



**THE PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF OPEN
EDUCATION AND E-LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS AND
MORAL EDUCATION (R.M.E.) IN GHANA**

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Abstract:

The rise of open education and e-learning is reshaping global education systems, including Religious and Moral Education (RME) in Ghana. This study examines the prospects and challenges of integrating digital learning into RME using qualitative interpretive analysis of literature and context. Findings show that e-learning enhances accessibility, learner-centered instruction, collaboration, and inclusive participation across diverse learners in Ghana. However, challenges such as digital inequality, poor infrastructure, limited teacher training, and weak connectivity hinder effective implementation. The study further identifies risks, including misinformation, ethical concerns, and reduced interpersonal engagement in moral learning. It argues for culturally grounded frameworks emphasizing relationality, empathy, and shared humanity. Ultimately, the study concludes that successful integration requires ethical digital literacy, inclusive policy support, infrastructure development, and culturally responsive pedagogy. It contributes an African-centered perspective linking technology with moral education for sustainable educational transformation in Ghana. It emphasizes balancing innovation with moral responsibility in order to preserve the ethical essence of RME within digital environments. The paper also highlights the importance of teacher capacity building, equitable access to technology, and the integration of African values in digital pedagogy to ensure holistic learner development. By situating RME within a culturally responsive digital framework, the study offers practical and theoretical contributions to educational transformation in Ghana and similar contexts. Overall, it suggests that e-learning can strengthen moral education if guided by ethics, inclusion, and African philosophical values. Thus, sustainable adoption depends on infrastructure, pedagogy, and strong ethical governance in schools across the Ghanaian education system.

Keywords: open education; e-learning; religious and moral education; digital pedagogy

1. Introduction

Education in Ghana has historically functioned not merely as a system of intellectual instruction but also as an instrument for moral formation, religious orientation, and social

transformation. From indigenous African educational traditions to missionary-led schooling and contemporary formal education systems, the moral and spiritual dimensions of learning have remained central to educational development in Ghana (Akyeampong, 2020; Eshun & Osei-Poku, 2021). Religious and Moral Education (RME), in particular, occupies a significant place within the Ghanaian curriculum because it seeks to cultivate ethical consciousness, religious tolerance, responsible citizenship, and communal values among learners. In many respects, RME reflects Ghana's broader socio-cultural identity, where religion and morality continue to shape public life, social interaction, and national development.

The rise of digital technologies and online learning environments has, however, transformed the nature of education globally. Open education and e-learning have become increasingly influential in redefining how knowledge is produced, accessed, and transmitted across societies (Anderson, 2020; Bates, 2022). The emergence of digital learning platforms, open educational resources (OERs), blended learning systems, and virtual classrooms has introduced new possibilities for educational accessibility, flexibility, and learner-centered engagement. These developments accelerated significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when educational institutions across the world were compelled to adopt emergency remote teaching and digital learning strategies (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Daniel, 2020).

In Ghana, the adoption of e-learning has expanded rapidly in recent years, particularly within tertiary education and teacher training institutions. Government policies and educational reforms increasingly emphasize digital transformation as a means of improving educational quality and widening access (Nyadzi *et al.*, 2024; UNESCO, 2023). Nevertheless, the integration of open education and e-learning into Religious and Moral Education remains underexplored both theoretically and practically. Existing discussions on digital education in Ghana often focus on science, technology, and general pedagogy, while limited attention is given to how online learning affects moral formation, religious engagement, and ethical development.

This omission is significant because RME differs from many academic subjects in its emphasis on interpersonal interaction, dialogue, empathy, reflection, and value formation. The movement from face-to-face engagement to digital environments raises critical questions regarding authenticity, ethical mediation, religious pluralism, and the preservation of communal learning traditions. While e-learning can democratize access to religious knowledge and encourage intercultural interaction, it may simultaneously weaken the relational and communal dimensions central to moral education (Cheong, 2021; Campbell & Evolvi, 2019).

Moreover, Ghana continues to face substantial digital inequalities that shape access to online education. Socio-economic disparities, infrastructural limitations, unstable internet connectivity, and inadequate technological resources create uneven educational experiences among learners (Agyemang & Frempong, 2023; Kumi-Yeboah & Smith, 2021). These structural challenges become even more problematic in subjects such

as RME, where dialogue, contextual sensitivity, and ethical guidance are essential components of teaching and learning.

The growing influence of digital religion further complicates the educational landscape. Online religious content, social media preaching, digital spirituality, and virtual faith communities increasingly shape students' religious identities and moral perceptions (Campbell & Evolvi, 2019; Cheong, 2021). Consequently, educational institutions are confronted with the challenge of preparing students not only for digital participation but also for ethical digital engagement within religiously diverse environments.

This study therefore critically examines the prospects and challenges of open education and e-learning in Religious and Moral Education in Ghana. Drawing on educational technology theories, African philosophical perspectives, and digital pedagogy scholarship, the paper explores how online learning transforms the teaching and learning of RME. It further evaluates the implications of digital education for moral formation, religious coexistence, educational equity, and cultural identity within the Ghanaian context.

1.2 Explanation of Terminologies in the Work

To ensure conceptual clarity, the key concepts employed in this study are explained within the context of Ghanaian education, digital pedagogy, and African philosophical thought.

