

Spiritual Assessment Based on Matthew 22:37-40: Faith Integration, Communal Spirituality, and Environmental Stewardship in Indonesian Christian Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the need for a contextual spiritual assessment model in Christian higher education in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, by examining the internalization of the Law of Love (Matthew 22:37–40) in personal spirituality, integration of faith and reason, and environmental stewardship. A descriptive-quantitative survey was conducted with 94 students purposively sampled from four theological institutions in Kupang. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, primarily frequency distributions and percentage analysis. The findings revealed that 95.7% of respondents affirmed love as the foundational basis for life decisions (combined "Agree" and "Strongly Agree"). Personal piety was highly endorsed, with 94.7% reporting that daily prayer and Bible reading deepened their relationship with God, and 95.7% indicating that communal worship strengthened their faith. Integration of faith and reason was reflected by 60.6% strongly agreeing that Christian education helped them love God intellectually. Notably, 92.6% affirmed that their faith compels care for the environment (61.7% strongly agree), highlighting an emerging dimension of student spirituality. The study supports the relevance of a Matthew 22:37–40-based assessment model for holistic spiritual formation. However, limitations include reliance on self-report data, a geographically concentrated sample in Kupang, and a cross-sectional design. Future research employing mixed-methods and longitudinal approaches is recommended to validate these preliminary findings and capture behavioral expressions of spiritual formation..



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INTRODUCTION

Christian education in Indonesia aims to develop not only the intellectual aspect of students, but also their spiritual aspect. Spiritual understanding and experience are an integral part of the curriculum in Christian schools, which aim to shape the character and morals of students based on Christian teachings. However, an assessment of the extent to which this spiritual experience is achieved and how it affects the student's development still requires in-depth study. Research conducted by Zummy Anselmus Dami, Sance Mariana Tameon, Ferdinant Alexander, found that first, mindfulness significantly affects spiritual well-being. Second, spiritual well-being significantly affects life satisfaction. Third, mindfulness insignificantly affects life satisfaction. Fourth, *Spiritual well-being* mediates the influence between mindfulness on life satisfaction (Dami et al., 2018). The practice of mindfulness can improve a person's relationship with the meaning of life, spiritual values, and deepen a sense of connection with oneself and the surrounding environment. It also supports a range of studies that have been conducted before, which show that mindfulness reinforces spiritual aspects such as acceptance, peace of mind, and transcendental experiences.

The view of the spiritual health sector must be interpreted from a variety of cultural frameworks. By focusing on the surrounding environment while developing strategies to recognize spiritual needs and provide relevant spiritual journeys in daily activities (Nissen et al., 2021). Spiritual health is one of the important aspects of human health, in addition to physical, mind, and society. Deep care is the key to knowing the spiritual needs of others. This suggests that we need to give them the opportunity to express the emotions, beliefs, and spiritual obstacles they may be experiencing. The complexity of terms and definitions in relation to the diverse Christian spiritual traditions, it also highlights an area of great importance given the importance of spiritual formation to the mission of theological

education (Wang et al., 2023). This spiritual formation is crucial because it provides education to prospective church leaders and theologians so that they not only have academic insights, but are also able to live a life with spiritual depth. Religious knowledge provides an analytical experience that transcends the boundaries of what can be known analytically (Zuidervaart, 2019).

Limited facilities and resources (teachers, books, worship rooms) are a challenge in itself. Nevertheless, many teachers and pastoral workers remain spiritually committed, even in difficult economic conditions. There are also challenges in terms of internet access or technology, which limits the enrichment of religious education digitally. Religious schools in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) play an important role in the education and character formation of the younger generation. In this region, the three major religions Catholicism, Protestant Christianity, and Islam have their own active and thriving educational institutions. Catholic schools are the most dominant, considering that the majority of the population of NTT adheres to Catholicism. Institutions such as Catholic Elementary Schools (SDK), Catholic Junior High Schools, and Catholic High Schools are widespread, managed by religious orders and Dioceses, and are known for their quality of education and discipline.

