



## Contextual Spirituality of Synodality: An Oase, Aeropagus and the Polarization of Catholic Religious Education

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### Article Info

ISSN (online): 2582-7138

Volume: 06

Issue: 02

March-April 2025

Received: 12-01-2025

Accepted: 07-02-2025

Page No: 325-336

### Abstract

Pope Francis called on all Catholics to engage in a more synodal church. Synod of Bishops towards the Synodality Church: Communion, Engagement, Mission. How to walk together as people of faith can be interpreted as a call for education, commitment, and faith development for young people. The contextual approach in pastoral care in the educational and spiritual fields has become an interesting topic of discussion and discretion among young people, not only demanding theory but also inviting practice, action, and service in the course of the Synodal Church. Religious and spiritual education as early as possible becomes the foundation and dimension of life with a fragmented understanding of experience and encounters with religious traditions. The focus of this article examines how the perspective of young people on contextual synodal spirituality in the context of education in schools. The research design is qualitative, with the interview method. Four research results were found. First: religious education and spirituality, are abstract theories that are difficult to define. Second, the correlation between religious education and synodal spirituality. Third, Religious Education and Synodality Spirituality "New Oasis and Aeropagus" in the Digital Age. Fourth; Polarizing Religious Education and Synodality Spirituality Contextually.

**Keywords:** Contextual Religious Education; Spirituality; Synodality; Paus Fransiskus; Polarized Aeropagus Oasis Perspective; Youth.

### 1. Introduction

Pope Fransiskus popularized synodal among Catholics by reflecting on the theme "Towards a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission. The Holy Father explained, "It is precisely the thin path of synodal which God expects of the Church of the third millennium." In the context of religious and spiritual education, Paus Fransiskus exemplifies the style of educational pastoral service which is rooted in accompanying and listening to young people. He motivates the faith community and educators to invite young people to be creative in church service activities and get involved in ecclesiastical communities such as the Church Basic Community (Lamont, 2023; Morrison, 2023) [62, 68]. Referring to various studies on the spirituality of synodal about religious education and service in the Church by inviting and involving young people (Morrison, 2023; Lambert, 2023; Castillo, 2022; Fialkowski, 2022) [69, 63, 14, 28] implying the need for "Hearts That Listen and Walk Together" towards a synodal church, its main contribution to building the true church. In the educational and spiritual context, it is abstracted as an educational path to awareness and purification of faith.

Traced, the form of the synodal of "fellowship, involvement, and mission" in the field of religious education is assessed as pedagogical, benevolent interaction, moral coaching (Cooling, 2020; Horowski, 2020) [20, 47], understand and think, practice, and move (Walshe, 2020) [105], religion is not only limited to tradition, but religion is contextual where the actuality is in the form of substantial social facts (Wright, 2008) [107]. In the context of education, religion must explore young people (Jackson, 2008;

Robben *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[54, 87]</sup>. It is also found that there is an idea that religious education is an aesthetic experience of a person (Holm & Holm, 2021) <sup>[45]</sup>, expressed with various explanations both methodologically and epistemologically. What is very interesting, religious education is an encounter that is translated into religion and faith (Kolb & Kolb, 2021; Schweitzer & Schreiner, 2020) <sup>[60, 91]</sup>.

Discussing spirituality in the context of religious education, spirituality comes from the Latin *spiritus*. According to the *Dictionnaire Critique de théologie*, another term is *ruah*, consistently translated into Latin as *spiritus*, (Peng-Keller, 2019; Fuertes & Dugan, 2021) <sup>[83, 35]</sup> whereas in Greek *pneuma* refers to God and his life-giving presence (Peng-Keller & Peng-Keller, 2019; Hill & Woolley, 2022) <sup>[84, 44]</sup> the noun *pneuma* is also used in an anthropological sense. Spirituality is the spirit of the Spirit that comes from God which moves the heart to serve others, 'especially in educating' (Apostolic *et al.*, 2022; Peng-Keller, 2019) <sup>[85]</sup>. Spirituality is a form of personal piety inspired by openness and relationship with the Spirit of God (Venkataraman & Konwar, 2019; Outcomes, 2022) <sup>[103, 80]</sup> piety that assumes 'I am spirituality-religious' is part of the expression 'key of religion' (Vaughn *et al.*, 2022; Harveys, 2016; Fiałkowski, 2022) <sup>[102, 29]</sup>. Spirituality is not only in the field of religion but is important in various fields of education (Mróz *et al.*, 2021; Nganga, Beck & De Four-Babb, 2021) <sup>[70, 75]</sup>, which requires guidance to create quality education on religion and faith (Sultmann, Lamb, Hall, & Borg, 2021); Hill & Woolley, 2022; Sultmann, Lamb, Hall, Borg, *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[96, 44, 97]</sup>. Therefore, Robben's (2021) opinion is correct that spirituality and religious education cannot be separated (Robben *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[87]</sup>, and need to be narrated and actualized (Vaughn *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[102]</sup> although it is difficult to understand by reason (Fuertes & Dugan, 2021; Engebretson, 2003) <sup>[35, 26]</sup>, it needs continuous coaching because true religious education is a religion that can practice spirituality (Generation & Percy, 2019) <sup>[38]</sup> of course with the use of various methods, approaches, or dialogue (Knuth & Körs, 2011) <sup>[59]</sup>. Various literature and previous research findings, show that the spirituality of the synodal of religious education represents individuals understood as a system of ideas and ideas based on theological, pastoral, and ideological commitments (Glenn Morrison, 2023) <sup>[68]</sup> which discusses the subjective component, while spirituality is a dynamic and intrinsic aspect of humanity based on the search for meaning, purpose, highest transcendence in relations with oneself, family, other people, community, society, nature that is significant or sacred, referring to the subjective side of religious experience in the context of synodal it is translated "to walk together" (David *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[22]</sup>. In the context of religion and theology, religion becomes a bridge, a means, and a unifying culture of dialogue (Catalano, 2022) <sup>[15]</sup>.