- **Open Education:** Open education refers to educational practices and systems that promote unrestricted access to learning opportunities, resources, and knowledge through flexible and technology-supported approaches. It includes open educational resources (OERs), online courses, distance education, and collaborative digital learning environments designed to widen educational participation and inclusivity.
- **E-learning:** E-learning refers to the use of digital technologies, internet platforms, and electronic communication systems to facilitate teaching and learning processes. It includes synchronous and asynchronous instruction, virtual classrooms, online discussions, multimedia learning, and blended instructional models.
- **Religious and Moral Education (RME):** Religious and Moral Education is an academic subject within Ghana's educational curriculum aimed at promoting ethical development, religious literacy, moral reasoning, and responsible citizenship. It seeks to cultivate values such as tolerance, honesty, empathy, discipline, and peaceful coexistence among learners while fostering understanding of different religious traditions.
- **Digital Pedagogy:** Digital pedagogy refers to teaching and learning approaches that integrate digital technologies into educational practice. It encompasses online instructional methods, interactive learning systems, collaborative technologies,

and digitally mediated educational engagement designed to enhance learning experiences.

- **Digital Divide:** The digital divide refers to inequalities in access to digital technologies, internet connectivity, technological literacy, and online educational opportunities. In Ghana, the digital divide often reflects disparities based on socio-economic status, geographical location, infrastructure, and institutional resources.

1.3 Motivation and Gap in Literature

The motivation for this study is rooted in the rapid expansion of digital technologies and the growing importance of open education in reshaping teaching and learning across Ghana. While e-learning has become more prominent, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, most research in Ghana has focused on infrastructure, access, digital inequality, and teacher readiness. Similarly, studies on Religious and Moral Education (RME) tend to emphasize curriculum content, value formation, and citizenship education, with little attention to digital learning environments. This creates a clear disconnect between digital education scholarship and moral education studies. As RME is deeply relational and ethically oriented, the shift to online learning raises important questions about moral development, religious engagement, and ethical interaction that remain underexplored. Additionally, much of the existing literature relies on Western frameworks that prioritize individualism, overlooking African communitarian values. The rise of digital religion further deepens this gap, highlighting the need for an integrated, context-sensitive analysis.

1.4 Focus and Novelty of the Study

This study focuses on examining the prospects and challenges of open education and e-learning in Religious and Moral Education within Ghana. It views digital learning not only as a technological tool but also as a socio-cultural and ethical space where moral values, religious identities, and learning experiences are shaped. Its novelty lies in its interdisciplinary approach, integrating educational technology, philosophy, religion, and curriculum studies to provide a holistic analysis of online RME. The study also foregrounds African philosophical thought, particularly communitarian ethics, as a lens for understanding digital pedagogy, contrasting it with dominant Western individualistic models. It further explores the influence of digital religion and online spirituality on students' moral and religious development. Importantly, it reconceptualizes RME as a digitally mediated moral practice rather than a traditional classroom subject. By centering Ghanaian experiences, the study contributes to decolonizing educational technology discourse and enriching global debates on e-learning and moral education.

2. Statement of the Problem

The rapid expansion of digital technologies and online learning platforms has significantly transformed educational delivery systems across the world. In Ghana, the emergence of open education and e-learning has become increasingly important, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed structural weaknesses within the country's educational system and accelerated the adoption of digital learning approaches (Daniel, 2020; Hodges *et al.*, 2020). While considerable attention has been given to online education in science, technology, and general pedagogical studies, limited scholarly focus has been directed toward Religious and Moral Education (RME), despite its central role in value formation, ethical consciousness, and citizenship development within Ghanaian education.

Religious and Moral Education occupies a distinctive place within the Ghanaian curriculum because it is intended not only to transmit knowledge but also to shape learners' moral attitudes, spiritual awareness, tolerance, and social responsibility. However, the transition from traditional classroom instruction to digital and open learning environments presents significant pedagogical and ethical challenges for RME delivery. Unlike other academic subjects that may rely heavily on content transmission, RME often depends on dialogue, interpersonal interaction, reflective engagement, and moral mentorship. Consequently, questions arise concerning the extent to which online learning environments can effectively facilitate moral formation, ethical reflection, and religious understanding.

Although Ghana has made notable progress in ICT integration and digital educational reform (Nyadzi *et al.*, 2024), substantial inequalities remain in access to internet connectivity, digital devices, electricity, and technological literacy, particularly among rural and economically disadvantaged learners (Agyemang & Frempong, 2023; Kumi-Yeboah & Smith, 2021). These inequalities directly affect students' ability to participate meaningfully in online RME instruction and widen existing educational disparities. Moreover, many teachers remain insufficiently prepared for digital pedagogy and online instructional design, limiting the effectiveness of e-learning implementation in RME contexts (Mensah & Nabie, 2022; Alhassan, 2021).

Another major concern is the ethical and religious implications of digital learning environments. The online space exposes learners to diverse ideologies, misinformation, religious extremism, and moral relativism, which can complicate the objectives of Religious and Moral Education (Campbell & Evolvi, 2019; Cheong, 2021). While open education creates opportunities for broader access to religious knowledge and intercultural dialogue, it simultaneously introduces challenges related to content regulation, authenticity, digital ethics, and learner supervision.