In the context of Christian education in religious schools, contextual education can be a means to integrate the values of faith and spirituality into daily learning. One form of its important application is through spiritual discernment rooted in Matthew 22:37–40, where Jesus taught two main commandments: to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself. The explanation of this text is the theological basis for assessing the spiritual growth of students. Spiritual judgment not only measures doctrinal knowledge, but also observes attitudes of love, concern, and obedience to God in daily life. In contextual education, this assessment is carried out through observation of students' real actions, such as honesty, responsibility, service, and cooperation in the school and community environment. Thus, Christian education is not only cognitive, but forms a living character and faith, reflecting love for God and neighbor. This is in harmony with the primary purpose of Christian education, which is to form a person who is like Christ as a whole.

This gap is especially pronounced in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), a region where Christian higher education institutions serve as primary centers for leadership development and community engagement amidst limited infrastructure and rich communal traditions. Prior studies in this context have often focused on institutional challenges or doctrinal instruction, but they have not adequately explored the lived spiritual experiences of students nor provided a contextualized framework for assessing the outcomes of holistic education. Furthermore, existing models of spiritual assessment are frequently borrowed from Western contexts and may not fully capture the communal spirituality and contextual realities of NTT. Despite the recognition that Christian higher education in NTT must foster holistic spiritual formation, scant empirical evidence exists regarding the extent to which students actually internalize the values of the Law of Love (Matthew 22:37–40) in their daily lives, academic pursuits, and environmental ethics. Moreover, existing spiritual assessment frameworks are largely derived from Western individualistic contexts and may not adequately capture the communal and ecological dimensions salient in Eastern Indonesian society. Therefore, this study addresses two central research questions: (1) To what extent do students in Christian higher education institutions in Kupang internalize the Law of Love as the foundation of their personal and communal spirituality? (2) How is the integration of faith and reason (*fides et ratio*) manifested in their academic life and in their commitment to social responsibility and environmental stewardship? The objectives of this study are: (a) to describe the levels of personal piety, faith-reason integration, and social-environmental ethics among students across four theological institutions; (b) to validate a contextual spiritual assessment model rooted in Matthew 22:37–40; and (c) to provide empirically grounded recommendations for curriculum development in Christian higher education in NTT.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive-quantitative survey design to systematically investigate the spiritual experiences and internalization of the Law of Love (Matthew 22:37–40) among students at Christian higher education institutions in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara. The design was selected to generate statistically generalizable insights regarding the prevalence of specific spiritual attitudes and practices across a defined population of theological students. The research method used is survey. The survey method is used to obtain data from certain natural places but researchers carry out treatment in data collection for example by distributing questionnaires, tests, structured interviews and others (Arifin, 2020). Robert Groves, said that surveys produce information that is naturally statistical. Surveys are a basic form of quantitative (Adiyanta, 2019). Warwick and Lininger say that surveys are a method of collecting information about the human population in which direct contact is made with the unit of study (individuals, organizations, communications, etc.) through systematic means such as questionnaires and interview schedules (Yusuf, 2017, 48). Surveys are a method of collecting primary data by providing questions to individual respondents. This method is used as a research technique to gather information through interview guidelines, questionnaires, sent questionnaires, or over

the phone (Sudaryo et al., 2019, 65). Research whose sample was taken from one population with a questionnaire as the main data collector (Subagyo, 2014, 87). Survey studies were conducted to collect data directly from a set of subjects (Mustari & Rahman, 2012, 18). Surveys are conducted to explore, depict, explain, assess, forecast in research in overcoming operational obstacles to a program and developing indicators of certain aspects of the situation in society (Subagyo, 2014, 88). The target population comprised active students enrolled in undergraduate theology and Christian education programs at four accredited Christian higher education institutions in the Kupang area. The institutions included were: (1) Institut Agama Kristen Negeri (IAKN) Kupang, (2) Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Indonesia (STTI) Kupang, (3) Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen (STAK) Reformasi, and (4) Sekolah Tinggi Teologi (STT) Soe. A purposive sampling strategy was utilized to ensure representation across institutions with varying denominational backgrounds and curriculum emphases. The target population comprised active undergraduate students in theology and Christian education programs at four Christian higher education institutions in Kupang. Inclusion criteria were: (a) enrollment in at least the second semester; (b) willingness to provide written informed consent. Institutions were purposively selected to represent state and private sectors as well as differing denominational backgrounds. The final sample consisted of 94 respondents who completed the survey voluntarily. The final sample consisted of 94 respondents who voluntarily completed the survey instrument. The demographic composition of the sample was 71.3% female (*n* = 67) and 28.7% male (*n* = 27), reflecting the gender distribution trends within theological education programs in the region. The research data is in the form of written or spoken words, pictures, photos or actions obtained, namely *paper*, *place* and *person*. Paper, namely, a source of data on documents, books, magazines or other writing materials, either in the form of theories, research reports and so on (Arikunto, 2010).

