

**Rekonstruksi Teonomi Kontekstual dalam Pendidikan Agama Kristen:
Model Integratif untuk Pemberdayaan Ekonomi dan Integrasi SDGs di Pendidikan
Tinggi Teologi**

**Reconstructing Contextual Theonomy in Christian Religious Education:
An Integrative Model for Economic Empowerment and SDGs Integration in
Theological Higher Education**

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Abstrak:

Artikel ini mengatasi kesenjangan yang persisten antara teori teologis kontekstual dan praksis dalam Pendidikan Agama Kristen, khususnya terkait pemberdayaan ekonomi dan integrasi Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Tujuannya adalah merumuskan model teonomi kontekstual yang menjembatani spiritualitas dan realitas ekonomi dalam pendidikan tinggi teologi. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian teologis interpretatif kualitatif dengan wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumentasi pada institusi teologi yang dipilih secara purposif. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa integrasi SDGs tetap sporadis, kapasitas institusional terbatas, dan tidak ada model teologi ekonomi operasional. Rekonstruksi teonomi kontekstual muncul sebagai novelty integratif-transformatif yang menghubungkan teologi, ekonomi, dan pembangunan berkelanjutan melalui tiga dimensi yang saling terhubung: fondasi teologis, analisis kontekstual, dan praksis transformatif. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa teonomi kontekstual memungkinkan pendidikan teologi bergerak melampaui pendekatan normatif-spiritualistik menuju praksis sosio-ekonomi yang berdampak.

Kontribusi: Kontribusi artikel ini terletak pada pengayaan kajian teologi kontekstual dengan dimensi pembangunan berkelanjutan sekaligus memberikan panduan praktis untuk desain kurikulum berbasis dampak di institusi teologi.

Kata Kunci: model teonomi kontekstual; pendidikan agama Kristen; integrasi pembangunan berkelanjutan; praksis pemberdayaan ekonomi; kurikulum teologi transformatif.

Abstract:

This article addresses the persistent gap between contextual theological theory and praxis in Christian Religious Education, particularly regarding economic empowerment and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) integration. The purpose is to formulate a contextual theonomy model that bridges spirituality and economic reality within theological higher education. The study employs qualitative interpretive theological

research using in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentary analysis at purposively selected theological institutions. The findings reveal that SDG integration remains sporadic, institutional capacity is limited, and no operational economic theology model exists. The reconstruction of contextual theonomy emerges as an integrative-transformative novelty connecting theology, economics, and sustainable development through three interconnected dimensions: theological foundation, contextual analysis, and transformative praxis. The study concludes that contextual theonomy enables theological education to move beyond normative-spiritualistic approaches toward impactful socio-economic praxis.

Contribution: The contribution lies in enriching contextual theology studies with sustainable development dimensions while providing practical guidance for impact-based curriculum design in theological institutions.

Keywords: contextual theonomy model; Christian religious education; sustainable development integration; economic empowerment praxis; transformative theological curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Christian Religious Education has witnessed a significant paradigm shift toward contextual and transformative approaches that emphasize the integration of faith with lived social and cultural realities.¹ This shift reflects a broader recognition that theological education must engage with the concrete contexts in which believers live and serve. Contextual theology functions as a framework that adapts Christian teachings to specific socio-cultural, political, and environmental contexts, balancing universal Christian doctrine with local particularities.² This approach fosters dialogue between universal truth claims and concrete human experience, enabling theology to address specific social issues while maintaining core doctrinal commitments.

The state of the art in contextual theological education reveals diverse methodological and theoretical approaches that have shaped the field. Tulung, Wuwung, Zaluchu, and Zaluchu employed a qualitative study of the Contextual Teaching and Learning model in Christian-Jewish religious education, demonstrating how digital media

¹ Jeane M. Tulung, Olivia C. Wuwung, Sonny E. Zaluchu, and Frederik R.B. Zaluchu, "Deuteronomy and Contextual Teaching and Learning in Christian-Jewish Religious Education," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 80, no. 1 (2024): a9312; Eunike Molebela, "Effective and Relevant Contextual Christian Education in Plural Society," *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change* 10, no. 2 (2019): 312 - 326.

