RELIGIOUS POLICY IN THE AGE OF AI: A PERSONALIST INQUIRY INTO MORAL PRAXIS AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

KEBIJAKAN KEAGAMAAN DI ERA AI: KAJIAN PERSONALISTIK TERHADAP PRAKSIS MORAL DAN TRANSFORMASI DIGITAL

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the foundations of religious authority and ethical formation in contemporary societies. This study examines how algorithmic systems—such as chatbots, recommendation algorithms, and AI-generated sermons—reshape religious legitimacy and moral discourse. Employing a conceptual–philosophical approach grounded in personalist realism, the research integrates theological anthropology with normative policy analysis to assess the ethical implications of AI in religious life. The findings indicate that AI shifts religious authority from institutional mediation toward algorithmic visibility and data-driven influence. While this transformation democratizes access to religious knowledge, it also fragments theological coherence and weakens interpretive accountability.

A central moral paradox emerges: increased participation in religious discourse coexists with diminished spiritual depth and responsibility. Ethical concerns arise from distributed agency, opaque algorithmic processes, and the reduction of human dignity to data-based representations. The study argues that prevailing regulatory frameworks, which focus primarily on technical governance and risk mitigation, are insufficient to address the deeper moral challenges posed by AI in religious contexts. It therefore proposes a shift toward a transcendental policy framework that conceives governance as moral praxis oriented toward truth, responsibility, and human flourishing. Policy recommendations include the development of a Religious Digital Ethics Framework, the establishment of a Digital Religious Ethics Council, and the integration of interfaith digital ethics education. The study concludes that religious policy must be grounded in the principle of imago Dei, ensuring that technological innovation remains subordinate to human dignity and humanity's spiritual vocation.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Religious Policy, Digital Ethics, Personalism, Human Dignity*

Abstrak

Perkembangan pesat kecerdasan buatan *(artificial intelligence/*AI) telah membawa perubahan signifikan terhadap otoritas keagamaan dan pembentukan etika dalam masyarakat modern. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana sistem berbasis algoritma, seperti chatbot, algoritma rekomendasi, dan khotbah yang dihasilkan oleh AI, memengaruhi legitimasi keagamaan dan diskursus moral. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan konseptual dan filosofis dengan landasan realisme personalis, serta mengintegrasikan perspektif antropologi teologis dan analisis kebijakan normatif untuk menelaah implikasi etis penggunaan AI dalam kehidupan beragama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kehadiran AI menggeser otoritas keagamaan dari mediasi lembaga keagamaan menuju visibilitas algoritmik dan pengaruh berbasis data. Di satu sisi, AI memperluas akses masyarakat terhadap pengetahuan keagamaan dan mendorong partisipasi yang lebih luas dalam diskursus keagamaan. Namun, di sisi lain, hal ini berpotensi menimbulkan fragmentasi pemahaman teologis dan melemahkan akuntabilitas dalam penafsiran ajaran agama. Penelitian ini mengidentifikasi adanya paradoks moral, yaitu meningkatnya partisipasi keagamaan yang tidak selalu diikuti dengan pendalaman spiritual dan tanggung jawab etis. Selain itu, persoalan etis muncul akibat distribusi tanggung jawab yang tidak jelas, proses algoritmik yang kurang transparan, serta kecenderungan mereduksi martabat manusia menjadi sekadar data. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pendekatan regulasi yang hanya berfokus pada aspek teknis dan mitigasi risiko belum cukup untuk menjawab tantangan tersebut. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan kerangka kebijakan yang lebih komprehensif dan bernuansa etis, yang memandang tata kelola AI sebagai praktik moral yang berorientasi pada kebenaran, tanggung jawab, dan kesejahteraan manusia. Rekomendasi kebijakan meliputi penyusunan kerangka etika digital keagamaan, pembentukan dewan etika keagamaan digital, serta penguatan pendidikan etika digital lintas iman. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kebijakan keagamaan perlu berlandaskan prinsip martabat manusia (*imago Dei*), agar pemanfaatan teknologi tetap mendukung nilai-nilai kemanusiaan dan kehidupan spiritual.

Kata Kunci: *Kecerdasan Buatan, Kebijakan Keagamaan, Etika Digital, Personalisme, Martabat Manusia*

INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI)–driven digital transformation has profoundly altered patterns of work, communication, learning, and religious expression.

Within this transformation, religious authority increasingly arises from algorithmic interactions that occur in digital environments. Algorithms now mediate faith experiences, structuring religious narratives and influencing interpretations of sacred texts through mechanisms such as recommendation systems, generative chatbots, and predictive analytics (Campbell, 2021). These algorithmic mediations signal a paradigmatic shift in how authority, truth, and moral formation are constituted in the public sphere.

Historically, religious policy has functioned as a state mechanism to guarantee freedom of religion while maintaining social harmony. In Indonesia, this policy operates both legally and pedagogically, defining relationships among the state, religious institutions, and citizens through structured dialogue (Suharto, 2018). However, as digital technologies expand into virtual spaces, the field of religious policy must now address an additional layer of authority— that of the algorithm. The emergence of digital religious authority calls for a moral and regulatory framework that is responsive to technological mediation. Traditional approaches anchored in institutional oversight are increasingly decentralized, often lacking ethical and theological depth (Floridi, 2019).

The epistemic logic of AI departs from revelation or tradition and instead relies on probabilistic reasoning derived from data aggregation. This raises critical questions about where moral and spiritual guidance originates in an algorithmic environment. Can religious policy ensure that technological systems remain aligned with human and divine values? Mechanisms of virality and engagement may substitute popularity for wisdom, and visibility metrics for theological truth. In this "infocracy," as data replaces discernment, religion risks being reshaped by emotional immediacy and algorithmic amplification rather than by contemplation and moral formation.

Comparative evidence illustrates diverse governmental efforts to regulate these transformations. Indonesia's Ministry of Religion promotes ethical awareness among online religious communicators and sets data governance standards through digital literacy programs (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023). In the United States, regulatory sandboxes allow the ethical testing of algorithmic content moderation, while in India, collaboration between state agencies and technology companies seeks to preserve cultural heritage in digital environments. These cases collectively demonstrate a global recognition that religious policy must evolve to mediate between technological innovation and spiritual integrity.