Sugiyono said population is a generalized area consisting of objects/subjects that have certain qualities and characteristics that are determined by researchers to be studied and then drawn conclusions (Sugiyono, 2013). A population is a member of a group of certain elements such as people, events or objects. The sample is representative of the population, not chosen solely for its convenience. Samples are randomly selected. Sugiyono said that the sample is a part of the number and characteristics possessed in the population (Sugiyono, 2013). The steps for sample selection are: first, determine the population by determining the target population. Second, determine the size of the sample. The selected sample was 94 people. The questionnaire was developed based on the three dimensions of the Law of Love (Matthew 22:37–40): personal and communal spirituality, integration of faith and reason, and social-environmental ethics. Content validity was established through expert review by two theological educators and one educational research specialist. Minor revisions were made for clarity and cultural relevance. A pilot test was conducted with 20 students from a similar institution not included in the main sample. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding values of 0.82 (spirituality dimension), 0.79 (faith-reason integration), and 0.81 (ethics and stewardship), indicating acceptable reliability.

Data collection techniques are the most important step in research, because the main purpose of research is to obtain data. Without knowing the data collection technique, the researcher will not get data that meets the set data standards. Survey steps according to Borg and Gall cited by Andreas (Subagyo, 2014), All participants were provided with a written information sheet detailing the study's purpose, voluntary nature of participation, and assurances of confidentiality. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentage distributions for each questionnaire item. Written informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection. Data were anonymized during transcription and analysis, and all identifiable information was removed from the final dataset to protect participant privacy. Namely: First, set goals. The researcher establishes the problem and registers a specific objective. Second, select a sample. Determination of target population to be used as a sample. Third, write the elements of the questionnaire. Fourth, prepare a questionnaire. Fifth, test questionnaires. Sixth, prepare a cover letter. Seventh, send a questionnaire and follow up. Eighth, analyze the results. Eighth, report the research (Subagyo, 2016). Survey analysis techniques are a set of systematic procedures used to process, interpret, and draw conclusions from data collected through survey instruments, such as questionnaires or questionnaires. The survey analysis aims to describe the characteristics of respondents, identify answer patterns, and test the relationship between variables based on quantitative data obtained from the research sample.

RESULTS

Higher education in theology in Eastern Indonesia, especially in the Kupang region, has a strategic role in shaping human resources who are faithful, reflective, and committed to the values of Christian love. This study focuses on the analysis of the characteristics of respondents from a number of Christian religious universities in Kupang and how these backgrounds affect the results of questionnaires on faith, knowledge integration, and love practices. Understanding the distribution of colleges, gender composition, and semester distribution is essential to interpret the

results of the study in a complete and valid manner, as the demographic characteristics of respondents often influence the way they interpret faith education and spiritual experiences.

This study involved 94 respondents from various Christian religious higher education institutions. The analysis was carried out with a descriptive-quantitative approach accompanied by theological and sociological reflection. Through this data, it can be understood how students as prospective educators, church ministers, and Christian leaders internalize the values of faith through the formal education process. In addition, the correlation between variables such as gender, institution, and semester suggests the social dynamics that shape their religious understanding. Thus, this discussion not only displays numerical data, but also interprets the data in the context of the development of theological education in Eastern Indonesia.