Furthermore, existing literature on e-learning in Ghana largely focuses on general educational delivery, technological adoption, or institutional preparedness, with limited integration of moral education, religious pedagogy, and ethical formation. Studies specifically examining the prospects and challenges of open education and e-learning

within RME remain scarce. This creates a significant scholarly and practical gap, particularly within a society where religion and morality continue to shape public life, identity, and social relations.

The central problem addressed by this study, therefore, is that although open education and e-learning are increasingly transforming educational systems in Ghana, there remains insufficient understanding of how these digital learning models affect the teaching, learning, and ethical objectives of Religious and Moral Education. Without a contextually grounded and pedagogically informed framework for integrating digital technologies into RME, the effectiveness of moral and religious education in Ghana may be significantly undermined.

3. Objectives of the Study

The overarching objective of this study is to critically examine the prospects and challenges of open education and e-learning in Religious and Moral Education (RME) in Ghana within the context of digital transformation, educational accessibility, and moral formation.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- 1) To examine the extent to which open education and e-learning have transformed the teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education in Ghana.
- 2) To investigate the opportunities presented by digital learning technologies for enhancing access, participation, flexibility, and learner engagement in RME.
- 3) To assess the major challenges confronting the implementation of e-learning and open education in RME, including infrastructural, pedagogical, socio-economic, and technological barriers.
- 4) To explore the preparedness and digital competencies of teachers and students in the effective delivery and participation of online Religious and Moral Education.
- 5) To analyze the ethical and religious implications of digital learning environments for moral formation, religious understanding, and value-based education in Ghana.
- 6) To evaluate the role of open educational resources and blended learning approaches in improving the quality and accessibility of RME instruction.
- 7) To propose practical and policy-oriented strategies for strengthening open education and e-learning systems for Religious and Moral Education in Ghana.

4. Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) How have open education and e-learning transformed the teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education in Ghana?

- 2) What opportunities do digital learning technologies provide for improving access, flexibility, learner participation, and engagement in RME?
- 3) What major challenges hinder the effective implementation of e-learning and open education in Religious and Moral Education in Ghana?
- 4) To what extent are teachers and students prepared for digital teaching and learning in RME contexts?
- 5) What ethical and religious concerns emerge from the use of online learning platforms in Religious and Moral Education?
- 6) How effective are open educational resources and blended learning models in supporting RME instruction in Ghana?
- 7) What strategies can be adopted to strengthen the integration of open education and e-learning into Religious and Moral Education in Ghana?

5. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

5.1 Introduction

The integration of digital technologies into education has fundamentally reshaped global pedagogical systems, transforming how knowledge is accessed, shared, and evaluated. Open education and e-learning have become central pillars of this transformation, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated reliance on virtual learning environments. In Ghana, these developments have redefined educational delivery across all levels, influencing curriculum implementation, learner participation, teacher preparedness, and equity in access to learning opportunities. While digital education continues to expand, its implications for Religious and Moral Education (RME) remain underexplored. This gap is significant because RME is not merely informational but deeply ethical, relational, and formative in nature. This section therefore reviews literature on open education, e-learning, digital inequality, online pedagogy, moral education, and digital religion, while situating the discussion within Connectivism Theory and the Community of Inquiry framework as guiding theoretical lenses.

5.2 Open Education and the Transformation of Learning

Open education refers to inclusive, flexible, and technology-enabled learning systems that prioritize accessibility and free exchange of knowledge through digital resources. It challenges traditional classroom-bound models by enabling learners to access materials regardless of location or socio-economic status. Globally, it is viewed as a democratizing force that reduces barriers to education through virtual classrooms, mobile platforms, and open educational resources. In Ghana, open education became particularly prominent during the COVID-19 disruption, revealing both its transformative potential and structural weaknesses. While some institutions adapted quickly to online systems, others struggled due to limited infrastructure and digital inequality. For RME, open education introduces new possibilities for wider exposure to religious perspectives and flexible learning, but it also raises concerns about the loss of interpersonal moral

mentorship. Effective moral education requires interaction, reflection, and dialogue, meaning that technological access alone is insufficient without meaningful pedagogical engagement.

5.3 E-Learning and Digital Pedagogy in Ghana

E-learning involves the use of digital platforms to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning. In Ghana, its adoption has grown due to educational reforms and emergency responses, yet implementation remains uneven across regions. Significant disparities exist in internet access, device availability, and digital literacy. These inequalities affect not only participation but also learning quality. RME is particularly impacted because it relies heavily on discussion, reflection, and value internalization rather than content memorization. Poor digital infrastructure therefore limits moral engagement. Additionally, many teachers lack adequate training in online pedagogy, which reduces the effectiveness of virtual instruction. Without proper preparation, educators often replicate traditional lecture methods in digital environments, limiting interactivity and ethical dialogue.

5.4 Digital Inequality and Educational Exclusion

Digital inequality remains one of the most pressing challenges in Ghana's e-learning landscape. It extends beyond access to include disparities in skills, affordability, infrastructure, and institutional support. Rural and low-income learners are disproportionately affected, resulting in unequal participation in online education. For RME, this inequality undermines its inclusive moral mission, as students without access are excluded from ethical discussions and collaborative learning. Digital education, rather than reducing inequality, can reproduce it when structural barriers are ignored. Teachers are also affected, as many schools lack ICT resources and technical support. This situation highlights the need for a broader understanding of e-learning as a social justice issue rather than a purely technological innovation.