At the heart of synodal as Paus Fransiskus' call for Indonesia to "Walk Together" with "Three Legs" requires dialogue and a contextual perception of being a "new way of being a church" young people in Indonesia are like "the foundation and future of the Church". This resonance is based on the Catholic education system in Indonesia rooted in religious values, and local cultural values by developing the abilities, creativity, and potential of young people to form a character of faith and piety to God Almighty, noble, healthy, knowledgeable, capable creative, independent, and become citizens of a democratic and responsible (Catholic, 2013; Asori, 2016; Laboris Instruments *et al.*, 202) planned and sustainable by the curriculum (Mangunjaya *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[66]</sup>. Attract attention in the Indonesian context, if contextually educators in learning are "inspired to bring aspects of synodal

values" in religious and spiritual education by demonstrating beauty, and not just its use (Lamont, 2023; Kessler, 2019; English & Francis, 2004) <sup>[62, 57, 27]</sup>. In research Stefania Palmisano (2013) <sup>[81]</sup> in Italy, there is a tendency to regard religion as an important part of social and personal identity, while spirituality is a need that interprets the expression of spiritual life (Palmisano, 2013) <sup>[81]</sup>. Applying religion, of course, through education, becoming spiritual of course through habituation. Student perspectives on religion and spirituality can help and influence the process of developing learning in academic achievement (Fuertes & Dugan, 2021) <sup>[35]</sup>. In this context, one approach to strengthening (and nurturing students' sense of) spirituality in education is to move from the inside out, to work from the core of our (human) experience (Fuertes & Dugan, 2021) <sup>[35]</sup>. Empirical research also discusses and shows that spirituality is understood as an inner life which underlines that humans are not only physical beings but also spiritual, meaning that humans need spiritual enthusiasm (Guilherme & Morgan, 2016; Casson & Cooling, 2020; Wartenweiler, 2021) <sup>[39, 13, 106]</sup> shows that spirituality in education has a fairly dynamic influence on the spirit and success of educational work services (Oman & Thoresen, 2003; Stern, 2018) <sup>[78, 95]</sup>, a broad pedagogical perspective of relationships, and communication and whole-hearted involvement are important points in the practice of spirituality (Hermans & Koerts, 2013) <sup>[43]</sup>, the involvement of young people, especially their understanding of being an important subject and object in religious education, their contextual understanding and insight is very important for the future (Parker & Freathy, 2011; (Wartenweiler, 2021; Oman & Thoresen, 2003; de Bruin-Wassinkmaat *et al.*, 2021; Wartenweiler, 2021; Flanagan *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[82, 106, 78, 23, 106, 32]</sup>. Theoretically, when exploring youth perceptions of religious and spiritual education in this digital era, religious education is seen as doctrine, advice, advice, a path to piety, a bridge, or an 'oasis' for people towards the purification of the heart, transcendence cannot be touched, but also because it is abstract, the ambivalence emphasizes theory and rationality (Fuertes & Dugan, 2021) <sup>[35]</sup>, involves exploring the power of the sacred (Oman & Thoresen, 2003) <sup>[78]</sup>; as a value that represents the purpose of finding the meaning of life (Hill & Woolley, 2022) <sup>[44]</sup>. For young people, this is a theoretical concept that can be found through searches in the digital age such as Google which provides a wealth of information about the world, specifically religion and spirituality. This era no longer limits space and scope exclusively but makes the 'digital era' a means of encounter, search, space, and even classes that create creativity and dialogue, multicultural plurality spaces that provide opportunities to exchange ideas, and educational spaces to discover knowledge. Exploring it in religious and spiritual education is very necessary given the increasingly advanced digital era, what young people perceive as religious and spiritual education, sometimes demands theoretical understanding.

The dimensions of young people's understanding of religious education and its relationship to spirituality may also be related to religiosity. Holistically it takes time, and training, to explore and construct students' understanding and experiences. Referring to the various studies above, there are various perceptions, understandings, and even challenges for young people (Hill & Woolley, 2022) <sup>[44]</sup> towards the contextual spirituality of synodal in the context of "Walking Together" with "Three Legs" an oasis, aeropagus, and polarization in Indonesia which is plural and multicultural, complexity, plurality, tradition, understanding of different religions, different insights and views in the world of

education (Casson & Cooling, 2020; Stern, 2018) <sup>[13, 95]</sup>. From these differences, Spirituality of Synodality: An Oasis, Aeropagus, and Polarization are interesting because it requires theory, perspective, and a broad and open understanding.

## 2. Scope

This research has been granted permission from the Catholic College of Saint Yakobus Merauke, and the place where the research was conducted focused on research on Synodality Spirituality: An Oasis, Aeropagus, and Polarization of Catholic Religious Education. The researcher used a qualitative approach, utilizing the perspective of students. The researcher conducted exploration and dialogue with educational institutions as policy authorities for this activity, thus providing space and time in interviews with respondents. This research is exploratory in nature to find and describe the definition and meaning of religious education and spirituality from the perceptions of respondents (young people).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Antecedents and research objectives

With the permission of the educational institution of the State University of Malang, Doctoral Program in Educational Technology (TEP), and the supervisor, the researcher was appreciated and given an 'official letter' of permission to conduct scientific research in the field of Religious and

Spirituality education. This research is mandatory and must be carried out as a form of final accountability of lectures. The hope is; to useful research results, become role models, and examples of scientific research for educational institutions at the State University of Malang, for assistants for young people, especially for high schools, religious teachers, education observers, and the general public who are open to the development of science.