The structure of this analysis began with a description of the distribution of the respondents' universities, then continued to the characteristics of gender and semesters, before finally reviewing the results of the questionnaire based on the dimensions of spirituality, integration of faith and knowledge, and ethics of love. This approach allows the reader to see the connection between the respondents' social-academic context and their expression of faith. With a systematic flow of thinking, this study aims to show that Christian religious higher education not only produces knowledgeable graduates, but also forms individuals who believe, love, and are ready to serve the community.

Distribution of Respondent Colleges

The results of the questionnaire showed that respondents came from several Christian religious-based universities in Kupang City, including the State Christian Institute (IAKN) Kupang, the Indonesian Evangelical Theological College (STTII) Kupang, and the College of Christian Religion Informatics (STAKRI) Timor. Of the three institutions, IAKN Kupang dominated the source of respondents with a proportion of around 70-75% of the total 94 participants. This dominance illustrates the position of IAKN Kupang as a center for Christian theology higher education in the East Nusa Tenggara region. Some of the other respondents came from smaller institutions such as the Kupang Academy of Social Work, but the number was insignificant.

The concentration of respondents at IAKN Kupang can be explained by its status as a state institution that has a larger capacity in terms of the number of students, lecturers, and academic facilities. As an official institution under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, IAKN Kupang has the responsibility to provide accredited theological education that is scientific, scientific, and relevant to the social context of Eastern Indonesian society. This makes the campus a magnet for prospective educators and church ministers from various regions in East Nusa Tenggara. On the other hand, the existence of private institutions such as STTII and STAKRI adds to the variety of academic and spiritual perspectives in the respondent population. STTII emphasizes evangelical theology and church ministry, while STAKRI combines theological and informatics approaches in digital ministry and modern education.

The diversity of this institution shows the dynamics of theological education in Kupang which is collaborative and plural within the framework of the Christian faith. This collaboration is important because it shows that although the institutions differ in structure and curriculum, they are all rooted in the same mission: to form a human being who fears God and is ready to serve with love. From an academic point of view, cross-institutional distribution also strengthens the validity of research results because it involves representations of various curricula and theological traditions. Thus, this distribution reflects the face of Christian education which is rich in intellectual and spiritual nuances, as well as a reflection that Kupang is the epicenter of Christian theological education in Eastern Indonesia.

Characteristics of Respondent Type

Of the total 94 respondents, 71.3% were women, while 28.7% were men. This disproportionate inequality shows the dominance of women's participation in theological studies. This phenomenon is interesting because it marks a paradigm shift in Christian religious education in Indonesia, where women are now seen as active subjects in the academic world and church ministry. Historically, theology has often been considered a male-dominated field, but this data shows that women are increasingly playing an important role in the reflection and ministry of the faith.

From a sociological perspective, the high participation of women shows a transformation of gender roles in the religious context. Women are no longer seen only as recipients of the teachings of the faith, but also as bearers and teachers of Christian values in the public sphere, education, and social services. These findings are in line with the theory of gender empowerment (Kabeer, 1999), which affirms that education is an important means in increasing women's equality and reflective capacity for faith and service. In the context of theological education, the great involvement of women also enriches the discourse of contextual theology based on women's experiences (feminist theology), which emphasizes love, justice, and balanced relationships in church and community life.

Women's dominance also has an impact on the approach to learning and spirituality on the theological campus. In general, female students have a tendency to empathic, relational, and reflective dimensions of spirituality characteristics that enrich the academic and spiritual dynamics within the campus community. This also explains why

the results of the questionnaire in the dimensions of love and social care show high scores: because their faith experience emphasizes the aspect of relationships and service. Thus, the gender structure in this study is not only demographic data, but also an explanatory factor that gives color to the theological meaning of the research results.

Personal and Communal Spirituality

The Personal and Communal Spirituality dimension forms the first core component of the spiritual assessment model rooted in the Law of Love (Matthew 22:37–40), representing the command to love God with all one's heart and soul. It measures the extent to which students engage in personal spiritual disciplines such as daily prayer and Bible reading and participate in communal worship as an expression of a living and relational faith. Strengthening this section is essential because personal–communal spirituality serves as the foundation for the dimensions of faith–reason integration and social ethics that follow. Within this dimension, items assessing personal devotional practices and communal worship received the highest endorsement. Specifically, 68.1% of respondents (*n* = 64) selected "Strongly Agree" in response to the statement that "daily prayer and Bible reading deepen my relationship with God." Similarly, 71.3% of respondents (*n* = 67) strongly agreed that "worshiping together with the campus community strengthens my faith." The combined "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" responses for these two items were 94.7% and 95.7%, respectively.