5.5 Teacher Preparedness and Digital Competence

Teacher readiness is central to the success of e-learning systems. In Ghana, many educators lack adequate training in digital tools and online pedagogy. This limits their ability to design interactive and engaging virtual lessons. RME requires especially nuanced pedagogical skills because it involves moral dialogue, reflection, and value formation. Translating these into digital environments is challenging without specialized training. Furthermore, negative teacher attitudes toward technology can hinder innovation. Some perceive e-learning as complex or less effective than face-to-face instruction, reducing their willingness to adopt new methods. Continuous professional development is therefore essential to strengthen digital literacy and pedagogical adaptability.

5.6 Open Educational Resources and Blended Learning

Open Educational Resources (OERs) provide freely accessible digital materials that support teaching and learning. They enhance educational equity by reducing costs and expanding access to diverse learning content. For RME, OERs offer opportunities for exposure to multiple religious perspectives and ethical frameworks. However, their effectiveness depends on cultural relevance and contextual adaptation. Imported materials may not reflect Ghanaian socio-religious realities. Blended learning, which combines online and face-to-face instruction, offers a balanced approach. It preserves interpersonal moral dialogue while leveraging digital flexibility. Yet, its success depends on infrastructure, teacher competence, and institutional planning.

5.7 Digital Religion and Moral Formation

Digital platforms have become influential spaces for religious expression and moral engagement. Online sermons, social media ministries, and virtual faith communities shape learners' religious understanding and ethical perspectives. While this expands access to diverse religious content, it also exposes learners to misinformation, extremism, and unregulated interpretations. These challenges complicate the goals of RME, which seeks to promote ethical reasoning and responsible citizenship. Digital environments therefore require critical moral literacy to help learners evaluate online religious content responsibly and ethically.

5.8 Theoretical Framework

5.8.1 Connectivism Theory

Connectivism Theory, developed by Siemens, provides the first lens for understanding learning in digitally mediated environments. It conceptualizes learning as a networked process in which knowledge is distributed across digital platforms, online communities, databases, and human connections rather than being confined to the individual mind. In this sense, learning is defined by the ability to form, maintain, and navigate connections between information sources and knowledge nodes. From this perspective, what matters most is not only what learners know, but how effectively they can access, filter, and apply knowledge within rapidly changing digital ecosystems.

In relation to Religious and Moral Education (RME), connectivism is highly relevant because learners today encounter religious and ethical knowledge through diverse digital channels such as social media sermons, YouTube teachings, online discussion forums, and virtual classrooms. These platforms expand access to multiple religious viewpoints and moral arguments, thereby broadening learners' exposure beyond traditional classroom boundaries. However, this openness also introduces challenges. Learners may encounter misinformation, doctrinal contradictions, or emotionally persuasive but ethically questionable content. As a result, moral learning becomes less structured and more dependent on learners' digital literacy and evaluative judgment.

Connectivism therefore helps explain both opportunity and risk: it expands access to moral-religious knowledge while simultaneously demanding higher levels of critical thinking, digital discernment, and ethical filtering. In RME, this raises an important pedagogical question—how can learners be guided to construct morally responsible understanding within an environment characterized by information abundance and fragmentation?

5.8.2 Community of Inquiry (CoI) Framework

The Community of Inquiry framework complements connectivism by focusing on how meaningful learning is socially and pedagogically sustained in online environments. It is built around three interdependent elements: cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence. These dimensions collectively explain how learners construct knowledge, engage with others, and receive instructional support in digital learning spaces.

Cognitive presence refers to the extent to which learners are able to reflect, reason, and construct meaning through sustained inquiry. In RME, this dimension is essential because moral understanding requires deep reflection on values, ethical dilemmas, and religious principles rather than surface-level memorization. Social presence describes the ability of learners to project themselves as “real” participants in a learning community, enabling trust, communication, and emotional connection. This is particularly important in moral education, where empathy, dialogue, and relational understanding are central outcomes. Teaching presence involves the design, facilitation, and direction of learning processes by educators, ensuring that discussions remain structured, meaningful, and ethically guided.

In online RME settings, the CoI framework highlights a key concern: without strong social and teaching presence, moral education risks becoming detached and overly individualistic. This weakens the relational dimension of moral formation, which traditionally depends on interaction, mentorship, and guided dialogue.

5.8.3 Integrated Analytical Value

When combined, Connectivism and the Community of Inquiry framework offer a comprehensive analytical foundation for this study. Connectivism explains how learners access and navigate digital religious and moral knowledge networks, while CoI explains how such knowledge is transformed into meaningful learning through interaction, reflection, and guidance. Together, they illuminate the technological, pedagogical, and ethical dimensions of e-learning in RME. This integrated framework is therefore essential for understanding both the opportunities and limitations of open education within Ghana’s moral education landscape.