StudyThis is necessary because, religion and spirituality are the foundation and main factors that are inseparable, and can be expressed through various methods and strategies. Identifying, the spirituality of synodal for young people requires an approach, creativity, innovation, and continuous learning both in theory and practice and can be realized openly in various evaluations, revisions, educational collaborations, pedagogical changes, and technological advances. Synodality is a bridge to improve Religious and Spirituality Education without partitions and space, existing at all times.

### 3.2 Participants

There were 90 young people (students/respondents) from three high schools who participated in this study. The three schools were divided into three groups based on school name, religion, gender, and age. Identification of the number of young people (students/respondents) in the interview can be seen in the table below.

**Table 1:** Number of respondents based on school name, religion, age, and gender

No	School name	Religion	Age			Gender	
		Catholic	16 years	17 years	18 years	Man	Woman
1	School (A) Number of respondents 30.	30	10	10	10	9	22
2	School (B) Number of respondents 30	30	10	13	7	10	18
3	School (C) respondent 30	30	12	8	10	11	20
	The total number of respondents 90						

**Information:** The average age of young people/high school-level students in Indonesia is between 15 -18 years.

The aim of engaging youth from three different schools is to find significant answers. To facilitate the interviews in the three schools, the researcher determined the interview schedule, dividing the three interview groups A, B, and C. The number of each group was 30 respondents. The length of interviews in the three groups was carried out for 3 weeks. In structured interviews 'researchers prepare detailed and complete questions', and in unstructured interviews 'questions prepared by researchers are open, free, remain relevant, and flexible'.

For consistency at the initial interview meeting, the researcher gave time to the respondents to ask questions openly, and spontaneously as well as being flexible to avoid being rigid. Examples of open interviews such as: Have you ever heard of spirituality and synodal? How do you define it? What do you think about religious education? This simple question can identify patterns and similarities in key answers from respondents. And do not forget that the researcher was present to record various answers from the respondents. In this case, the researchers themselves come from different backgrounds of character, education, age, religion, and beliefs. In addition, the researchers did not discriminate against gender, ethnicity, or age.

### 4. Approaches and data analysis techniques

The research approach used is qualitative grounded Theory which focuses on the selection of techniques, and describing field conditions natural approach emphasizes semi-structured in-depth interviews that are flexible and structured often

called informal interviews, using interview instructions, and standard or open interviews. Grounded Theory (GT) is a qualitative research methodology that is rooted in constructivism, or a scientific paradigm that tries to construct or reconstruct the results of field interview data and compare them with theory.

The process of analyzing research data is more systematic in nature with an open coding format by forming initial categories of information or interview results, then reviewing and separating the information answers by making comparisons and concepts. As for primary data, researchers collected field notes, photo documentation, sound recordings, and in-depth observations. In the secondary data, the researcher reads books as literature, the internet, scientific journals, archives, personal documents, and documents from educational institutions where research is conducted.

The method used was in-depth interviews conducted directly with the respondents (youth people students) separately in their respective environments. Respondents were interviewed individually to gain a deep understanding. Where the interviewer came up with the above theme categories by making a summary statement based on the responses, which were collected from the interviews. The data collected is zigzag, analyzing data, coding, or grouping (eg grouping data based on religion, age, and gender). As in the opinion (Maxwell and Miller 2007). After the data was collected, the researcher identified the types of answers about the perspective of young people towards contextual synodal spirituality in the context of education in schools by using

data analysis based on similarities or drawing common threads. As Maxwell and Miller explain, similarity-based relationships involve common similarities or features, which when applied to data analysis take the form of specific themes and emergent patterns that interviewers can generate based on the data collected. This data is then grouped by category, examined, and compared, both within and between categories. Such analytical strategies that focus on similarity

relationships are referred to as categorization strategies (Maxwell and Miller 2007).

## 5. Findings

This study found that of the 90 youth/students who participated all chose and identified themselves with an 'anonymous student name' (name, school origin, religion, age, gender). Can be shown in the table below.

**Table 2:** Research findings of respondents knowing the definition of religious and spiritual education based on gender.

No	Name of school/respondent/youth	Knowing the definition of religious education based on gender		Knowing the definition of synodal spirituality based on gender		Doubtful (definition of religious education)		Doubtful (definition of spirituality synodal)		Not answering (definition of religious education)		Does not answer the definition of spirituality synodality	
		LK	homework	LK	homework	LK	homework	LK	homework	LK	homework	LK	homework
1	School (A) Number of respondents 30	9	22	6	8	-	-	5	7	-	-	1	3
2	School (B) Number of respondents 30	10	18	9	10	-	-	4	3	-	-	2	2
3	The school (C) Number of respondents 30	11	20	11	8	-	-	3	5	-	-	2	1
	Number of respondents	30	60	26	26	-	-	12	15	-	-	5	6

The table above can be explained as follows:

- All respondents are 90 people
- Number of respondents who know the definition of religious education LK 30, PR 60.
- The number of respondents who know the definition of spirituality synodal LK 26, PR 26.
- The number of respondents who answered they were unsure about the definition of religious education LK (-), PR (-).
- The number of respondents who answered that they were unsure about the definition of synodal spirituality in LK 12, PR 15.
- The number of respondents who did not answer questions about the definition of religious education LK (-), PR (-).
- The number of respondents with the definition of spiritual synodal of LK (5), PR (6).
- Additional information on LK (male), PR (female)
- This finding is based on data from structured interviews and unstructured interviews.

## 6. Results and Analysis

### 6.1 Spirituality abstract reality, difficult to define?

Before the interview began, we first introduced ourselves and explained the intent and purpose of this activity to the respondents. Then the respondents were asked and asked for their willingness to answer several questions spontaneously as introductory questions, such as;

Have you ever heard of the words synodal religious education and spirituality? Of the 90 respondents all answered ever. Summarized as follows.