Integration of Faith and Knowledge (Fides et Ratio)

Items within this dimension revealed a strong rejection of the faith–reason dichotomy. A total of 60.6% of respondents (*n* = 57) strongly agreed that "Christian education helps me to love God with all my mind," and 57.4% (*n* = 54) strongly agreed that "my studies on campus deepen my understanding of the relationship between faith and academic knowledge." The strong endorsement of both items demonstrates that the participating institutions have, to a considerable extent, succeeded in dismantling the false separation between intellectual rigor and spiritual devotion. Students report that academic engagement deepens rather than diminishes their love for God, which validates the integrative curriculum approach employed in these theological schools. The presentation of these data in a frequency table without evaluative narrative ensures that readers can independently assess the significance of the empirical patterns and understand them as descriptive groundwork for the subsequent discussion on social ethics and environmental stewardship.

Christian Ethics, Social Action, and Environmental Stewardship

This dimension captured respondents' commitment to the horizontal application of the Law of Love, including care for creation. Table 3 presents the frequency distribution for the three items specifically addressing love for neighbor, social care, and environmental stewardship. Over 90% of respondents affirmed each statement through combined "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" responses. Notably, the item on environmental stewardship ("My faith compels me to care for the environment as part of God's creation") received a 92.6% affirmation rate, with 61.7% (*n* = 58) indicating strong agreement. This third dimension addresses the horizontal command of the Law of Love to love one's neighbor as oneself (Matthew 22:39)—extended to include care for creation. It measures students' commitment to translating personal faith into ethical action, social concern, and environmental stewardship. Strengthening this section is vital because it provides empirical evidence that the spirituality cultivated in these institutions is not inward-looking but outwardly expressed in concrete responsibility toward others and the natural world.

DISCUSSION

Thematic Analysis

The findings provide robust empirical evidence that students across four theological institutions have deeply integrated the dual commandment of love for God and neighbor into their personal spirituality, academic pursuits, and social ethics. This discussion interprets these findings within the broader literature on spiritual formation in Christian higher education and considers their implications for contextual theological education in Eastern Indonesia. To better understand respondents' views on faith and education, the twenty questions in the questionnaire were grouped into three main themes: (1) Personal and Communal Spirituality, (2) Integration of Faith and Knowledge, and (3) Christian Ethics and Social Action. Each dimension reflects an important aspect of the education of the Christian faith as a whole, namely spiritual, intellectual, and moral formation.

A. Personal and Communal Spirituality

The majority of respondents showed a high level of personal spirituality. More than 65% voted "Strongly Agree" on the statement that daily prayer, Bible reading, and worship together foster closeness to God. This data illustrates that students not only rely on cognitive learning, but also practice spiritual discipline in their daily lives. Theologically, this shows the success of educational institutions in instilling *personal piety* personal piety as the basis for the formation

of faith. Not all aspects of spirituality have an equal influence on human life or establish good relationships (Lifshitz et al., 2019). This shows that the dimension of spirituality is complex and multidimensional, so its development must pay attention to the balance between personal, social, and environmental aspects. Because the link between mindfulness and spiritual well-being, both personally, in community, and in the environment, is especially evident in individuals who have undergone formal mindfulness training (Daniel et al., 2024). In this context, the researcher assesses that the spiritual practices carried out by students, such as prayer and regular Bible reading, can serve as a form of spiritual mindfulness that fosters awareness of God's presence in daily life. That religious teaching and the practice of prayer constructively support the spiritual well-being of university students across personal and communal domains. The data further reveal that this personal devotion is not individualistic; 71.3% of respondents strongly agreed that communal worship strengthens their faith. This balance between personal discipline and communal expression reflects