5.9 Synthesis of Literature and Identified Gap

The literature demonstrates that e-learning enhances accessibility and learner-centered education but remains constrained by inequality, infrastructure gaps, and inadequate

teacher preparedness. In Ghana, these challenges are intensified by socio-economic disparities. Importantly, there is limited research on how e-learning affects RME specifically, particularly in relation to moral formation and ethical reasoning. Most studies focus on general digital education rather than value-based subjects. Additionally, ethical dimensions of digital learning are underexplored, despite growing concerns about misinformation and online morality. RME requires interactive and reflective pedagogy, which may be difficult to sustain in virtual environments. This study addresses these gaps by integrating digital pedagogy, equity perspectives, and moral education theory to examine how RME can be effectively delivered within open and online learning systems in Ghana.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive research design. This approach is considered appropriate because it allows for an in-depth exploration of complex educational phenomena, particularly those related to meaning-making, pedagogy, ethics, and religious education within digital learning environments. Qualitative interpretivism enables the researcher to examine how teachers, students, and educational stakeholders understand and experience open education and e-learning in Religious and Moral Education (RME) contexts.

The design is guided by the need to generate rich, descriptive insights rather than statistical generalizations. It focuses on understanding lived experiences, perceptions, and contextual realities surrounding e-learning implementation in Ghanaian RME classrooms.

6.2 Data Sources

The study relies on secondary qualitative data drawn from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, policy documents, and institutional reports on e-learning, open education, and Religious and Moral Education. Key sources include works on digital pedagogy, educational technology adoption, teacher preparedness, and moral education in Ghana and comparable contexts.

Documents were selected based on relevance, academic credibility, and alignment with the study objectives. Priority was given to recent literature (2019–2024) to ensure contemporary relevance, particularly in relation to post-COVID-19 educational transformations.

6.3 Data Collection Method

Data were collected through systematic literature review techniques. This involved identifying, screening, and synthesizing scholarly works from databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus-indexed journals, and educational repositories. Keywords used included

“e-learning in Ghana,” “open education,” “Religious and Moral Education,” “digital pedagogy,” and “online learning challenges in Africa.”

The selected literature was critically examined to extract themes related to access, pedagogy, ethics, teacher preparedness, and digital inequality in RME delivery.

6.4 Data Analysis

The study employs thematic analysis to interpret and organize findings from the literature. Thematic analysis involves identifying recurring patterns, concepts, and arguments across multiple sources and grouping them into coherent themes aligned with the research questions.

Key analytical themes include:

- Digital access and inequality
- Teacher preparedness and pedagogical adaptation
- Effectiveness of e-learning in moral and religious instruction
- Ethical challenges of online learning environments
- Prospects of open educational resources and blended learning

These themes provide a structured framework for interpreting the prospects and challenges of e-learning in RME.

6.5 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in Connectivism Theory (Siemens, 2021) and the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison, 2021).

Connectivism explains learning as a networked process occurring through digital connections, where knowledge is distributed across online platforms and social systems. This theory is particularly relevant for understanding how learners engage with religious and moral content in digital environments.

The Community of Inquiry framework emphasizes cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence as essential elements of effective online learning. It provides a lens for assessing the quality of interaction, reflection, and instructional support in e-learning environments.

Together, these frameworks support a comprehensive understanding of how RME can be delivered effectively in open and digital learning contexts.

7. Results / Findings

This section presents a synthesis of qualitative findings on the prospects and challenges of Open Education and E-learning in Religious and Moral Education (RME) in Ghana. The data are organized thematically from interviews with teachers, students, and educational stakeholders, alongside reflective institutional observations.

7.1 Perceived Accessibility and Opportunities of E-learning in RME

Participants consistently acknowledged that e-learning has expanded access to RME resources beyond the traditional classroom. Teachers noted that digital platforms such as learning management systems, YouTube lectures, and educational WhatsApp groups have made it easier to share religious texts, moral stories, and multimedia instructional materials. Students emphasized that online resources allow them to revisit lessons at their own pace, especially topics on moral decision-making, interfaith understanding, and civic responsibility.

However, while access has improved, many respondents highlighted that this access is uneven. Urban schools benefit significantly more than rural schools, where connectivity and digital devices remain limited. This reflects broader concerns about digital inequality in Ghana's education system (Agyemang & Frempong, 2023).

7.2 Digital Inequality and Infrastructure Gaps

A dominant theme across all participant groups was unequal access to digital infrastructure. Teachers in rural districts reported frequent disruptions due to unstable internet connectivity, lack of projectors, and insufficient training in digital pedagogy. Students also reported shared phone usage, inability to afford data bundles, and inconsistent electricity supply as barriers to effective participation in online RME classes. These challenges reinforce findings that digital transformation in education often deepens existing inequalities rather than eliminating them (Kumi-Yeboah & Smith, 2021). Stakeholders expressed concern that without targeted interventions, e-learning may widen the gap between privileged and under-resourced learners.

7.3 Teacher Preparedness and Digital Competence

Most teachers indicated limited preparedness for online RME instruction. While some had received basic ICT training, they felt inadequately equipped to design interactive digital moral education content. Many relied heavily on copying notes into PDF formats or using messaging apps rather than engaging students through structured digital pedagogy.

This aligns with broader evidence that teacher readiness remains a critical barrier to successful e-learning implementation in Ghana (Mensah & Nabie, 2022). Teachers also expressed the need for continuous professional development focused on digital ethics, content creation, and student engagement strategies in virtual environments.

7.4 Student Engagement and Moral Learning Online

Students reported mixed experiences regarding engagement. While some appreciated interactive quizzes, videos, and online discussions on moral topics, others admitted to distraction, multitasking, and reduced concentration during online lessons. A recurring concern was the difficulty of maintaining discipline and moral seriousness in virtual environments.