What comes to your mind when you hear the word religious education? Various answers from students as follows: religious education is learning about religion and God, an introduction to all kinds of goodness, in religion, there is character education, an introduction to manners, ethical manners, a lesson about good deeds in the world, and in heaven, the application of religious education is a service to the wider community, teaching alms or socializing, teaching religious knowledge skills of noble character, religious

education makes people believe in their God, teaches people to pray. And no less important is the answer from a student who taught me to love God, others, and nature.

The answers from these respondents resonate with the research conducted by (Cooling, 2020; Jackson, 2008; Horowski, 2020; Robben *et al*, 2021) <sup>[20, 54, 47, 87]</sup> In abstract theory, religious education is part of the pedagogy that is mandatory in the scope of schools in nature to develop and explore students to study religion, deepen their faith through various methods.

Summary of interviews about spirituality.

Spirituality is difficult to explain/transcendent, is spiritual but abstract, the spirit of service is sourced from and related to God, the highest level of thinking, people whose lives have special gifts, actions side with others, a culture of goodness, spirituality means that others are part of oneself, continuous search for meaning, seeking God, teaching and making one's personality whole, a friend of the soul means peace and happiness, related to cultural values. Spirituality's unique answer is the compass of all sciences to regulate and awaken a person to behave well and relate to culture and customs. However, some students hesitated and did not answer the question.

From the interview, the answers from the students have the purpose of this research. Some of the students claim that spirituality is related to God, even though it is abstract. The various answers of the respondents were strengthened by the findings of faith and religion being part of education (Engebretson, 2003; Fuertes & Dugan, 2021; (Robben *et al*, 2021) <sup>[26, 35, 87]</sup>. While spirituality is a symbol of life from religion and culture (Bassett *et al*, 2018) <sup>[6]</sup>, the spirit of service and work, a relationship with God (Venkataraman & Konwar, 2019a); (Fuertes & Dugan, 2021) <sup>[104, 35]</sup>, the imagination of reason and has no form, difficult to describe but can be felt or narrated (Vaughn *et al*, 2022) <sup>[102]</sup>, piety, spirituality is classic, transcendent, and the highest level of need for thought is at the religious stage (Fuertes & Dugan, 2021) <sup>[35]</sup>.

Summary of interviews about a synodal;

Synodal is understood as Meetings, seminars, discussions,

church activities, church leadership structure, thinking together, and acting together.

The various answers above are new concepts discovered by researchers because they are unique based on understanding, experience, involvement, and theological thinking that is transformative, and spontaneous, with involvement, education received is indicated in deep religious appreciation and spirituality, synodal and spirituality itself. As the results of the study concluded, the spirituality of synodal is understood by young people through a process of involvement, understanding, modeling, and dynamic growth in connections and relationships with others, spirituality develops because of mentoring including contextual relational factors (Lamont, 2023; Morrisons, 2023; Capitano & Naudé, 2020) <sup>[63, 69, 121]</sup>, a soul friend 'not mystical' vision and mission to goodness (English & Francis, 2004) <sup>[27]</sup>; institution based (Lee & Jeong, 2022) <sup>[64]</sup>, untouchable reality, ambiguous, abstract, transcendent, difficult to understand and describe (Bensaid, 2021; Hill & Woolley, 2022; Peng-Keller, 2019; MacKinlay, 2022) <sup>[9, 44, 83, 65]</sup>. Perhaps, Spirituality is a topic that is difficult to understand and define in the world of education because it is a social process that changes from time to time and develops dynamically, based on educational level, age, habituation, concepts/ideas, character/behavior, even mentoring (Fuertes & Dugan, 2021) <sup>[35]</sup>.

In theory, Spirituality from an etymological point of view is soul, soul, spirit, and spirit (Venkataraman & Konwar, 2019; Fuertes & Dugan, 2021) <sup>[103, 35]</sup>. This word comes from the English word spiritual (Dierking *et al*, 2005) <sup>[24]</sup> refers to 'spirituality or piety' or 'spiritual life' or spiritual values emphasize the community aspect and signify the individual's relationship with God and one another (Oman & Thoresen, 2003; Venkataraman & Konwar, 2019a; Culliford, 2020; Bellous, 2021; (Flanagan, 2022) <sup>[78, 104, 21, 7, 30]</sup>, shaping attitudes and speech, underlying decisions, directing thoughts and actions every day based on the power of God (Palmisano, 2013; Networks, 2019; Bensaid, 2021) <sup>[81, 9]</sup>.

Tracing religious and spiritual education in the context of youth education, spirituality is like a 'red beaver' woven in various spaces and times, meaning that realizing spirituality requires continuous education and assistance, even though the impacts and challenges are difficult to narrate (Hyde, 2008) <sup>[48]</sup>; bearing in mind that spirituality education has a plural dimension (Casson & Cooling, 2020; (Hornborg, 2016) <sup>[13, 46]</sup>. In line with the opinion of Hay and Nye (Stern, 2018; Bellous, 2021; Chi-Kin Lee, 2020) <sup>[95, 7, 18]</sup> the formation of the concept of religion and spirituality mainly due to the invitation of synodal to "walk together" to young people based on education and mentoring 'this is the path of knowledge of moral values leading to deepening of religion spirituality and faith in the true God' this concept is formed in a space that can be carved because Spirituality is an intermediate space of 'experience' between personal and material reality, the midpoint between subjective and objective reality which is formed when there is perception and experience of oneself and the world. As Pope Francis calls for visionary, prophetic, and communal from the divine in the service of the world of education, not only looking for quantity but quality in the implementation of the curriculum of attention and service to school stakeholders (Lamont, 2020; Bellous, 2021b; change, 2022) <sup>[61, 8, 17]</sup>.

