formed for within digital public life.

The primary contribution of this model lies in integrating two perspectives that are often discussed separately.

Liturgical formation addresses the question:
How are Christians formed?

The answer is through practices, habits, symbols, imagination, embodiment, community, and the orientation of the heart. Smith (2009, 2013, 2016) provides the foundation for understanding that people are formed through what they do and love. Lindemann and Schultz (2024) extend this framework through the parameters of *worship, embodiment, symbols, and rituals*.

Public ecclesiology, meanwhile, addresses the question:

What are Christians formed for?

The answer is so that the church and its members can embody Christian witness within communal life. In digital contexts, such witness takes place within a public sphere undergoing transformation through digital media (Heymann, 2026; van Oorschot & Höhne, 2026).

The integration of these two perspectives can therefore be expressed as:

Formation → Character → Community → Public Witness

Formation shapes character; character is cultivated and sustained within community; and community embodies witness in public life.

The ultimate goal of the model, therefore, is not to produce Christians who are merely “technologically literate” but Christians who possess Christian character in their use of technology and participation in digital culture.

10 Implications for Church-Based and Christian Religious Education Praxis

This model has several implications. First, churches need to broaden their understanding of literacy. Christian literacy in the digital era involves not only the ability to read Scripture and understand doctrine but also the capacity to interpret digital culture critically and theologically.

Second, churches need to develop *digital discipleship*. Discipleship should encompass how Christians use time, select content, respond to conflict, build relationships, seek recognition, and participate in the public sphere.

Third, churches need to develop practices of *counter-formation*. If digital culture frequently forms people through speed, consumption, popularity, and the pursuit of attention, churches need to cultivate alternative habits through silence, patience, service, generosity, presence, and love.

Fourth, the criteria for evaluating digital ministry need to be reconsidered. The number of views, likes, and followers may be useful indicators of reach, but they cannot automatically serve as measures of spiritual maturity. Formation should be assessed through growth in character, depth of community, capacity for *discernment*, and the quality of public witness.

Fifth, churches need to develop a hybrid approach. Online and offline life are not two completely separate worlds. They mutually influence one another and therefore need to be integrated within the process of Christian formation.

11 Educational Praxis: Roles of Learners, Educators, and Institutions

The proposed model has direct implications for Christian Religious Education at three interconnected levels. At the learner level, Christian learners need opportunities to develop digital-theological literacy, examine their desires and habits, practice discernment, participate in community, and exercise ethical public witness. At the educator level, teachers, pastors, catechists, mentors, and other Christian Religious Education practitioners need to move beyond merely warning learners about the dangers of digital media. They can facilitate critical media analysis, theological reflection, prayer, digital Sabbath practices, discussion of online conflict, ethical communication, and mentoring that connects digital experience with Christian discipleship. At the institutional level, churches and Christian educational institutions need to cultivate environments in

which digital learning is integrated with embodied worship, community, service, and face-to-face relationships. Digital spaces can support communication, learning, mentoring, prayer, and discussion, while embodied communities remain essential for practices of worship, friendship, accountability, and shared life. Evaluation should also move beyond views, likes, followers, or other engagement metrics. Educational evaluation should attend to growth in discernment, character, relational maturity, community belonging, ethical participation, and the capacity to embody Christian witness in public digital life. In this way, Christian Religious Education becomes not merely a consumer of digital technology but a formative practice that equips learners to inhabit digital popular culture faithfully.

Limitations and Future Research. Because this study develops a conceptual model through literature synthesis, the five dimensions have not yet been empirically validated with learners, educators, or Christian educational institutions. Future research should therefore test the model through qualitative studies, educational interventions, and empirical assessment of changes in digital-theological literacy, desire, habitus, community participation, ethical digital behavior, and public witness.

Conclusion

Digital popular culture constitutes a formative environment that shapes human beings through attention, repetition, habits, symbols, relationships, and social recognition. For Christian Religious Education, this means that digital culture cannot be treated merely as a technological context or a channel for delivering educational content. It is itself a formative environment in which learners encounter and practice competing visions of identity, community, and the good life.

This study demonstrates that insights from digital culture, digital religion, Christian formation, liturgical formation, and public ecclesiology can be synthesized into an educational model of Christian digital citizenship formation. Liturgical formation clarifies how Christians are shaped through practices, habits, symbols, imagination, worship, and desire, while public ecclesiology clarifies the communal and public purpose of that formation. Their integration enables Christian Religious Education to connect learning and formation with faithful participation in digital public life.

The proposed model consists of five interconnected dimensions: digital-theological literacy, desire formation, digital-liturgical practices, ecclesial community, and public witness. These dimensions form an ongoing and recursive educational process through which learners develop critical understanding, Christ-oriented desires, faithful habits, communal identity, ethical digital participation, and public Christian witness.

The principal contribution of this study is not the claim that these five dimensions are individually new. Rather, its contribution lies in integrating previously dispersed theoretical and educational insights into a single, interconnected, and recursive framework for Christian digital citizenship formation.

This framework enables Christian Religious Education to move beyond technological competence and content delivery toward the intentional formation of desire, habitus, community, ethical participation, and public Christian witness in digital culture. Churches and Christian educational institutions can therefore understand digital engagement not simply as a matter of technological adaptation but as a formative task requiring theological discernment and intentional educational practice.

However, because the model is derived from a conceptual literature synthesis, further empirical research is required to examine its implementation, contextual adaptation, and effectiveness across different educational and ecclesial settings.

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