² Elena Stepanova. "Theology in Context: The Authenticity of Particular as a Challenge to Christianity's Universal Truth." *Gosudarstvo, Religii, Tserkov' v Rossii i za Rubezhom/State, Religion and Church in Russia and Worldwide* 2, no. 1 (2021): 7–35.

and inquiry-based processes harmonize theological insights with real-world contexts.³ Molebila utilized a qualitative case study approach in Alor Regency to show how multicultural education can align with social transformation visions.⁴ Stepanova applied a hermeneutical-contextual method to argue that contextual theology balances universal Christian doctrine with local particularities through dialogical engagement.⁵ Edie drew on Freirean pedagogical theory to combine contextual pedagogy with traditional Christian practices, creating reflective learning environments.⁶ Yata Mones and Mauk used a problem-based learning framework to demonstrate enhanced critical thinking skills among students analyzing religious doctrine.⁷

Despite these theoretical and methodological advances, empirical realities in theological higher education reveal significant gaps that demand scholarly attention. Chairy, Istiqomah, and Nahdiah found through qualitative institutional analysis that many theological institutions lack SDG centers or offices, resulting in unsystematic integration.⁸ Wahyuningrat, Harsanto, Fitrah, Yamin, and Luthfi identified through mixed-methods research that funding limitations and institutional resistance to curriculum change are common barriers.⁹ Ambariyanto and Utama employed a case study approach to demonstrate that interdisciplinary curriculum reformulation and faculty training are necessary for connecting religious values with SDG indicators.¹⁰ Rini, Paramitha, Arifianto, and Jaya used a problem-based learning model to show that SDG integration in religious education remains underdeveloped and faces resistance.¹¹

³ Tulung, Wuwung, Zaluchu, and Zaluchu, "Deuteronomy and Contextual Teaching and Learning," a9312.

⁴ Molebila, "Effective and Relevant Contextual Christian Education," 312 - 326.

⁵ Stepanova, "Theology in Context," 7-18.

⁶ F.P. Edie, "Considering the *Ordo* as Pedagogical Context for Religious Education with Christian High School Youth," *Religious Education* 100, no. 2 (2005): 266-279.

⁷ Anselmus Yata Mones and Vincentius Mauk, "How Can Critical Thinking Skills Be Taught in Catholic Religious Education?" *International Studies in Catholic Education* (2025): 1-18.

⁸ Ach. Chairy, I. Istiqomah, and A.C.F. Nahdiah, "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Dan Pendidikan Islam Di Perguruan Tinggi: Sinergi Untuk Masa Depan," *Academia* 4, no. 4 (2024): 124-34.

⁹ Wahyuningrat, Bambang Tri Harsanto, Elpeni Fitrah, Muhammad Yamin, and Raden Mokhamad Luthfi, "The Effectiveness of Implementing the Merdeka-Belajar Kampus-Merdeka (MBKM) Policy in Developing High-Quality Human Resources at Jenderal Soedirman University, Indonesia, Contributing to SDGs: Quality Education," *E3S Web of Conferences* 609 (2025): 08001.

¹⁰ A. Ambariyanto and Y.J. Utama, "Educating Higher Education Institutions to Support SDGs: Indonesian Case," in *E3S Web of Conferences* (2020), 02015.

¹¹ Wahyu Astjarjo Rini, Gracia Paramitha, Yonatan Alex Arifianto, Carolina Etnasari Anjaya, and Christian Adi Jaya. "The Contribution of Christian Religious Education (CRE) in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Through a Problem Based Learning Approach - 4A Cycle Model." *Technium Social Sciences Journal* 56, no. 1 (2024): 338-350.