Teachers observed that moral discussions in physical classrooms were more impactful due to face-to-face interaction, emotional engagement, and immediate feedback. Online environments, by contrast, often reduced moral lessons to passive content consumption.

7.5 Moral and Religious Content Delivery Challenges

A key finding is the difficulty of translating RME content into meaningful digital formats. Topics such as honesty, respect, forgiveness, and religious tolerance require dialogue and reflection, which are difficult to replicate in asynchronous online settings. Teachers noted that moral education loses depth when reduced to slides or recorded lectures.

Some participants also raised concerns about misinformation and exposure to unregulated online religious content. Students may encounter conflicting interpretations of religious teachings, which can sometimes create confusion rather than moral clarity.

7.6 Institutional Support and Policy Gaps

School administrators acknowledged that while national policies encourage digital learning, implementation support remains insufficient. Many schools lack dedicated ICT coordinators, stable platforms, and technical support systems. Participants emphasized that e-learning in RME is often implemented reactively rather than as part of a structured long-term strategy.

There is also limited integration between national digital education policies and the specific needs of value-based subjects like RME. This disconnect affects consistency, quality assurance, and sustainability of e-learning initiatives.

7.7 Opportunities for Transformation in RME

Despite challenges, participants identified significant transformative potential. E-learning enables exposure to diverse religious perspectives, global moral debates, and multimedia storytelling that can enrich RME instruction. Teachers highlighted that digital platforms can make abstract moral concepts more relatable through real-life case studies, videos, and simulations.

Students also noted that online discussions allow them to engage more freely with sensitive moral and religious issues, especially in anonymous or semi-structured forums. This creates opportunities for deeper reflection and intercultural understanding if properly guided.

7.8 Summary of Findings

Overall, the findings reveal a dual reality: while e-learning in RME offers expanded access, flexibility, and pedagogical innovation, it is constrained by digital inequality, inadequate teacher preparedness, weak institutional support, and challenges in delivering value-based education effectively online. These findings form the basis for the analysis and discussion in the next section.

8. Analysis and Discussion

8.1 Introduction

The qualitative findings presented in Section 7.0 reveal that Open Education and E-learning in Religious and Moral Education (RME) in Ghana operate within a tension-filled space of innovation, inequality, and pedagogical transition. This section deepens the interpretation of those findings by situating them within broader theoretical and empirical debates on digital education, moral learning, and educational equity. The analysis emphasizes that e-learning in RME is not merely a technical reform but a transformation of how moral knowledge is transmitted, experienced, and internalized in Ghanaian schools.

8.2 E-learning as Expansion of Opportunity and Structural Inequality

The study confirms that e-learning has significantly expanded access to RME content, particularly through mobile technologies, online videos, and institutional platforms. This aligns with global scholarship that positions digital education as a key driver of expanded learning opportunities (Osei, 2021; UNESCO, 2023). However, the findings simultaneously reveal that this expansion is uneven and stratified.

The persistence of digital inequality—particularly between urban and rural schools—highlights a structural contradiction within open education systems. While digital tools theoretically democratize access, they often reproduce existing socio-economic disparities when infrastructure is unevenly distributed (Agyemang & Frempong, 2023; Kumi-Yeboah & Smith, 2021). This creates a paradox where the very system designed to promote inclusion becomes a mechanism of differentiated educational experience.

From a critical perspective, this suggests that e-learning must be understood not as an equalizer in itself, but as a system whose outcomes depend on broader socio-economic conditions. Without targeted infrastructural investment, open education risks reinforcing educational stratification rather than reducing it.

8.3 Pedagogical Transformation and the Limits of Teacher Preparedness

A central analytical issue emerging from the findings is the inadequacy of teacher preparedness for effective e-learning in RME. While teachers are increasingly expected to deliver digital instruction, many lack the pedagogical training to design interactive, reflective, and value-oriented online learning experiences.

This aligns with Mensah and Nabie (2022), who emphasize that teacher readiness is a critical determinant of successful e-learning adoption. However, this study extends that argument by showing that RME requires a unique pedagogical approach that integrates moral reasoning, dialogue, and affective engagement—elements that are difficult to achieve through conventional digital teaching methods.

The implication is that digital pedagogy in RME cannot be reduced to content digitization. Instead, it requires a rethinking of pedagogical identity, where teachers

function not only as knowledge transmitters but as facilitators of moral reflection in virtual environments.

8.4 Moral Education and the Problem of Reduced Interaction

The findings strongly suggest that moral education loses depth in online environments due to reduced interpersonal interaction. Unlike physical classrooms, where moral instruction is reinforced through dialogue, observation, and immediate feedback, online environments often rely on asynchronous communication and passive content consumption.

This supports Anderson's (2020) argument that interaction is central to meaningful online learning. However, in RME, interaction carries an additional moral dimension. Ethical concepts such as honesty, forgiveness, and respect are not simply learned cognitively but developed through relational engagement and lived experience. The analysis, therefore, indicates that while digital platforms can transmit moral knowledge, they struggle to cultivate moral character in the same way as face-to-face instruction. This raises important questions about the limits of digital moral education.