However, significant gaps remain between the ethical objectives of states and the commercial imperatives of digital platforms. Governments emphasize moral responsibility, data protection, and social harmony, while platforms prioritize engagement and profitability. This divergence underscores the need for policy instruments that foster cooperation. Regulatory sandboxes and multi-stakeholder task forces offer controlled environments for experimentation, co-learning, and the formulation of shared ethical standards (Floridi, 2019). Such instruments can bridge the gap between policy and technology by fostering dialogue among governments, corporations, and faith communities.

While secular ethical frameworks stress transparency, fairness, and accountability, they often overlook spiritual dimensions of human dignity and purpose (UNESCO, 2021). Luciano Floridi (2019) characterizes AI as an "information agent" that extends human capabilities but simultaneously blurs the distinction between moral action and automation. Similarly, Echchaibi and Hoover (2019) note that algorithmically curated religious content produces "digital charisma," where authority is conferred through visibility rather than vocation. This reconfiguration challenges both theological anthropology and public ethics. To address these challenges, scholars such as Wojtyła (1979) and Maryniarczyk (2018) argue for a personalistic realism that affirms the human person as a moral subject whose freedom and responsibility must direct technological systems.

In this view, AI should serve humanity rather than replace it. Religious policy must therefore integrate anthropological and theological principles, grounding ethics not only in human-centered but in God-centered moral reasoning (Maritain, 1943). The doctrine of *imago Dei* offers a theological corrective to technocratic rationality by affirming that human beings, as co-creators, bear responsibility for the moral orientation of technology. Aligning with UNESCO's (2021) Human-centered AI principles with such theological insights can produce a more holistic ethical framework, one that situates AI within humanity's spiritual vocation rather than reducing it to functional optimization.

Therefore, this study proposes a shift from mere technical policy, which focuses on procedural regulation, to transcendental policy, which places governance as a moral praxis oriented towards truth and human dignity.

Accordingly, this study investigates the capacity of religious policy to address the reconfiguration of authority in the digital age, in which algorithmic systems increasingly mediate religious knowledge, legitimacy, and moral formation. It examines how religious policy adapts to the rise of digital and algorithmic forms

of religious authority, as well as the epistemological consequences resulting from the transition from institutionally grounded mediation to algorithm-driven interpretation and dissemination of religious meaning. The study also considers the ethical implications of automating sacred knowledge, focusing on the risks of fragmented moral responsibility, diminished intentional agency, and the reduction of spiritual discernment to computational processes. Finally, it proposes a normative policy framework through which public policy can foster religious ethics that constructively engage with artificial intelligence while upholding spiritual values, human dignity, and a transcendental moral order.

By engaging philosophical, theological, and policy perspectives, this article aims to advance dialogue between faith, reason, and technology. It argues that effective religious policy in the AI era must uphold a teleological vision of human dignity and moral responsibility—ensuring that technological progress remains anchored in truth, justice, and the transcendent good.

METHOD

This research employs a conceptual–philosophical approach within the field of religious policy. Rather than collecting empirical data, the study analyzes the ideas, concepts, and normative principles that underlie religious policy in the context of artificial intelligence (AI). The research adopts a descriptive–analytical and qualitative orientation with a normative–theoretical emphasis, examining how principles of religious ethics can inform public policy in the digital era (Sugiyono, 2019).

Philosophically, the study follows a hermeneutic and reflective paradigm, interpreting religious policy as moral praxis within a social context transformed by technological mediation (Gadamer, 2004). This approach not only elucidates the ethical foundations of existing policies but also proposes a conceptual synthesis to guide future policy formulation.

The research materials are divided into primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consist of official documents and philosophical texts directly influencing the discourse on religious policy and AI ethics, including:

- *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence* (UNESCO, 2021);
- *Rome Call for AI Ethics* (Pontifical Academy for Life, 2020);

- *Policy Document for the Digital Transformation of Religious Services* (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023);
- Foundational texts of personalist ethics, such as Wojtyła's *The Acting Person* (1979) and Maritain's *The Person and the Common Good* (1943).

Secondary sources comprise supporting literature in the form of academic books, journal articles, and essays that discuss parallel philosophical and policy issues. Key references include Floridi's (2019) *The Logic of Information* on information ethics, Han's (2021) *Infocracy* on the crisis of digital authority, and Mazur and Maryniarczyk's (2018) works on Lublin School personalism. All materials are examined through critical and comparative reading to trace the intellectual continuity between traditional religious policy and the ethical challenges emerging from AI development.

The analytical process is structured in three interrelated stages, each building upon the previous to produce an integrative philosophical synthesis.

1. Conceptual Analysis

   This stage clarifies key concepts, including *digital religious authority*, *AI ethics*, and *religious policy*. Following Sartori (1970), conceptual precision prevents epistemic ambiguity and maintains the logical coherence of theoretical discourse.

2. Normative Analysis

   The second stage critically assesses moral and theological principles that should undergird religious policy. Personalist ethics, as developed by Wojtyła (1979) provides the evaluative framework for determining the extent to which emerging AI policies reflect respect for human dignity and moral responsibility.

3. Integrative Synthesis

   The final stage combines conceptual and normative findings to formulate a Religious Digital Ethics Framework, a theoretical construct for ethical policymaking in the AI era. The synthesis process is iterative, involving cycles of reading, comparing, and interpreting until conceptual and moral coherence is achieved between the principles of religious ethics and public policy objectives.

The study is also guided by the philosophy of policy approach, which regards public policy as a form of collective moral praxis rather than a purely administrative instrument (Dunn, 2018). Within this framework, policies are

evaluated not only for their efficiency but also for their conformity with the principles of truth, justice, and human dignity. Religious policy, therefore, is understood as reflective ethical praxis—social action grounded in moral deliberation and oriented toward transcendental values (Wojtyla, 1979).

Accordingly, this research goes beyond a critique of digitalization. It aims to reconstruct the moral orientation of AI policy by integrating theological anthropology with ethical governance. Through this lens, technology is examined as a human endeavor that must remain subordinate to spiritual and moral order.