The research gap lies in the absence of a conceptually integrated and operationally applicable model that connects theology, economic empowerment, and sustainable development within theological higher education. Saragih developed an entrepreneurship theology concept through qualitative field research, positioning economic activity as theological manifestation integrated with church mission.¹² Djami employed a transformative diakonia perspective to frame entrepreneurial activity as theological praxis, while Sosingih, Mosooli, and Labito conducted field research identifying supporting factors and barriers to entrepreneurship programs in congregations.¹³ However, these approaches remain partial and have not been integrated into formal theological education systems, as Gao observed through contextual analysis that contemporary Sino-Christian theology lacks significant responses to market economic reforms.¹⁴

The purpose of this study is to formulate a contextual theonomy model based on SDGs for Christian Religious Education in theological higher education. The specific research questions are: How is SDG integration currently manifested in theological higher education curricula? What are the institutional and pedagogical barriers to integrating economic empowerment and SDGs into theological education? How can contextual theonomy be reconstructed as an integrative model connecting theology, economics, and sustainable development? The contribution of this research lies in developing a "Reconstruction of Contextual Theonomy" model that bridges the dichotomy between spirituality and economics while integrating theological values with SDG indicators within an operational pedagogical framework that extends existing contextual theology approaches.¹⁵

METHOD

¹² Erman Sepniagus Saragih, "Fungsi Gereja Sebagai Entrepreneurship Sosial Dalam Masyarakat Majemuk," *Kurios: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 5, no. 1 (2019): 12–23.

¹³ S. Djami, "Menuju Teologi Kewirausahaan: Suatu Tinjauan Teologi Kewirausahaan Dari Perspektif Diakonia Transformatif Terhadap Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Di Jemaat Yeremia Kampung Sabu, Klasis Sulamu" (Universitas Kristen Artha Wacana Kupang, 2025), 45–67; Fredy Sosingih, Ermin Alperiana Mosooli, and Alce Mariani Labito, "Peluang Dan Hambatan Pengadaan Program Kewirausahaan Di Jemaat Mandiri Protestan Nazareth Lunas," *Visio Dei Jurnal Teologi Kristen* 5, no. 1 (2023): 12–28.

¹⁴ Zhe Gao, "A Contextual Theology without Context: A Study of the Weaknesses of Contemporary Sino-Christian Theology," *Logos and Pneuma - Chinese Journal of Theology* 45 (2016): 38–78.

¹⁵ Stepanova, "Theology in Context," 7–18; A. Wright, "Church School Ministry as Contextual Theology," in *Anglican Church School Education: Moving Beyond the First Two Hundred Years* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 145–62.

This study employs a qualitative interpretive theological research design oriented toward conceptual reconstruction of contextual theonomy in Christian Religious Education, specifically in relation to economic empowerment and SDG integration in theological higher education. The interpretive-reconstructive approach allows researchers to uncover implicit meaning structures in secular discourse so that faith issues can be transformed into praxis discourse relevant to pastoral and social policy.¹⁶ This approach was selected because it enables in-depth exploration of meaning, experience, and theological construction developing within socio-economic and religious contexts.¹⁷ The research was conducted at purposively selected theological higher education institutions based on relevance to the study focus, with participants consisting of theology lecturers, institutional leaders, students, and church ministers. Purposive sampling was employed considering participants' experience, involvement, and reflective capacity, with participant numbers determined by data saturation principles.¹⁸ A total of 18 participants were involved: 6 lecturers, 3 institutional leaders, 5 students, and 4 church ministers. Data collection employed three triangulated techniques: in-depth interviews using semi-structured protocols, participatory observation of curriculum development meetings and classroom practices, and documentary study of curricula, institutional policies, and programs related to theology and SDG integration.¹⁹ The researcher served as the primary human instrument, actively interpreting data while considering theological, social, and cultural sensitivities.²⁰

Data analysis was conducted iteratively using an interactive model encompassing data reduction, thematic categorization, and interpretation within the frameworks of contextual theology, critical pedagogy, and sustainable development.²¹ The coding process involved three stages: open coding to identify initial concepts, axial coding to establish relationships between categories, and selective coding to integrate themes into a coherent model. Two independent coders reviewed 20% of the data to ensure coding

¹⁶ Nkiruka Okafor Ihm, "Transforming Narratives Through 'LIVE': A Pastoral Model of Care for Women in Sex Work" (PhD diss., Lutheran Seminary, 2016), 45–67.