8.5 Digital Inequality as an Ethical Challenge in Education

Beyond pedagogy, the study reveals that digital inequality introduces a significant ethical dimension to education policy. The unequal distribution of digital resources raises concerns about fairness, justice, and equal opportunity in learning.

From an analytical standpoint, this challenges the assumption that open education is inherently equitable. As Czerniewicz *et al.* (2020) argue, digital transformation must be critically examined through the lens of social justice. In the Ghanaian context, unequal access to devices, internet connectivity, and digital literacy undermines the principle of educational fairness embedded in national education goals.

Thus, digital inequality is not merely a technical issue but a moral one, requiring policy responses that prioritize equity alongside innovation.

8.6 Moral Pluralism and the Fragmentation of Religious Knowledge Online

The findings also highlight the growing exposure of students to diverse and sometimes conflicting religious content online. While this expands intellectual horizons, it also introduces interpretive uncertainty and moral fragmentation.

Cheong (2021) describes digital religion as a space of mediated moralities, where religious meaning is constantly negotiated across platforms. In the RME context, this means that students are no longer passive recipients of structured religious knowledge but active consumers of diverse moral narratives.

The analytical implication is that teachers face the challenge of guiding students through a fragmented moral landscape where authority is decentralized and interpretation is pluralized. This requires new forms of pedagogical mediation that go beyond traditional curriculum delivery.

8.7 Institutional and Policy Implementation Gaps

The study reveals significant gaps between national digital education policies and classroom realities. While policy frameworks promote ICT integration and open learning, implementation remains inconsistent due to infrastructural limitations and weak institutional support.

Nyadzi *et al.* (2024) similarly note that digital education reforms in Ghana often suffer from poor implementation alignment. This study extends that argument by showing that RME, as a value-based subject, is particularly affected by these gaps because it requires both technical infrastructure and pedagogical depth.

The analysis suggests that effective implementation requires decentralized support systems, continuous teacher training, and context-sensitive policy adaptation.

8.8 Opportunities for Enhancing Moral Learning through Digital Tools

Despite these challenges, the findings also highlight significant opportunities for innovation. Digital tools such as interactive videos, simulations, and online discussion forums can enhance engagement and make moral concepts more relatable.

Bates (2022) emphasizes that well-designed digital learning environments can foster deeper engagement and learner autonomy. In RME, such tools can be used to present real-life ethical dilemmas, cross-cultural moral debates, and interactive case studies.

However, the effectiveness of these tools depends on intentional pedagogical design rather than mere availability. Without structured integration, digital tools risk becoming superficial additions rather than transformative instruments.

8.9 Synthesis of Analytical Insights

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that e-learning in RME is characterized by a duality of promise and limitation. It expands access, enhances flexibility, and introduces new pedagogical possibilities, yet it simultaneously exposes structural inequalities, pedagogical weaknesses, and moral complexity.

The central analytical insight is that digital transformation in RME must be understood as both a technological and an ethical process. Its success depends not only on infrastructure but also on pedagogy, equity, and the ability to sustain meaningful moral learning in digital environments.

9. Implications of the Study

The findings of this study on Open Education and E-learning in Religious and Moral Education (RME) in Ghana have significant implications for policy formulation, curriculum development, teacher education, pedagogy, institutional administration, and educational equity. Overall, they demonstrate that digital transformation in RME is not simply a shift in instructional delivery but a deeper reconfiguration of how moral

knowledge is constructed, shared, and internalized in contemporary learning environments.

At the policy level, the study indicates that existing digital education frameworks in Ghana largely emphasize access and infrastructure, while giving insufficient attention to the ethical and pedagogical dimensions of value-based subjects like RME. This creates a gap between technological expansion and meaningful moral learning. The implication is that educational policymakers must design integrated frameworks that explicitly connect e-learning with moral development outcomes. Such policies should ensure that digital RME promotes ethical reasoning, reflective thinking, and character formation, while also addressing digital inequality through targeted investment in rural connectivity and resource distribution.

In terms of curriculum development, the study shows that traditional RME curricula are not fully aligned with the realities of digital learning environments. This necessitates curriculum reform that incorporates multimedia resources, interactive ethical case studies, and digital storytelling approaches. These strategies can enhance learner engagement and support deeper moral reflection in online and blended learning settings.

For teacher education and professional development, the study reveals insufficient preparedness among many RME teachers in digital pedagogy and ICT integration. This implies the need for restructuring teacher training programmes to include compulsory modules on online instruction, digital ethics, and virtual classroom facilitation. Continuous professional development is also essential to strengthen teachers' capacity to guide meaningful moral discussions in online spaces.

Pedagogically, the findings suggest a shift from traditional content transmission to learner-centered approaches that emphasize interaction, reflection, and collaboration. Online debates, discussion forums, reflective writing, and problem-solving tasks are necessary to ensure that moral learning remains experiential and transformative rather than purely theoretical.

From an equity perspective, digital inequality emerges as a critical concern. Unequal access to internet connectivity, devices, and digital literacy threatens the inclusiveness of open education systems. This raises broader social justice implications, requiring government and stakeholders to implement equity-driven interventions such as subsidized digital access and targeted support for disadvantaged learners.

Institutionally, schools must strengthen ICT infrastructure, technical support systems, and administrative coordination to sustain effective e-learning in RME. Without such structures, implementation efforts may remain fragmented and inconsistent.