So that religious teaching, involvement in religious activities, and the practice of prayer or meditation constructively support the growth of the spiritual well-being of university students in various aspects, including personal, community, environmental, and transcendental development aspects (H. K. Pong, 2018). Positive outcomes greatly contribute to the advancement of teaching by lecturers in higher education institutions (Saad et al., 2023). Therefore, the researcher concluded that the formation of student spirituality in Kupang runs holistically, touching on intellectual and affective aspects in a balanced manner. In addition, the high value of the role of joint worship confirms that student spirituality is communal, not individualistic. From an ecclesiological perspective, this is important because the Christian faith is always lived in communion. Theology education in Kupang, both at IAKN and STTII, seems to emphasize a balance between personal relationship with God and life with the congregation. Such spirituality shapes students into spiritually stable individuals who are ready to serve humbly.

B. Integration of Faith and Knowledge (Fides et Ratio)

The second dimension shows how Christian education helps students connect faith with academic thought processes and activities. About 60% of respondents "strongly agree" that Christian education helps them love God with all their senses, and 57% state that learning on campus deepens their understanding of the relationship between faith and knowledge. That religious teaching and the practice of prayer constructively support the spiritual well-being of university students across personal and communal domains. The data further reveal that this personal devotion is not individualistic; 71.3% of respondents strongly agreed that communal worship strengthens their faith. This balance between personal discipline and communal expression reflects The Christian view of the world gives us an understanding of truth, goodness, and beauty. Often, contemporary apologetics focuses only on intellectual issues regarding truth. However, humans are not just minds in the body, which think logically without feelings. We also need to discuss ethical issues the right and the aesthetic. Talking about ethics means cultivating science as a collective effort, an institution built by humans (Keathley, 2023). Furthermore, aspects related to the environment and educational dynamics are important elements in the implementation of holistic education through learning methods that focus on experiences at the university (H.-K. Pong, 2021). Thus, contextual Christian education in the university environment becomes an arena for character formation and ecological awareness rooted in faith. The basis for higher education institutions to design more open and motivating leadership strategies that incorporate spiritual principles and create a more supportive working environment for teachers (Saad et al., 2023).

This result confirms that educational institutions in Kupang have succeeded in rejecting the dichotomy between faith and rationality. The principle *of fides et rasio* faith and reason is integrated into the entire teaching and learning process. Students are not only invited to think critically critically, but also directed to understand that all knowledge comes from God. Thus, theological education in Kupang becomes a means of complete intellectual and spiritual transformation. These findings show that Christian education in Kupang has moved towards an integrative paradigm that places faith and knowledge as two complementary aspects. This integration shows the success of educational institutions in forming students who are able to think critically without losing their spirituality dimension.

C. Christian Ethics and Social Action

The third dimension describes the application of faith in social life. Most respondents stated that love for God should be manifested in love for others, helping those in need, and respecting differences. About 60% "strongly agree" with statements about social care and service. This data shows that students have high social awareness and understand that true faith does not stop at vertical relationships with God, but must be real in horizontal actions towards others. Christian love needs to be implemented in every aspect of human life, covering the cultural, political, social, and economic spheres. Humans face five major problems (Franz Magnis-Suseno, 2023). In addition, mechanisms and conditions that can cause or prevent social change (Liland et al., 2024). These findings confirm that theological education in Kupang has played an effective role in integrating the dimensions of faith and social responsibility.

Students are not only formed to be individuals of personal faith, but also compassionate servants of human suffering. Thus, the application of social faith is proof that healthy spirituality is a spirituality that has an impact on living together, strengthens solidarity, and fosters the spirit of humanity across borders. In the context of ethnically and culturally plural Eastern Indonesia, this outcome is crucial. Faith education carried out by institutions in Kupang has succeeded in instilling the values of tolerance, empathy, and solidarity. According to social theology, the Christian faith must produce acts of love that bring justice and peace. Thus, theological education forms not only a thinking theologian, but also a compassionate servant of human suffering. The present study suggests that for students in Kupang, environmental concern is not a secular add-on to faith but an integrated expression of creation care rooted in the command to love.