## 6.2 Correlation of religious education and synodality spirituality

In the context of education and curriculum in Indonesia, religious education is a series of efforts that are carried out in

a planned and sustainable manner to develop the ability of young people to strengthen their faith and devotion to God Almighty following their respective religious teachings. This effort is carried out while paying attention to respect for other religions to create harmony, inter-religious harmony in society to realize national unity (Country & Traded; Catholic, 2013) this is stated in the curriculum, mapped out in the syllabus, and explained in textbooks and lesson plans, the aim is to make it easier for teachers and students to understand and apply it in coaching and practice. In particular, the presence of "synodal" strengthens and strengthens the enthusiasm of educators to involve young people in service both in the church and in society "communal relations/communion without boundaries". Equivalence and correlation between religious education and synodal spirituality in the perspective of religious education and synodal spirituality is service, fostering faith, religion, character, and morals, towards the path of piety. This correlation can be seen from the responses of students in interviews, including;

The questions asked are: What do you think about the relationship or correlation between religious education and synodal spirituality?

Group C youth: Religion and synodal spirituality are both in the form of an educational character, like a road and a bridge connecting one place to another, a direction pointer like a wind compass doesn't turn if the wind doesn't blow, he explains that religion is necessary but more useful if it is lived and practiced. Religion is a social identity inherent in humans and related to the environment, and a set of teachings on values and the introduction of God, synodal spirituality is a meeting that is inspired and imbued with religious values, has ideas to do, is practiced in small communities and in large wide.

Group B students: Religion is the science of divinity, a community of several people who believe in God in which there are theories, practices, and dialogues with common goals like seeds sown in the ground, spirituality is people who have a spirit 'like the results must be regrown in the soil, religious education must be open to anyone. A different opinion is that religion is a requirement, rules, and identity, spirituality concerns actions and appreciation. Others commented that religion is like a garment that sticks to the body, and spirituality is the body and soul reflecting decency and etiquette, a unique answer but with a point. Studying religion is easy and simple, spirituality is difficult because it demands discipline and struggle. Religious education and spirituality all the time. Synodal is defined separately ie

Group A students: Religious and spiritual education both go through training and habituation, correlation and dialogue between humans and God, a cultural tradition, religion, in the family, and society. Religious education means spiritual education towards the path of piety. The human experience of silence. The encounter between God's creation. Deepening of faith. A person's relationship with others, nature, and God. Religious education regarding religious values and norms, spirituality in the form of a condition, role, action, and appreciation, seeking the fullness of life/a search for human identity towards holiness and happiness.

The essence of this interview explains the connection between religious education and the spirituality of synodal in various multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approaches (Lamont, 2020; Glen Morrison *et al*, 2023; Chi-Kin Lee, 2020; Lee & Jung, 2022) <sup>[61, 68, 18]</sup>, where religious education is not only a theory but a contextual practice (Bellous, 2021; Baileys, 2020) <sup>[7]</sup>, with the method of accompaniment, exemplary, towards the transformation of the understanding

and development of religion and faith (Gall *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[37]</sup>. Even though it gives the impression of extra-religious religious education and spirituality, religion and spirituality are human identities that are experienced, lived, and are essential and holistic encounters (Palmisano, 2013) <sup>[81]</sup>. Indeed, 'spirituality is a primordial human experience, from which religious responses or religious traditions can emerge' and vary (Chi-Kin Lee, 2020; Religion *et al.*, 2022; Hill & Woolley, 2022) <sup>[18, 44]</sup>. As Pope Fransiskus message for Indonesia, "walking together" with "three legs" has become a massive movement. "three legs" is a spiritual spirit that underlies all synodal activities, a national vision with policies of moderation and dialogue, and local wisdom is defined as a set of ideas and knowledge (Prakoso, 2023). According to the group B interview, religion is indeed a rule and identity, but without spirit, soul, spirit, religion, and spirituality will die. Exploring student responses through interviews and referring to previous research opinions such as findings from Roebben religious education is an act of faith-an act of believing in the future that uniquely presents itself, education is a path of hope, Robben borrows Leclercq's opinion that religious education offers "soul food". " for young people who are thirsty for spiritual food in the complexities of the modern world (Roebben, 2014); Casson & Cooling also cites Roebben's opinion that professional teachers in religious education are competent teachers, have 'open arms', are receptive and attractive, and the success of religious education is in the hands of the teacher as an educator (Casson & Cooling, 2020) [13].

In this era, besides students studying in the school, family, and community environment, students are also required to have an awareness of religious education literacy and spirituality (Hawa *et al.*, 2019; Starkey & Rymarz, 2018; Kao *et al.*, 2020; Hill & Woolley, 2022) <sup>[44]</sup>. It is reminiscent of works (Nelson, 2019) where the expression of religious education and spirituality is relational, not just a sense of 'difference', a spiritual connection, transcendence, Nature, God, or an intangible relationship that cannot be expressed (Fuentes & Dugan, 2021); Hill & Woolley, 2022) <sup>[35,44]</sup>, rather these relationships are 'intangible' correlations connecting all aspects of the cosmos and the interrelationships between people, beings, objects, places and all other elements of human experience across space and time (Hill & Woolley, 2022) <sup>[44]</sup> in terms of 'indescribably sublime.' This indescribable connection is not limited to those affiliated with certain religious traditions or structures (Possamai *et al.*, 2020). <sup>[86]</sup>

On the other hand, the debate about religion and spirituality remains complex, but gives rise to similarities in sharing definitions and even attributes and determinants of relationships/connectedness; transcendence/being embedded in something bigger than oneself; and the search for meaning in life (including, for some, the sacred) (Wartenweiler, 2021; Catherine *et al.*, 2017; Wright & Wright, 2008; Flanagan *et al.*, 2012; Nganga, Beck, & Four-Babb, 2021) <sup>[106, 16, 31, 108, 75]</sup>. Describing the spiritual dimension as a 'way' for young people can help them find the idea of religious knowledge contextually relational relations (Hill & Woolley, 2022; Religion *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[44]</sup>.