The validity of this conceptual study is grounded in three interrelated academic principles. First, conceptual coherence is maintained by ensuring internal consistency among key terms, theoretical frameworks, and argumentative structures throughout the analysis, thereby preventing epistemic ambiguity and theoretical fragmentation. Second, the study upholds traceability of sources through systematic engagement with authoritative literature drawn from international policy documents as well as classical and contemporary philosophical works, ensuring scholarly rigor and intellectual accountability. Third, normative relevance is preserved by directing the analysis toward concrete contributions in the formulation of humane, transcendently oriented, and contextually grounded religious policies, in line with the ethical vision articulated by Madjid (1992).

Through these procedures, the study aims to produce a policy reasoning framework that is both scientifically rational and theologically moral, bridging the gap between faith-based ethics and digital public governance.

DISCUSSION
The Transformation of Religious Authority

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) has reconfigured the foundations of religious authority, shifting legitimacy from scriptural interpretation and institutional recognition to algorithmic mediation. In pre-digital contexts, authority was conferred through sacred tradition, theological education, and ordination—structures that embodied both epistemic and moral continuity. In the digital age, however, AI-driven platforms increasingly mediate how believers access, interpret, and share religious meaning. Recommendation systems, automated chatbots, and AI-assisted preaching tools have created what Campbell (2021) terms *algorithmic authority*—a new form of legitimacy

derived not from divine revelation but from data-driven visibility and networked trust.

Recent studies confirm that this transformation has global scope and theological significance. Rähme (2025) identifies how AI technologies absorb and re-express religious narratives, producing what she calls a "mythological feedback loop" in which religious symbols are re-encoded through algorithmic logic. Similarly, Papakostas (2025) and Kurata (2025) show that AI-based educational tools in Religious Education (RE) alter students' perceptions of credibility and orthodoxy. Learners are increasingly guided by algorithms that prioritize engagement over doctrinal depth, resulting in what Han (2021) describes as a "crisis of mediation"—a cultural condition where immediacy replaces reflection, and truth becomes entangled with virality. These findings suggest that AI's intervention into religious life is not merely technological but anthropological: it changes how individuals *know* and *belong* within faith communities.

Empirical evidence further illustrates how algorithmic systems amplify certain voices while marginalizing others. Tsuria (2024) demonstrates that generative AI and search algorithms reproduce representational biases in religious discourse, simplifying complex theological traditions into stereotypical summaries. In Muslim contexts, Fitryansyah (2024) warns that unsupervised AI interpretation of sacred texts risks distorting meaning and undermining *asalah* (authenticity). Tarwiyyah (2025) echoes this concern, which shows that algorithmic curation can reweight legitimacy toward digital influencers rather than trained scholars. These cases confirm a global pattern: digital platforms democratize religious participation but simultaneously fragment moral authority.

From a normative perspective, this shift challenges the metaphysical foundations of authority. According to Wojtyła (1979), moral authority arises from personal agency—the human capacity for self-determination through conscious and responsible action. AI, by contrast, lacks intentionality and cannot participate in moral awareness. Floridi (2019) calls this condition "distributed agency," where responsibility for moral effects is dispersed among human and nonhuman actors. However, such diffusion risks erode the moral core of decision-making, as no single agent bears full accountability for the consequences of algorithmic mediation. Within the sphere of religious policy, this raises critical questions: who safeguards truth when automated systems

produce authority, and how can policy restore moral intentionality to the digital religious ecosystem?

Recent scholarship has begun to respond to these dilemmas. Simmerlein (2025) reports that AI-led religious services, while innovative, generate widespread doubts about authenticity and sacramentality among participants. Fioravante (2024) argues that *personalism*—a philosophical framework emphasizing the intrinsic dignity of the person—provides a normative foundation for AI governance that resists technocratic reductionism. Likewise, Evolvi (2021) conceptualizes digital religion as a "hyper-mediated space" in which religious authenticity depends less on institutional oversight and more on relational engagement. These insights collectively suggest that religious policy in the AI era must not attempt to eliminate algorithmic authority but rather *situate* it within a moral hierarchy that subordinates data to dignity.

Therefore, the transformation of religious authority must be interpreted as both an opportunity and a warning. On the one hand, AI technologies democratize access to theology, enabling new forms of participation and interfaith dialogue (Papakostas, 2025). On the other hand, they risk dissolving the communal and moral anchors of belief, reducing faith to a consumable flow of information. The task of religious policy, then, is to reaffirm that truth cannot be automated. Policy must ensure that the use of AI in religious contexts preserves human responsibility as the locus of moral agency. As Wojtyła (1979) reminds us, human beings act not only *within* the world but also *upon* themselves through their choices. Hence, policy grounded in personalistic realism should re-center the moral subject—the person—as the final arbiter of spiritual and ethical discernment.

In this light, the transformation of religious authority under AI is not simply a matter of technological change but of moral anthropology. Religious policy must serve as a normative compass guiding this transition, ensuring that algorithmic mediation remains accountable to transcendent truth and the dignity of the human person. Without such guidance, the promise of AI-enhanced religious life risks devolving into a marketplace of beliefs measured by metrics rather than meaning.

Thus, the transformation of religious authority in the digital age cannot be addressed with only technical approaches such as data standardization or algorithmic auditing. Instead, transcendental policy demands a more profound reorientation: from simply regulating technology to reshaping moral subjects capable of acting in the light of divine truth.

The Dilemma of Algorithmic Ethics and the Reduction of Human Dignity

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) in religious contexts introduces a fundamental ethical dilemma: AI can simulate interpretation and moral reasoning, but it cannot *intend* or *take responsibility*. This paradox—an agent that acts without consciousness—creates what Floridi (2019) describes as *distributed agency*, a moral condition in which responsibility is dispersed across human and nonhuman systems. When applied to faith and theology, this dispersion erodes the traditional link between intention, action, and accountability. If an algorithm disseminates a distorted interpretation of scripture or amplifies divisive content, who bears moral responsibility—the programmer, the platform, or the machine itself?

