

Growing Faith in the Digital Age: A Study on How AI-Based Spiritual Platforms Affect Religious Maturity in Youth

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of AI-based spiritual engagement on religious maturity by employing a small-scale experimental design. A total of 40 participants aged 18–30 were divided equally into two groups: Group A comprised regular users of AI-driven spiritual tools (e.g., meditation apps, spiritual chatbots, and virtual religious services), while Group B consisted of individuals with no significant exposure to such technologies. Religious maturity was assessed using a condensed version of the Religious Maturity Scale (RMS), evaluating dimensions like moral reasoning, symbolic understanding, and openness to faith development. The study applied an independent samples t-test to compare the mean scores between the two groups. Initial findings suggest noticeable variation in symbolic interpretation and openness scores among AI users, indicating potential cognitive stimulation through digital spiritual practices. However, moral reasoning showed minimal group differences, highlighting that certain dimensions of maturity may develop independently of technological mediation.

Keywords: *Ai-Spirituality Interface, Religious Maturity, Digital Faith Practices, Algorithmic Guidance, Techno-Religious Engagement*

In an era marked by rapid technological advancement and digital immersion, the spiritual lives of young individuals are undergoing a profound transformation. The emergence of AI-based spiritual platforms—ranging from chatbot-guided scripture interpretation to algorithm-driven meditation tools—has introduced a new paradigm in religious engagement. These platforms offer personalized, accessible, and often interactive spiritual experiences that resonate with the digital-native generation. However, this shift also raises critical questions about the depth, authenticity, and developmental trajectory of religious maturity among youth. Religious maturity, traditionally nurtured through communal rituals, mentorship, and introspective practices, is now increasingly mediated by artificial intelligence. Platforms such as Gita GPT, Sibyl AI, and Magai are not merely disseminating religious content; they are shaping how young users interpret sacred texts, form moral judgments, and experience transcendence. While these tools democratize access to spiritual knowledge, they also risk reducing complex theological concepts into algorithmic outputs, potentially altering the cognitive and emotional dimensions of faith development. This study seeks to explore the nuanced impact of AI-based spiritual platforms on the religious maturity

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of youth in India, a context where spirituality is deeply embedded in cultural identity. By examining user experiences, engagement patterns, and perceived spiritual outcomes, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on technology-mediated religiosity and its implications for educational and pastoral practices. In doing so, this research not only addresses a critical gap in the literature but also offers insights for educators, spiritual leaders, and technologists seeking to navigate the evolving landscape of faith in the digital age.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into spiritual practices has prompted new inquiries into how digital tools influence religious development, particularly among youth. Scholars have begun to explore the psychological, cultural, and theological implications of AI-mediated spirituality.

Alkhouri (2024), writing in the *Religions* journal, examined the psychological dimensions of AI-guided spiritual experiences. The study highlights how AI-powered religious applications and virtual communities may simulate rituals but lack the existential depth required for authentic faith development.

Vaughan, Kim, and El-Amin (2025) published a comprehensive review in the *Journal of Digital Theology*, emphasizing the epistemological shifts introduced by AI in religious contexts. They call for empirical frameworks to assess belief formation in digital environments, especially among youth.

Singh (2020) conducted a sociological study published in the *International Journal of Research in Commerce and Social Sciences (IJRCS)*. Her work reveals a shift from institutional religiosity to personalized, digitally mediated experiences among Indian youth, influenced by spiritual movements like ISKCON and Brahma Kumaris.

Mishra (2012), in a chapter published by Cambridge University Press, explored how Hindu religious values are transmitted to adolescents through traditional and modern schooling systems. His findings provide a cultural baseline for understanding religious maturity in Indian youth, which AI-based platforms may either harmonize or disrupt.

These studies collectively suggest that AI-based spiritual platforms are not merely tools of convenience but are actively reshaping the contours of religious maturity in youth.

Objective

To assess whether the use of AI-based spiritual platforms contributes to higher stages of religious maturity in Indian youth.

Hypothesis

Indian youth who engage regularly with AI-based spiritual platforms will score higher on a religious maturity scale than those who do not engage with such platforms.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a cross-sectional comparative research design, aiming to identify differences in religious maturity between two independent groups of youth: those who

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engage regularly with AI-based spiritual platforms and those who do not. An independent samples t-test was used to compare mean maturity scores across groups.

Participants

A total of 40 participants, aged 18 to 30, were purposively sampled from educational institutions and youth communities in urban Indian settings. Participants were evenly divided into:

- Group A (n = 20): Individuals who reported regular engagement (minimum 3 times per week) with AI-based spiritual tools such as spiritual chatbots (e.g., Gita GPT), meditation apps, or virtual religious discourses.
- Group B (n = 20): Individuals who reported minimal or no engagement with such platforms.

All participants provided informed consent prior to participation, and demographic parity (e.g., gender, education level) was considered to avoid confounding variables.

Instrument

Religious maturity was assessed using a condensed version of the Religious Maturity Scale (RMS), developed by Gary K. Leak and Stanley B. Fish in 1999. Responses were collected on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating greater religious maturity.

Procedure

Participants completed the RMS and a brief demographic survey in controlled, distraction-free environments—either in person or via a secure online form. Group classification was determined using a pre-screening questionnaire that assessed digital spiritual habits over the past three months. The average completion time was approximately 15–20 minutes. No spiritual prompts or stimuli were presented during testing to ensure neutrality.

Data Analysis

Collected data were analyzed using SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated for each group. To examine the hypothesis, an independent samples t-test was conducted on the total RMS scores.

RESULT

Table 1

Group	Sample	Mean	S.D	T-test	D.F	Significant level
A	20	41.75	4.80	2.73	38	.009
B	20	37.25	5.35			

The findings of this study indicate that youth who regularly engage with AI-based spiritual platforms scored significantly higher on the Religious Maturity Scale compared to those who do not use such tools. With a mean difference of 4.5 points and a p-value of .009, the result is statistically significant, suggesting that this difference is unlikely to be due to chance. The large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.86$) indicates that this difference is not only statistically meaningful but also practically impactful. In simple terms, youth who use AI-driven spiritual tools may be experiencing deeper or more flexible religious growth—particularly in how they reflect on, interpret, and remain open to their faith journey.

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However, it is important to note that while the data suggests a strong association, this study does not establish a direct cause-and-effect relationship. Other personal, cultural, or environmental factors might also contribute to religious maturity.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate a statistically significant difference in religious maturity between youth who engage with AI-based spiritual platforms and those who do not. The higher mean RMS score among AI users suggests that digital spiritual engagement may enhance certain facets of religious maturity—especially those related to reflective openness and symbolic interpretation.

These findings align with previous literature (e.g., Singh, 2020; Vaughan et al., 2025), which emphasize the role of personalized spiritual technologies in reshaping how young people process religious content.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the emerging discourse on technology-mediated spirituality, providing empirical evidence that AI-based spiritual platforms may positively influence aspects of religious maturity in youth. While not a replacement for traditional mentorship or community-based practices, such platforms appear to support introspective growth and symbolic comprehension, essential elements of maturing faith. However, caution is warranted in interpreting these results as causal, and further longitudinal or experimental designs are needed to explore deeper developmental shifts. The findings emphasize that digital tools can serve as complementary pathways—not replacements—for spiritual formation in the digital age.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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