### 6.3 Religious education and Synodality spirituality "new oasis and AEROPAGUS" in the digital age

Synodical religious and spiritual education in the scope of formal education in this digital era is not easy to do. The challenge that often occurs is first; differences in perceptive instrumentalization. This point of view for some young people, social media 'let's just say the internet' is seen as a

reliable instrument for implementing education and learning including religious education (Sala, 2020; Lambert, 2020; Galang & Macaraan, 2021; International, Reilly, *et al.*, 2020). In that case, say teacher educators), community leaders (religious people) or lay people are obliged to even be creative using the internet arena as a room for coaching and education. Recognizing that social networks can be best utilized to become coaching spaces for youth. Second; encounter perspective. In this perspective, the digital world is seen as a "new oasis and erophagus" where new encounters and dialogues between humans and culture take place. Therefore, religious and spiritual education must be present and transformative in the digital world and offer it an atmosphere of religious encounter and faith that enlivens (Wright, 2008; International, Reilly, *et al.*, 2020) [107]. The intended encounter is not limited to a concept but sparks ideas that are rooted in the development of faith, and universal inter-religious relations. Related to the two points above, it is important and necessary to lead by example, testimony is a 'way of beauty' in developing students' faith (Priest & Religious, 2021; Instructions of the Congregation for Roman Catholic Education, 2022; Apostolic *et al.*, 2022).

Analyzing the media as a place of 'meeting', technology has changed the condition of the education system. Geir Ottestad adopted the opinion of Tammets and Laanpere (2011) digital space is an inspirational space that can be designed, and developed in an educational environment (Ottestad, 2014; Oststad, 2014; Clark & Hinzo, 2019) <sup>[79, 79, 19]</sup>. The reality is that digital is present to help even simplify the education system, this is a great opportunity to improve education for both educators and young people (Martin, n.d.). And what is necessary is the presence of digital technology to become a bridge of communication and dialogue in conveying information in a precise, straightforward, and accurate manner (Samosir & Boiliu, 2021; Theology *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[90]</sup>. Attracting the attention of researchers when interviewing young people, the questions asked were; what do you think about the process of religious education and learning in this digital era?

Group C students: a summary based on interviews: likes learning strategies that are contemporary according to the style of young people. Don't like textual by memorizing theories, doctrines, advice, or being preached continuously about religion, contextual there is theory and there is practice, out of the box learning style means learning is not only in class where the textbook focuses on the teacher but is more creative using digital means. Others said, I prefer that in theory, it is very permissible, but coupled with practice in the field. The digital era spurred me to be creative because creatively I found new ideas and ideas to create, discover, and share new things with the media.

Group B student: In this era, religious education has been presented in the media, you just have to look at Google. The educational process in this era requires teachers and even students to be creative. One student answered, "Creative space for me besides being able to dialogue with the world, I can find friends of faith to study together". I like religious learning and education not to be monotonous with textbooks with the method of reading, memorizing, listening to advice, sermons, advice, and praying but it is more creative if religious learning uses digital means, for example making religious learning videos, then uploading them on social media is also a form of preaching and learning space for us. One student said that he was grateful for digital facilities in this era, all of which made work/activities easier.

Group C student: Studying religion and spirituality in the digital era is very challenging, I said a student. Many social

media have presented a variety of religious and spiritual education, all that remains is to read it. Social media 'especially the internet' is part of my life he said. In addition, I am in the digital era, where information is abundant, "not just writing, pictures, animated videos, games, everything that concerns needs is available via the internet". For me, media is a means of literacy.

Reflection of this interview, describing young people as media users, familiar with even part of their activities, helping in learning activities (researchers do not discuss the controversy or negative effects of digital media but purely look at the positive side). Religious and spiritual education is very important for students because it is understood as a necessity. As the opinion of (Birkinshaw, 2014) <sup>[10]</sup>, from the context of young people, are required to have competence, creativity, ability, and literacy that can build. Digital technology 'let's just say the internet' presents various new conceptual realities that have the potential to become a means of spreading religious values. In addition, social networking is a media tool that brings relationships and even learning that has a positive value (Spector & Merrill, n.d; International *et al*, 2020) <sup>[92]</sup>. In this context, teachers and students must learn how to manage media to become a learning space and a place for experiments that create religious educational creations (Trothen, 2022; King & King, 2015) <sup>[101, 58]</sup>. This is necessary as they begin to experiment and explore ways that increase their freedom and growth toward a mature faith (King & King, 2015) <sup>[58]</sup>. Therefore, digital media is not only a means of religious and spiritual education, it is also a means and a new arena for the inculturation of education with a new culture created by advances in digital technology.

In the synodal context in Indonesia, there is an appeal for all Catholics, especially for missionaries in preaching and ministry. Especially for young people, religious and spiritual education is a space that creates the potential for prophecy, communication, dialogue, tolerance, and personal wisdom, the influence of which is very large on experience and life in the future (Outcomes, 2022) <sup>[80]</sup>, having spirituality from an early age is very important because it will determine their development when they become adults (Networks, 2019). If from the start they are given stimulation and even good educational visualization about digital media, then in the future they can apply these spiritual values in everyday life (Buckingham, 1979) <sup>[11]</sup>, the educational space in this era is a digital space combined with technology and scientific discoveries, knowledge can be accessed from everywhere, that is the form of an 'oasis' in the entire educational environment. The key is learning. Technology develops, and humans also have to develop and be creative (Nicolaou, 2021) <sup>[77]</sup>. The cultivation and nurturing of spirituality are part of religious education in the digital era (Bellous, 2021) <sup>[8]</sup> and certainly cannot be separated from the assistance of parents, and teachers as educators. Thus, increasing the spirituality of young people in the digital era is an important thing that needs to be improved through teaching religious and spiritual education (Adams *et al*, 2016; Bellous, 2021; Szymczak & Adamczyk, 2022) <sup>[1, 7, 99]</sup>.