Recent empirical and conceptual studies illuminate the contours of this ethical crisis. Zhang (2025) demonstrates that generative AI models can shape learners' religious cognition by introducing subtle cognitive framing biases in their textual outputs. Such findings reinforce Tsuria's (2024) conclusion that AI often reproduces stereotypes about religious traditions due to unbalanced training data and cultural blind spots. These algorithmic distortions are not morally neutral; they influence how users understand sacred meaning, potentially redirecting devotion toward emotionally resonant but theologically shallow content. Han (2021) calls this the "crisis of mediation," where the space for reflection between stimulus and response collapses under the pressure of speed and virality. In digital moral ecosystems, decisions are made instantly, often before contemplation or discernment occurs.

This acceleration of moral communication leads to what Kurata (2025) terms *pedagogical automation*: a process where moral formation becomes mechanized, shaped more by algorithmic suggestions than by dialogical learning. Similarly, Simmerlein (2025) finds that participants in AI-led religious services report feeling emotionally engaged but spiritually detached, reflecting the loss of relational intentionality in worship mediated by technology. These studies confirm that the ethical problem of AI in religion lies not in malicious design but in moral reductionism—the shrinking of ethical life to computational optimization.

From a normative perspective, such reductionism conflicts directly with the principle of human dignity. According to Wojtyła (1979), moral action is a self-determining act through which a person becomes more fully human; dignity is not an attribute bestowed but an ontological reality realized through freedom.

AI systems, however advanced, lack this capacity for self-determination. They perform functions but cannot participate in the drama of moral choice. Maritain (1943) calls this distinction *theonomous ethics*: true morality presupposes reference to a transcendent order that grounds the good. When algorithms replace discernment with probability, they effectively secularize morality, severing it from its transcendent source.

The literature also reveals that this ethical dilemma is not confined to individual users but extends to systemic governance. He et al. (2024) demonstrate a negative correlation between AI expansion and religious freedom across 60 countries, suggesting that algorithmic surveillance and moderation practices may constrain spiritual expression. This finding affirms the need for what UNESCO (2021) calls *human-centered AI*, but as many scholars argue, such an approach remains incomplete without a spiritual or theological dimension (Fioravante, 2024; Rähme, 2025). Religious policy, therefore, must advance beyond procedural ethics toward a teleological framework grounded in human dignity and divine purpose.

A coherent response requires three complementary strategies: ethical accountability, structural transparency, and moral formation. First, mandatory ethical audits and licensing mechanisms—already proposed in global policy discourse—should be adapted for religious applications (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023). These mechanisms ensure that AI systems deployed in religious spaces comply with clear moral and epistemic standards, including respect for pluralism and the prohibition of manipulation. Second, transparency must extend beyond algorithmic disclosure to *interpretive accountability*: AI systems should indicate sources and theological schools informing their outputs to prevent unverified doctrinal claims (Tarwiyyah, 2025). Finally, moral formation must be reintroduced into digital ethics education. Papakostas (2025) argues that without pedagogical grounding in virtue and critical reflection, even the most transparent technologies will perpetuate superficial moral engagement.

In theological terms, these measures express a reaffirmation of human teleology. As Krąpiec (2015) notes, human action participates in objective truth; ethics cannot be reduced to efficiency or consensus. Religious policy must thus insist that AI serves humanity's journey toward truth, not merely its informational needs. By situating technological ethics within this metaphysical horizon, policy can restore the moral depth eroded by algorithmic immediacy.

Ultimately, the dilemma of algorithmic ethics is a test of civilization's moral maturity. It reveals whether societies regard technology as a servant of human flourishing or as an autonomous power shaping human destiny. The recent literature converges on a standard warning: without moral reorientation, AI may deepen the alienation between intelligence and wisdom. A religious policy grounded in personalist ethics can avert this by reaffirming the irreducible dignity of the person and reestablishing moral intentionality as the foundation of digital life.

In contrast to the technical approach that emphasizes procedural transparency and accountability alone, transcendental policy affirms that human dignity cannot be reduced to mere variables in the system. Technocraticism fails to answer fundamental questions about the meaning and purpose of human life, while the transcendental approach restores technology into a broader moral framework.

Reorientation of Religious Policy in the Digital Age

Traditional religious policies tend to be technical and reactive, for example by setting platform permissions or content standards. However, in the age of AI, this kind of approach is no longer adequate. Transcendental policy invites us to move from simply governing (governance as control) to moral formation (governance as formation).

The convergence of artificial intelligence (AI), digital communication, and religious life demands a reorientation of religious policy from administrative regulation toward participatory moral governance. The findings of recent studies (Fioravante, 2024; He et al., 2024; Papakostas, 2025) indicate that digital technologies not only reshape religious discourse but also redefine how authority, ethics, and community are structured. Consequently, religious policy must evolve beyond institutional control to serve as a framework that fosters ethical consciousness and responsible digital citizenship rooted in human dignity and spiritual discernment.

Historically, religious policy operated within a paradigm of state supervision, balancing religious freedom and social harmony through regulation (Suharto, 2018). However, in the digital era, this regulatory model is increasingly insufficient. Algorithmic systems now mediate the production and circulation of religious meaning across decentralized networks (Campbell, 2021). As a result, moral formation and public theology are no longer confined to formal

institutions but distributed across digital environments where non-clerical actors, influencers, and AI agents shape collective belief. Recent evidence from Indonesia illustrates this shift: the *Digital Transformation Policy of Religious Services* (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023) emphasizes digital literacy and service efficiency but does not yet integrate theological or anthropological principles into its framework. Without such grounding, digital policy risks becoming ethically procedural rather than morally formative.

International developments reveal parallel trends. Kurata (2025) and Papakostas (2025) demonstrate that in the field of Religious Education (RE), AI tools have enhanced access but diminished moral depth. Learners exposed to algorithmically curated materials develop fragmented moral reasoning, shaped more by recommendation engines than by reflective guidance. Similarly, Tsuria (2024) and Zhang (2025) find that AI-generated religious content often emphasizes emotional immediacy over doctrinal coherence, fostering what Han (2021) terms a "spectacular faith," sustained by affect rather than contemplation. These studies underscore the necessity of policy mechanisms that not only regulate AI's operation but also cultivate moral reflection within digital spaces.