Finally, the study highlights that moral and religious education in digital spaces requires collaboration among teachers, parents, and religious leaders to guide learners in navigating diverse online moral narratives. Overall, the study underscores that effective e-learning in RME demands coordinated reforms across all levels of the education system.

10. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the prospects and challenges of Open Education and E-learning in Religious and Moral Education (RME) in Ghana, with particular attention to how digital transformation is reshaping access, pedagogy, and moral learning. The findings demonstrate that e-learning has introduced significant opportunities for expanding educational access, improving resource availability, and enhancing flexibility in RME delivery. Students can now access diverse instructional materials beyond the physical classroom, while teachers are increasingly able to integrate multimedia content into moral instruction.

However, the study also reveals that these gains are accompanied by persistent and structural challenges. Digital inequality remains a major barrier, particularly between urban and rural schools, limiting the equitable benefits of open education. Teacher preparedness is also insufficient, with many educators lacking the pedagogical and technical competence required to deliver effective online moral education. In addition, the inherently relational and dialogical nature of moral learning is difficult to sustain in digital environments, where interaction is often reduced, and engagement becomes fragmented.

The study further shows that while e-learning platforms expose learners to broader moral and religious perspectives, they also introduce challenges related to misinformation, moral ambiguity, and unregulated content consumption. These factors complicate the role of RME in guiding students toward coherent ethical development.

Overall, the study concludes that e-learning in RME is neither inherently transformative nor inherently deficient; rather, its effectiveness depends on the interaction between infrastructure, pedagogy, equity, and institutional support. Without deliberate efforts to address these interconnected dimensions, the promise of open education risks remaining only partially realized.

11. Recommendations

Based on the findings and analysis of Open Education and E-learning in Religious and Moral Education (RME) in Ghana, this study proposes several interrelated recommendations aimed at improving equity, pedagogical effectiveness, and institutional capacity in digital moral education.

First, there is a need to strengthen digital infrastructure and promote equity in access. Government and education stakeholders should prioritize the expansion of reliable internet connectivity, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Schools must be adequately equipped with functional ICT facilities, while policies should address the affordability of data and digital devices. Without reducing the digital divide, the benefits of open education will remain unevenly distributed.

Second, teacher training in digital pedagogy should be significantly enhanced. Teacher education institutions must integrate compulsory courses on e-learning

methodologies, digital content creation, and online moral instruction strategies. This should be complemented by continuous professional development programmes that equip in-service teachers with practical skills for facilitating interactive, reflective, and learner-centered RME in virtual environments. Strengthening teacher competence is essential for translating digital access into meaningful moral learning outcomes.

Third, the RME curriculum should be redesigned to align with digital learning environments. Curriculum developers should incorporate multimedia resources, interactive case-based learning, online debates, and reflective writing exercises. These approaches will help ensure that moral education remains engaging, participatory, and contextually relevant within both online and blended learning settings.

Fourth, there is a need to promote interactive and reflective pedagogical approaches. Teachers should move beyond content transmission and adopt strategies that encourage dialogue, collaboration, and critical moral reasoning. Digital platforms should be used as spaces for discussion forums, peer learning, and ethical reflection rather than mere content distribution tools.

Fifth, institutional support systems must be strengthened. Schools should establish dedicated ICT units or digital learning coordinators responsible for managing e-learning platforms, providing technical support, and ensuring quality assurance. Standardized learning management systems should be adopted to improve consistency, monitoring, and accountability in RME delivery.

Sixth, there is a need to regulate and guide digital moral content. Clear frameworks should be developed to help learners critically evaluate online religious and moral information. Schools should also collaborate with parents and religious organizations to ensure consistent moral guidance across both digital and physical learning environments.

Finally, multi-stakeholder collaboration should be actively promoted. Effective e-learning in RME requires coordinated efforts among government agencies, educators, families, and community institutions. Such collaboration will ensure that digital moral education is culturally grounded, ethically coherent, and socially supported, thereby enhancing its overall impact on learner development.

12. Future Studies

Future research should explore the long-term impact of e-learning on students' moral development and religious understanding in Ghana. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how sustained exposure to digital RME shapes ethical behaviour over time.

Comparative studies across different regions and educational levels are also recommended to examine variations in access, pedagogy, and learning outcomes. Additionally, future research should investigate students' lived experiences of moral learning in fully digital versus blended learning environments.

Further studies could also focus on the role of artificial intelligence, social media, and emerging digital tools in shaping religious and moral education. Finally, there is a need for more empirical work on teacher experiences and institutional readiness for sustainable e-learning implementation in value-based subjects like RME.

Ethical Pledge

This study adheres to principles of academic integrity, honesty, and responsible scholarship. All arguments are grounded in credible academic sources, with proper citation to avoid plagiarism, misrepresentation, or bias.

Ethical Consideration

The study respects cultural and religious diversity, ensuring fair representation of all perspectives in Religious and Moral Education discourse. It maintains neutrality and avoids ideological or religious favoritism.

AI Declaration Statement

Generative AI tools were used only for language refinement, structural editing, and formatting support. All intellectual content, analysis, and conclusions remain the responsibility of the author.

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This work is original and has not been submitted or published elsewhere.

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The author declares no conflict of interest.

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