#### 6.4 Polarizing religious education and synodality spirituality contextually

Studying research by Ellie, Richard Woolley, Lamont T, Glen Morrison, and Sala, the importance of religious education is even printed and programmed in the school curriculum. Not only that, establishing religious education as a key element is often debated when it is related to spirituality. What Ellie found in her research is the contextual meaning-making of religious education and spirituality. It

requires the identification of the inculcation of religious values that are explored in contextual life experiences (Hill & Woolley, 2022; Glenn Morrison, 2023; Salam, 2020; Glenn Morrison, 2023; Lamont, 2023a) <sup>[44, 68, 62, 69]</sup>.

Of course, separating religion and spirituality will raise very complex questions because it involves their essence and implementation in the world of education, especially the presence of synodal, which is a challenge for educators. Religious education has a special position in the curriculum in Indonesia. Religious education is the main thing because it offers significant space and time. In the context of polarizing 'without putting aside spirituality' religious education is more dominant because lessons are mandatory and written as part of the curriculum (Asrori, 2016) <sup>[4]</sup>. While spirituality is more about coaching, and habitus/habitation that is done outside of learning hours. However, when analyzing these two things 'religious education and spirituality' are inseparable and even complement each other as Zinnbauer and Pargament argue (Hill & Woolley, 2022) <sup>[44]</sup> the quest for spirituality can occur outside of religion, but spirituality is, at the same time, the essence of religion. Moreover, religiosity represents a broader phenomenon than spirituality because it relates to all aspects and functions of the human being himself, which is both sacred and profane.

Contextually, religious and spiritual education is based on real-life experiences, coaching, caring, skills, participatory action, creativity, and independence (Nganga, Beck, & Four-Babb, 2021; Capitano & Naudé, 2020) <sup>[76, 12]</sup> everything 'should' be addressed critically in responding to the changes that occur (anticipatory education). Contextual spirituality can be realized and successful when the teacher as an educator becomes the right facilitator and mediator connecting theory, and practice helping young people see the meaning of what is learned by connecting the context of life in the personal, school, and socio-cultural environment (Fuentes & Dugan, 2021; Flanagan *et al*, 2015; Hill & Woolley, 2022) <sup>[35, 32, 44]</sup>.

Contextually it also shows, in the school environment, students' religions are different but their enthusiasm and tolerance are very high (International, Mahmud, *et al*, 2020; Suprpto, 2020) <sup>[52, 98]</sup> Besides being disciplined with a social spirit, and friendly, polite and very high ethical practice, this is part of religious and spiritual education (Hardawirya, 1991) <sup>[40]</sup>. This different context forms the image of students at the stage of spiritual actualization, not only emphasizing education as a theory that must be memorized but making it social teaching, as in the words of Pope Francis in his encyclical;

"...The spiritual level of human life is determined by love, which ultimately becomes "the criterion for a definitive decision about whether or not human life is worth it." However, there are people of faith who think that their greatness lies in imposing their ideology on others, defending the truth with violence, or demonstrating great strength. We, believers, must all realize this: the most important thing is love which should not be at stake; the greatest danger is not to love (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-13) ..." (Franciscus, 2020).

Although the perspective on the contextual spirituality of Catholic religious learning assumes that religious teaching is based on the tradition of the Christian faith alone with various methods of approach, experience, dialogue, interpretation, and narrative, even with religious literacy (Casson & Cooling, 2020) [13], the spirit of learning religion and how to understand not only limited to theory but applied in activities and actions (Florin *et al*, 2009).

As one student responded; about the contextual context of religious education and synodal spirituality namely;

I study religion every week at school, must and must because the school rules are like that. But for me, the necessity is not coercion or because of rules, but because I need teaching from teachers about the religion that I profess, the proof is by studying religion I become active in religious activities at school, church, and community, I am even taught to love my neighbor. The positive thing is that I am active in religious communication forums, becoming a young activist in promoting religious tolerance in FKUB "religious communication forum".  
one student added.

Apart from my parents being active in community activities, it has become a tradition in our family, to give alms, fast, worship together, visit orphanages, and every major religious holiday, for example, on Eid al-Fitr, we socialize at orphanages, on major holidays of Christians, we invite orphans to give thanks at home.

Another answer said, I am active in the village youth community, our job is social service, cleaning the village, and participating in religious activities.

Table 3

School name	Difference	Equality
<b>School Identity A, B, and C</b>	School A has a higher level of hesitation in answering interview questions about spirituality than schools B and C did not answer the question of male and female synodal spirituality 6 based on the data (table 2). The number of women answered more interview questions because there were more female students in schools A, B, and C.	Schools A, B, and C are all Catholic students. The number of respondents was the same, namely 30 in each school's A, B, and C. Each student knew the definition of religious education based on gender. Schools A, B, and C are Catholic schools (SMAK) located in Malang, Indonesia.
<b>Abstract reality spirituality is difficult to define.</b>	From the results of the interviews as a whole, it showed that students in school B were more prominent and more critical in giving and writing answers "without putting aside the answers from schools A and C". Examples of answers from students, religion is a set of teachings and values created by humans, while spirituality is a form of seeking a godly life 'even if it is abstract' to regulate and awaken someone in the world to behave piously, spiritually, and well (cf. MacKiclay, 2022)	There is a similarity in the answer that religious education makes people have more faith in their God, and love others, and nature. With this understanding, humans have a spirit that comes from God referring to spirituality, piety, service or action, and togetherness in an individual relationship with God.
<b>Correlation of Religion and Spirituality education.</b>	Preliminary observations show school B (is more responsive, effective, intelligent, and critical, and answers are not rote but reasoning based on participatory experience in various religious and social activities).	Overall it shows that Spirituality and religion are two inseparable, interrelated things, religion is a pedagogy that teaches religious values, and spirituality is passion. Religion does have structure and rules, but without spirituality (spirit, spirit, spirit) religion and spirituality will die. Continuous coaching is required.
<b>Religious and spirituality education "New Oases and Aeropagus" in the digital era.</b>	In general, schools A, B, and C have the same answer, but the answers are more contextual than school B, which shows: Digital media is a learning tool that creates creativity for students. and others universally.	For students, religion and spirituality are a model of encounter where religious learning is not limited to theories or concepts taught in class but the teachings of 'life' in the digital era.
<b>Contextually polarizing religious and spiritual education</b>	The three schools A, B chose religious education, spirituality needs to be implemented in schools	There is no difference in answers in contextually polarizing religious and spiritual education in schools A, B, and C