Recent scholarship points to two promising directions for policy innovation. First, the integration of personalist ethics, which emphasizes the person as the measure and end of all technological development (Mazur & Maryniarczyk, 2018; Wojtyla, 1979) offers a theological foundation for digital governance. Fioravante (2024) shows that a personalist framework for AI governance ensures that technological progress remains oriented toward human flourishing rather than utilitarian efficiency. Second, participatory governance mechanisms such as regulatory sandboxes and multistakeholder councils are being explored internationally to bridge ethical, technological, and religious perspectives (Rähme, 2025). These collaborative models foster trust by involving religious scholars, technologists, and policymakers in shared deliberation over digital ethics.

Based on these findings, three strategic reorientations are essential for religious policy in the AI era:

Formulating AI Ethics Based on Personalistic Religiosity

Religious policy should begin with an explicit affirmation that human dignity is not a contingent quality but a metaphysical truth grounded in the doctrine

of *imago Dei*—the belief that humans are created in the image of God. This principle distinguishes personalist religiosity from secular humanism: while both value human dignity, the former locates it within divine intentionality. The *AI Ethics Charter* proposed for Indonesia should therefore adopt theological anthropology as its ethical baseline. In practice, this entails ensuring that AI systems deployed in religious contexts respect human conscience, protect privacy as an extension of personal integrity, and avoid manipulative data practices. UNESCO's (2021) *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence* already articulates fairness and transparency as universal values, but as Maritain (1943) argues, justice requires a transcendent foundation to remain coherent. Integrating this perspective could expand UNESCO's secular humanism into a theonomous ethics that affirms moral order as participation in divine truth.

Interfaith Digital Ethics Education

The reorientation of policy also requires educational transformation. Digital literacy, as currently practiced, focuses mainly on technical competence and the prevention of misinformation. However, the moral and interreligious dimensions of digital engagement remain underdeveloped. Papakostas (2025) and Kurata (2025) both emphasize the importance of integrating ethical reflection into AI-assisted pedagogy, arguing that value-neutral instruction risks reinforcing moral superficiality. Interfaith digital ethics education should thus be introduced at multiple levels—schools, seminaries, and public platforms—to foster what Mazur and Maryniarczyk (2018) call *interpersonal dialogue*, the foundation of ethical coexistence. Case-based learning that presents AI-related moral dilemmas across different faith perspectives can cultivate empathy, humility, and discernment. Such initiatives not only reduce interreligious tension but also strengthen the collective ethical imagination needed to govern emerging technologies responsibly.

Recognition and Accountability of Digital Spiritual Leadership

As online religious influencers and AI-assisted preachers increasingly guide moral discourse, policies must define mechanisms for recognition and ethical oversight. Research by Tarwiyyah (2025) and Simmerlein(2025) shows that digital leadership, when unregulated, can blur the boundaries between charisma and credibility, leading to the spread of extremist or sensationalized interpretations. A *Digital Religious Leadership Framework* should be developed

to establish transparent procedures for recognizing online spiritual leaders who uphold doctrinal integrity and promote ethical digital citizenship. Evaluation panels composed of religious scholars, ethicists, and digital culture experts could assess leaders' adherence to moral and theological standards. Inclusion of minority faith representatives within these bodies would ensure pluralism and protect against domination by majority groups. This participatory oversight transforms digital spaces into loci of moral dialogue—*locus fidei*—where faith and technology meet under the rule of truth and responsibility.

The reorientation of religious policy, therefore, entails a paradigm shift from reactive regulation to proactive moral formation. Policy must function not only as a legal instrument but as a pedagogical force shaping the moral architecture of digital society. Such transformation requires collaboration among state institutions, religious authorities, educators, and technology developers. As Wojtyła (1979) asserts, authentic human development occurs when freedom is guided by truth. Thus, policies rooted in personalism can ensure that digital transformation leads not to moral relativism but to the renewal of human responsibility before God and community.

Normative Synthesis: From Technical Policy to Transcendental Policy

The cumulative findings of this study reveal that integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into religious life demands a deeper philosophical and theological reorientation of policy. Religious policy can no longer remain at the level of technical regulation—focused on compliance, data governance, or procedural ethics—but must advance toward what may be called a *transcendental policy*: one that restores the question of meaning, moral teleology, and human vocation before God. This synthesis bridges the empirical insights of recent studies with the metaphysical and ethical principles of personalist realism, emphasizing that technology is not merely a tool to be managed but a moral environment that shapes human self-understanding.

This normative synthesis clearly distinguishes between technical policy, which focuses on efficiency, compliance, and procedures, and transcendental policy, which places questions about the meaning, purpose of life, and human calling before the Divine as the center of policy reflection.

The Limits of Technical Rationality

Modern AI governance, as reflected in secular policy frameworks such as UNESCO's (2021) *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, operates primarily through technical rationality, emphasizing transparency, fairness, and accountability. While these principles are essential, they remain anthropologically shallow when detached from a transcendent moral order (Maritain, 1943). Fioravante (2024) critiques this technocratic minimalism, arguing that without a metaphysical foundation, ethical norms risk being reduced to procedural consensus. Similarly, He et al. (2024) demonstrate empirically that AI expansion, even under regulatory oversight, can erode religious freedom when policies prioritize efficiency over moral pluralism. These findings illustrate the inadequacy of purely human-centered ethics in addressing the spiritual and cultural consequences of automation.

A transcendental policy framework acknowledges that human dignity does not emerge from social contracts or technological functionality but from participation in truth. As Wojtyła (1979) insists, moral agency is ontological—it defines what it means to be human. This recognition repositions policy as a moral enterprise: it must not only regulate behavior but also articulate a vision of the good. In the context of digital religion, this means ensuring that algorithmic systems serve human sanctification rather than commodification. Han's (2021) diagnosis of *infocracy*—a regime where information replaces wisdom—warns that without transcendental grounding, digital culture risks collapsing into nihilism disguised as knowledge.