D. The Law of Love and the Growth of Faith

As the culmination of all dimensions, the law of love is at the heart of the respondents' spirituality. About 95% of respondents "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" that love is the basis of all life decisions. This shows that the value of love has been internalized in students as a moral and theological orientation. Belief in stronger growth compared to weaker growth shows a different pattern from how people view acceptance (Freedman et al., 2018). According to John's theology (1 John 4:7–12), love is evidence of God's presence in man. This shows the success of theological education in Kupang in forming *faith maturity* a balanced maturity of faith between knowledge, spiritual experience, and acts of love. Love is the common thread that connects all aspects of students' academic and spiritual lives. Faith is not so much about organized religion as it is about your own emotions and relationship with God (Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2019). Christian education aims to form a person who lives from God's love and distributes it to others. Thus, all the results of the questionnaire show that religious higher education in Kupang has produced a generation of students who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also rooted in the love of Christ. The data suggest that students in Kupang have internalized this relational understanding of faith, with love serving as the integrating center of their spiritual, intellectual, and ethical lives.

The assessment model proposed in this study grounded in the Law of Love and operationalized through dimensions of personal piety, faith-reason integration, and social ethics offers a holistic alternative to reductive or purely cognitive evaluation methods. By demonstrating that these dimensions can be reliably measured and that students across diverse institutional contexts exhibit consistent patterns of internalization, this study provides a replicable framework for other Christian higher education institutions seeking to assess spiritual formation outcomes. This study contributes a contextualized three-dimensional spiritual assessment model personal piety, *fides et ratio*, and social-environmental ethics grounded in the Great Commandment. The model moves beyond purely cognitive or individualistic measures and provides a transferable framework for non-Western theological institutions seeking to evaluate holistic formation. The findings suggest that Christian higher education curricula in NTT should intentionally foster the connection between communal worship and social action, including explicit ecological education. Regular assessment using validated instruments like the one piloted here could help institutions monitor the effectiveness of their spiritual formation programs and make data-informed adjustments.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the internalization of the Law of Love (Matthew 22:37–40) among students at four Christian higher education institutions in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara, using a descriptive-quantitative survey design. The findings provide preliminary empirical evidence that students report high levels of personal spirituality, with 94.7% affirming that daily prayer and Bible reading deepen their relationship with God, and 95.7% indicating that communal worship strengthens their faith. Integration of faith and reason was also strongly endorsed, with 90.4% agreeing that Christian education helps them love God intellectually. Notably, 92.6% affirmed that their faith compels environmental stewardship, suggesting that creation care is an emerging and contextually relevant dimension of student spirituality. However, these conclusions must be interpreted with caution, as the study relied on self-reported data from a geographically concentrated sample and employed only descriptive statistical analysis without inferential testing. The study makes two primary contributions. Theoretically, it offers a contextualized three-dimensional spiritual assessment model personal piety, *fides et ratio*, and social-environmental ethics rooted in the Great Commandment, which can serve as an alternative to predominantly Western, individualistic frameworks. Practically, the findings encourage Christian higher education institutions in NTT to intentionally integrate ecological education into curricula and to adopt validated instruments for monitoring holistic spiritual formation outcomes. Several limitations warrant attention. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences, the reliance on self-report measures may inflate affirmation rates due to social desirability bias, and the exclusive focus on Kupang limits generalizability. Future research should employ mixed-methods approaches, including in-depth interviews and behavioral observation, to

capture the lived expressions of faith. Longitudinal designs are also recommended to examine how spiritual formation evolves throughout the course of theological education. Replication studies across other Indonesian regions and denominational contexts would further test the transferability of the proposed assessment model.

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IS and AS contributed to the conceptualization, research design, and overall supervision of the study, while ET, OT, and YW were responsible for data collection, field investigation, and formal analysis of the survey findings. The original manuscript was drafted by ET and subsequently reviewed, refined, and approved by all authors — IS, ET, OT, YW, and AS - ensuring the intellectual integrity and academic coherence of the final work.

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The authors utilized Mendeley and Publish or Perish during the preparation of this work to facilitate systematic literature searching, reference management, and the retrieval of relevant academic sources. After employing these tools, the authors thoroughly reviewed and edited all identified content as needed, and take full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the material presented in this publication.

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