Analyzing theory and results, researchers have adopted many theories and thoughts from Euro-West, the reason being that the context of religious and spiritual education is the field of research, previous researchers have proven their theory scientifically and used it in the context of universal and worldwide Catholic religious nuanced education (given the system catholic education pivots from one source, translated according to the context of each school, including synodal), so these theories and results are very helpful for researchers to explore them in the context of religious and spiritual education in Indonesia. Very precisely, the theory of religious education and spirituality 'takes root and lands' in practice. What is accepted as a theory of religion in the classroom must be applied in the field (Hill & Woolley, 2022) <sup>[44]</sup>, religion is no longer a matter of theory but appreciation, passion, spirit, or spirit that moves (Statham & Webster, 2021) <sup>[94]</sup>. In another context, contextual religious and spiritual education in this school environment grows from multidimensional thoughts and concepts that are very complex even though they differ in religion and faith, but the moral seeds are already rooted in the minds of young people (Fransiskus, 2020); (Muderedzwa, 2021) <sup>[34, 71]</sup>, where patterns and ways of thinking are very open to others. There

appears to be an awareness of young people learning religion and spirituality, respecting each other, having tolerant attitudes and behaviors, and being social (Mangunjaya *et al*, 2021) <sup>[66]</sup>. As with religious assumptions, having spirituality is specifically for people who are diligent in worship, diligent in church, religious behavior, the enthusiasm that comes from God, transcendence, and the search for the deepest meaning, obedience to religion is appropriate (Wartenweiler, 2021); Bellous, 2021) <sup>[106, 8]</sup>.

## 7. Conclusions

This paper explores the religious education and spirituality of synodals in the context of regional high schools in Indonesia. The results of the research show that spirituality is difficult to define and we acknowledge this. Even implementing "walking together" through "dialogue and service" the mission of religion and spirituality education to young people is not easy, especially to implement it in this all-virtual digital era. Considering that young people come from different cultures, religions/beliefs, characters, family backgrounds, and different regions, we also find diverse and varied answers about their experiences of religious and spiritual education. The young people interviewed in this study were students in

Catholic neighborhoods or foundations who were Catholics. So, it is important to note, given the diversity and multiculturalism of religions in Indonesia, we identify the results of this research as a conclusion

- The Importance of Religious and Spiritual Education is not something that is easily taught to young people, assistance is needed from the family as 'the main educational space for students, the school environment as a place for formal education 'to learn theory, perception, understanding, and even into the realm of scientific discovery'. Continuous collaboration is needed.
- Educators or teachers are the main keys in introducing theories, perceptions, and understanding of religious and spiritual education so that young people grow and love their religion and faith. So it is necessary for a teacher who is professional in his field to 'master the field of religion and he becomes an example in contextualizing religious values'. Spirituality which was previously considered difficult to understand can be defined and carried out by teachers who are experts in their fields.
- Religious education as an "oasis and Aeropagus" in the digital era is a meeting space for religious and faith education for young people, which produces discoveries and habits in various forms, disciplinary values, responsibility, honesty, inculcation of faith, character, quality of students, tolerance education and steady harmony.
- The main and very important findings in this study are: Religious and spiritual education is the foundation and basis for forming faith and belief in Indonesia. Even though it seems very universal, transcendent, theoretical, abstract/ambiguous in the concept of human thought.
- The context of the spirit of synodal becomes material for reflection, motivation, and challenges for educators and foundations where "Walking Together" with "Dialogue" needs to be realized and shows the role of "teaching, learning - as a prophet" present as a living Church as Christ embraces all people regardless of partition.
- This research revolves around students' perceptions in the context of education in Indonesia, and research needs to be developed in the future.

The concept of spirituality which is considered 'universal' shows that spirituality is subjective, and unique because it deals with experience, and involves the level of growth of faith, and understanding of religion. Therefore, young people need to be invited, involved, empowered in various spiritual and religious activities, treated, and given sufficient and continuous education. Academic institutions need to spearhead open spaces in starting conversations with young people, to nurture and help everyone develop spiritually. The question is, "Are our institutions ready for this collective effort?"

Young people are proud of their involvement in school activities, religious activities, social activities, character building, and activities that foster creative-innovative interest. Thus, they can develop and identify elements of religious and spiritual education as fundamental and transformative values. This is not to promote certain religions and beliefs but to promote elements and values that are indescribable within them.

Of course, learning for young people (high school) does not need to be limited to religious education, but is identified in such a way. A very specific focus and contribution of this research project and paper is to explore the interaction between religious education and spirituality. Research

conducted by the authors has the potential to impact practice at national and international levels. Bearing in mind, that the authors do not focus on curriculum content, but on theoretical understanding which gives birth to values and attitudes supported by reflections and models that can be adapted to other subjects.

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