Synthesizing Empirical Findings with Personalist Ethics

The reviewed literature collectively supports a movement toward value-based policy design. Studies by Papakostas (2025) and Kurata (2025) emphasize that AI-mediated education must include moral reflection to prevent epistemic fragmentation. Rähme (2025) and Tsuria (2024) show that algorithmic systems shape theological narratives and authority structures, underscoring the need for moral discernment embedded in policy. These findings, when read through a personalist lens, converge on a central insight: policy must recognize the human person as both subject and end of technological action.

Personalistic realism, as developed by Wojtyła (1979) and expanded by Mazur and Maryniarczyk (2018), offers a coherent synthesis. It affirms that technology's moral value derives from its orientation toward the person's

integral good—*bonum integrale*—and its capacity to facilitate participation in truth. This principle aligns with Krąpiec's (2010) notion of *teleological realism*, which views moral action as participation in the objective order of being. Applying this framework, religious policy must ensure that AI systems reflect not only human rights but also human destiny. Such an approach reframes digital ethics as an extension of moral anthropology: technology becomes a field of virtue rather than a substitute for it.

Transcendental Policy as Moral Praxis

A transcendental policy does not reject modern governance tools such as ethical audits, transparency metrics, or participatory councils; instead, it integrates them into a hierarchy of moral ends. Technical mechanisms ensure accountability, but teleological reflection ensures *orientation*. Policies thus become acts of moral praxis—collective expressions of humanity's search for the good within a technological civilization. This view resonates with Dunn's (2018) conception of public policy as a form of collective moral reasoning rather than mere administration. In contrast to technical policy, which views technology as an object to be controlled, transcendental policy views technology as a field of moral praxis—a space in which man actualizes his spiritual calling through ethical choice.

By incorporating the principles of theonomous ethics (Maritain, 1943), transcendental policy reintroduces God as the ultimate horizon of moral order. This perspective complements secular AI ethics without contradicting its procedural aims. As Fioravante (2024) argues, the inclusion of religious insights can deepen policy's moral coherence by grounding its principles in an enduring anthropology of the person. Moreover, Mazur and Maryniarczyk (2018) highlight that dialogue between faith and reason strengthens public ethics by uniting rational discernment with metaphysical realism. Such integration transforms religious policy from reactive regulation into proactive spiritual formation for digital society.

Policy Implications: From Governance to Formation

The practical implication of this synthesis is that religious policy should govern not only technology but also shape the human moral subject within it. Policies oriented toward transcendence aim to cultivate wisdom (*sapientia*) rather than merely ensure safety or compliance. This approach implies the inclusion of theological anthropology in AI policy curricula, interfaith

dialogue in ethics committees, and value-based indicators in AI evaluation models. Education programs—like those proposed by Papakostas (2025) and Kurata (2025)—should therefore integrate contemplative reflection and moral reasoning into digital literacy training.

At a global level, such an approach could complement existing frameworks, such as UNESCO (2021), by embedding the concept of *God-centered AI*—technology that reflects divine order by respecting human dignity and moral purpose. In the Indonesian context, this reorientation aligns with the cultural and spiritual ethos of *Pancasila*, where belief in God serves as the foundation of public morality. Hence, religious policy informed by transcendental ethics can harmonize technological innovation with both national philosophy and universal moral law.

Toward a Theology of Policy

Finally, this synthesis suggests that policy itself can become an act of theological reflection. Maritain (1943) envisions a "civic spirituality" in which social institutions embody metaphysical truths through their structures of justice. In this light, religious policy becomes not merely an instrument of control but a manifestation of humanity's vocation to co-create with God. It affirms that governance, when rightly ordered, participates in divine providence by directing technological progress toward communion rather than domination.

Therefore, the movement from technical policy to transcendental policy signifies a rehumanization of digital governance. It restores to policy its proper dignity as moral action in history—an instrument of the common good that unites scientific rationality with spiritual wisdom. As Wojtyła (1979) writes, "man cannot be understood apart from his reference to that which transcends him." In affirming this truth, religious policy in the age of AI reclaims its ultimate purpose: to form a society in which intelligence serves love and technology becomes a medium of grace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The preceding analyses indicate that religious policy in the age of artificial intelligence (AI) must operate not merely as an administrative or legal framework, but as a moral, pedagogical, and participatory instrument guiding technology toward the good of the human person. The integration of AI into religious life calls for governance models that are simultaneously ethical,

inclusive, and grounded in transcendent values. Building on recent research (Papakostas, 2025; Fioravante, 2024; He et al., 2024; Rähme, 2025), this section formulates five interrelated recommendations to reorient religious policy toward the principles of personalism, moral accountability, and interfaith collaboration.

Developing Personalistic-Based Religious Policy Ethics

At the foundation of all religious policy reform should be a reaffirmation of human dignity as the first principle. The doctrine of *imago Dei*—the conviction that humans are created in the image of God—provides the anthropological core for a theonomous ethics that can ground AI governance in religious contexts (Maritain, 1943; Wojtyła, 1979). A personalistic policy framework perceives humans not as passive users of technology but as moral subjects responsible for shaping it toward truth and justice. The framework of religious digital ethics must go beyond technical approaches by integrating transcendental principles such as imago Dei and bonum commune, which cannot be accommodated by technocratic logic alone.

In practice, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia can develop a *Religious Digital Ethics Framework (RDEF)* that integrates theological anthropology with principles of digital justice such as transparency, responsibility, and respect for conscience. This framework would extend the existing *Digital Transformation Policy of Religious Services* (Ministry of Religion, 2023) from service optimization to moral formation. The RDEF could be formulated through cross-sectoral collaboration between government bodies, religious institutions, and academic researchers.

Empirical studies support this direction. Fioravante (2024) demonstrates that personalism enhances AI ethics by grounding decisions in moral teleology rather than instrumental rationality. Likewise, Papakostas (2025) argues that digital ethics must integrate value reflection to avoid moral superficiality in algorithmic environments. Thus, a personalist framework not only safeguards human rights but also restores the moral intentionality lost in technocratic policymaking.

Establishing a Digital Religious Ethics Council

To operationalize the Religious Digital Ethics Framework (RDEF), religious policy should establish a Digital Religious Ethics Council (DREC) as a permanent,

cross-faith, and interdisciplinary institution. The council would function as both a consultative and supervisory body tasked with evaluating the ethical, theological, and social implications of artificial intelligence (AI) within religious contexts. Its composition should reflect pluralism and expertise, bringing together representatives of major spiritual traditions, ethicists, technologists, legal scholars, and policy experts. Key virtues such as prudence, compassion, and integrity should guide the council's actions, ensuring that its evaluations are not only technically sound but also morally sensitive. Unlike purely technocratic oversight mechanisms, the DREC would extend beyond technical compliance by systematically assessing the spiritual, anthropological, and moral consequences of AI deployment in religious communication, education, and governance. A clear delineation of decision-making boundaries is essential. The council should decide that purely theological issues, such as doctrinal interpretations and spiritual teachings, remain under the exclusive control of theologians and faith leaders. In contrast, technical aspects, like data privacy protocols and algorithmic transparency, are managed through collaborative efforts with technologists and legal experts. This separation ensures that the council fulfills its ethical mandate while respecting the unique domains of theology and technology.

As a best practice in AI governance for religious policy, the DREC should adopt a preventive and formative approach rather than a reactive or punitive one. This involves integrating ethical discernment at the design, deployment, and evaluation stages of AI systems used in religious environments. First, ethical review and licensing mechanisms should be established to assess AI applications involved in religious teaching, preaching, counseling, or content dissemination. Such assessments must ensure doctrinal integrity, respect for freedom of conscience, and the preservation of human moral agency, preventing the delegation of spiritual authority to automated systems. This practice aligns with international standards on human-centered AI while extending them through a theologically grounded understanding of moral responsibility. For instance, consider a scenario in which a congregant seeks spiritual guidance from an AI confessor. While the convenience is evident, the ethical stakes are high. Suppose the AI begins to advise the congregant in ways that subtly redefine community doctrines or disregard personal spiritual nuances. The preventive and formative approach of the DREC is akin to nurturing a healthy information ecology, where the focus is on cultivating a balanced and nourishing flow of information. This perspective supports ethical audits that are viewed as enhancing understanding rather than policing compliance, resonating with

readers who may be wary of surveillance. Through such a systematic audit cycle, deviations are recognized and addressed to maintain doctrinal fidelity and uphold the council's commitment to an information environment conducive to both faith and ethics.

To sharpen the sense of urgency, it is essential to surface potential unintended consequences of AI deployment in religious contexts. Specifically, the risks of bias amplification, doctrinal dilution, and ritual substitution must be explicitly mitigated. Bias amplification could lead to skewed AI interpretations that reinforce existing prejudices within religious teachings. Doctrinal dilution may occur if AI interpretations gradually alter core religious beliefs, eroding the cohesion of religious communities. Furthermore, ritual substitution risks AI applications replacing traditional religious practices, potentially eroding the cultural heritage and spiritual depth of these rituals. Regular audits must therefore include continuous monitoring and evaluation of AI-generated content against predefined doctrinal benchmarks. If discrepancies or risks are detected, the council would initiate a comprehensive review process to realign the AI output with core religious tenets, ensuring ongoing alignment with ethical standards.

Second, the council should formulate clear, actionable guidelines governing the use of AI on religious platforms. These guidelines should include requirements for transparency regarding data sources and theological references, safeguards for personal and communal data, and mechanisms for algorithmic accountability that allow human oversight and contestability. To ensure that oversight remains feasible while protecting moral agency, a proportionality principle should be applied. Criteria must be established to determine when human review should be light supervisory rather than deeply hands-on, depending on the complexity and potential impact of the AI applications. By flagging these proportionality principles, technologists can be reassured that the oversight process is balanced and efficient. To make compliance with these guidelines more seamless, small nudges, such as default transparency dashboards, could be implemented. These nudges would require platform designers to automatically include transparency features, making ethical behavior an effortless default, rather than an added burden. To ensure these guidelines remain adaptive to the rapidly evolving field of AI, the council will implement a biannual horizon-scanning ritual. This process will monitor changes in foundational AI models and emerging risks, triggering necessary updates to the guidelines to prevent ossification. Best practices also require that AI systems explicitly signal their non-human status

and limitations, particularly when performing interpretive or advisory religious functions, to avoid the illusion of moral or spiritual authority. By embedding such standards and maintaining a dynamic review process, religious policy can prevent faith from being reduced to algorithmic output and preserve the primacy of human discernment.

Third, public engagement and education must form a core function of the DREC. Best practices in religious AI governance emphasize participatory ethics, where faith communities are not merely regulated but actively involved in ethical reflection and policy formation. To embody this collaborative spirit, the council should establish a yearly forum that functions as a common, enabling communities to co-monitor AI as a shared resource. This language of collective stewardship can evoke a sense of essential participation rather than optional engagement. In this forum, community feedback would directly influence and reshape the guidelines regarding AI use in religious contexts. The forum would be a space for believers to co-create policies, ensuring ongoing adaptability and relevance. Genuine engagement would be measured through actionable outcomes, such as revisions to existing guidelines or the introduction of new ones based on community input. Moreover, the council should facilitate interfaith dialogue, public consultations, and educational initiatives on digital ethics, fostering shared moral literacy and critical awareness of AI's role in shaping religious life. This participatory dimension strengthens trust and ensures that policy remains responsive to lived religious experience rather than abstract regulation.

This model aligns with participatory governance frameworks widely discussed in international scholarship. Rähme (2025) highlights the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder task forces in harmonizing ethical norms with technological innovation, particularly in culturally sensitive domains such as religion. Similarly, He et al. (2024) demonstrate that shared governance structures reduce the risks of censorship, bias, and moral homogenization that often accompany unilateral state regulation of digital religious expression. In this context, the DREC functions as a moral intermediary, bridging state authority, technological expertise, and spiritual responsibility, while safeguarding pluralism and reinforcing AI's ethical orientation toward human dignity and transcendental values.

To strengthen the legitimacy of the DREC's guidelines, each can be mapped onto well-known international AI principles. For instance, principles such as transparency are reflected in the guidelines requiring open data sources and

algorithmic accountability. Fairness principles are upheld through measures that prevent bias amplification and ensure doctrinal integrity. These mappings anchor the religious framework within the broader AI policy discourse, illustrating its alignment with global standards for ethical AI implementation.

Advancing Interfaith Digital Ethics Education

The ethical governance of AI in religion cannot succeed without education that cultivates moral awareness and critical reflection. Papakostas (2025) and Kurata (2025) emphasize that ethical competence in digital contexts must extend beyond technical proficiency to include moral discernment, empathy, and cross-faith understanding. Accordingly, religious policy should promote *Interfaith Digital Ethics Education (IDEE)*—a structured program that fosters dialogue across religious traditions on the ethical challenges of AI.

The IDEE curriculum could include modules such as:

- Foundations of Religious and Digital Ethics;
- Algorithms and Moral Responsibility;
- Interfaith Perspectives on Truth and Technology;
- Case Studies on AI and Spiritual Leadership; and
- Designing Faith-Based Ethical Guidelines for Digital Communities.

Educational institutions—including seminaries, madrasahs, and universities—could integrate these modules into theology, philosophy, and communication programs. Internationally, this approach parallels UNESCO's (2021) calls for *human-centered AI* and extends them by incorporating *God-centered moral formation*. In Indonesia, such programs resonate with *Pancasila's* first principle—belief in Almighty God (*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*)—which frames education as a path toward holistic human development.

Strengthening Recognition and Oversight of Digital Spiritual Leadership

The proliferation of digital preachers, influencers, and AI-generated sermons raises the need for policies that recognize and regulate digital spiritual leadership. Simmerlein (2025) and Tarwiyyah (2025) document how online platforms elevate charismatic figures who may lack theological training, resulting in fragmented or sensationalized interpretations. To address this, a transparent recognition mechanism should be developed that enables qualified

leaders to obtain ethical certification while ensuring inclusivity for minority faiths.

The recognition process could involve:

1. *Application and Documentation:* Candidates submit evidence of theological competence and ethical practice.
2. *Evaluation:* A DREC-led review panel, composed of religious scholars and digital ethics experts, assesses candidates.
3. *Public Transparency:* Certified leaders are listed in a publicly accessible database to enhance credibility.

This structure would formalize digital spiritual authority while maintaining the freedom of religious expression. It also mirrors Fioravante's (2024) call for value-based accountability and aligns with Han's (2021) critique that unregulated digital charisma risks reducing religion to spectacle. Through ethical certification, religious policy can reclaim moral substance within digital influence economies.

Integrating Spirituality into National and Global Digital Policy

Finally, AI governance must recognize that spirituality is not an external or private dimension but a moral infrastructure of public life. The separation between technological policy and spiritual ethics, as several authors note (Fioravante, 2024; Rähme, 2025), perpetuates a fragmented view of human existence. Religious institutions, therefore, should not merely react to technological trends but actively participate in shaping policy.

In Indonesia, this integration can be achieved through inter-ministerial collaboration among the Ministry of Religion, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. Joint working groups can align AI regulation with spiritual values by drafting an AI Policy Charter on Moral and Cultural Responsibility, inspired by *Pancasila* and the *Rome Call for AI Ethics* (Pontifical Academy for Life, 2020). Internationally, such initiatives could foster cooperation among states with strong religious heritage, promoting an intercultural theology of technology.

This integrative approach ensures that technological development remains oriented toward *digital common good*—a concept that unites efficiency, justice, and transcendence. As Krąpiec (2010) argues, moral action is always teleological; its value lies not in its effectiveness but in its conformity to truth.

By embedding spirituality within policy design, governments can ensure that AI serves human flourishing rather than subordinates humanity to technical progress.

Toward a Policy of Communion

In summary, religious policy in the AI era must evolve from a model of control to a model of communion, a moral order rooted in dignity, dialogue, and divine orientation. Technical policy regulates; transcendental policy transforms. The challenge is not merely to keep pace with technology but to humanize it through shared moral purpose. As Wojtyła (1979) reminds us, "participation in truth" is the essence of human freedom. Therefore, the ultimate aim of policy is not compliance but conversion: the reawakening of conscience in an age of code.

CLOSING

The central problem this study addresses is the transformation of religious authority in the age of artificial intelligence (AI). Algorithmic systems increasingly replace institutional and traditional mediations of faith, creating a moral crisis in which data visibility substitutes for divine transcendence. This raised a key research question: how can religious policy preserve human dignity and spiritual integrity amid the rise of algorithmic authority?

The primary objective was to formulate a conceptual foundation for religious policy that can respond to AI's development without detaching itself from theological and anthropological principles. The study sought to ground religious policy in personalist ethics so that governance becomes a form of moral praxis rather than administrative control.

The main conclusion is that religious policy in the era of AI must shift from a technocratic paradigm to a transcendental one—from regulating behavior to forming conscience. Technology, within this framework, cannot serve as a new authority; it must remain a medium through which human beings encounter truth, act freely, and assume responsibility before God.

Normatively, this study affirms that religious policy must shift from a technical-regulatory paradigm to a transcendental policy centered on the formation of conscience and moral responsibility. Practically, the study proposes three interrelated policy directions:

- The development of a *Religious Digital Ethics Framework (RDEF)* integrating theological values with principles of digital justice.
- The establishment of a *Digital Religious Ethics Council (DREC)* as a cross-faith institution responsible for evaluating the moral implications of AI in religious contexts.
- The implementation of *Interfaith Digital Ethics Education (IDEE)* to cultivate moral awareness and social responsibility in digital environments.

These recommendations are not intended as mere technical instruments, but rather as the embodiment of a transcendental policy that integrates faith, morals, and technology.

Theoretically, this research affirms that religious policy is not only a legal or administrative instrument but also a form of collective moral praxis. Grounded in personalist realism (Wojtyła, 1979; Maritain, 1943), policy becomes an act of participation in truth—uniting reason and faith to shape a humane and spiritually grounded digital civilization.

In conclusion, the study achieves consistency between the identified problem, its objective, and its conclusions:

- *Problem:* the displacement of religious authority by algorithmic systems;
- *Objective:* to formulate a personalist and transcendental foundation for religious policy in the AI era;
- *Conclusion:* religious policy must uphold human dignity as *imago Dei*, subordinate technology to moral order, and orient AI toward the common good (*bonum commune*).

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