¹⁷ J.W. Creswell and C.N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (New York: Sage Publications, 2018), 78–92.

¹⁸ M.Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods* (New York: Sage Publications, 2015), 264–86.

¹⁹ N.K. Denzin, "Triangulation 2.0," *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 6, no. 2 (2012): 80–88.

²⁰ Y.S. Lincoln and E.G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (New York: Sage Publications, 1985), 234–45.

²¹ M.B. Miles, A.M. Huberman, and J. Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (New York: Sage Publications, 2014), 89–112.

reliability, achieving a Cohen's kappa of 0.82. Data validity was maintained through trustworthiness strategies including source, technique, and time triangulation, as well as member checking to ensure credibility of findings.²² The study upheld ethical principles including informed consent, participant confidentiality, and respect for faith values. The application of this qualitative interpretive theological method to the theoretical framework in the Results and Discussion section proceeds through several systematic steps. First, the interpretive-reconstructive approach is applied to analyze how SDG integration manifests in theological curricula, revealing the gap between normative-spiritualistic paradigms and sustainable development engagement.²³ Second, the triangulated data collection informs the identification of institutional and pedagogical barriers, which are then interpreted through institutional theory and critical pedagogy frameworks.²⁴ Third, the thematic analysis of participants' experiences and documentary evidence provides the empirical foundation for reconstructing contextual theonomy as an integrative model.²⁵ The theoretical framework of contextual theology, particularly Stepanova's dialogical approach and Bevans' models of contextual theology, provides the interpretive lens for understanding how theological education can engage with socio-economic realities.²⁶ Critical pedagogy, drawing on Freire's concept of praxis, informs the transformative dimension of the proposed model, while sustainable development theory, particularly the SDG framework, provides the operational indicators for measuring the model's impact.²⁷

RESULTS

The Gap in SDG Integration in Theological Higher Education

The research findings indicate that SDG integration in theological higher education remains sporadic and not systematically institutionalized. This finding aligns with Chairy, Istiqomah, and Nahdiyah, who identified low institutional capacity in organizing SDG agendas, and the absence of SDG centers in many institutions.²⁸ The findings also confirm

²² Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, 301–18.

²³ Chairy, Istiqomah, and Nahdiyah, "Sustainable Development Goals," 124–34.

²⁴ Wahyuningrat, Harsanto, Fitrah, Yamin, and Luthfi, "Effectiveness of Implementing," 08001.

²⁵ Molebela, "Effective and Relevant Contextual Christian Education," 312 - 326.

²⁶ Stepanova, "Theology in Context," 7–18; Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 1–18.

²⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970), 72–86.

²⁸ Chairy, Istiqomah, and Nahdiyah, "Sustainable Development Goals," 124–34.

cross-contextual studies showing that SDG integration in religious education faces structural and epistemological barriers. The research reveals that many institutions support SDGs theoretically, but practical implementation is often limited due to economic, administrative, and cultural barriers. The research extends the discourse by demonstrating that the problem lies not merely in technical implementation aspects but also in theological paradigms that have not fully viewed SDGs as integral to faith mission.

This disconnect is more conceptual than administrative, as evidenced by institutions still oriented toward normative-spiritualistic approaches experiencing difficulty adopting the agenda.²⁹ Participants expressed this tension in various ways during interviews. One lecturer stated, "We understand that SDGs are important, but our primary task is spiritual formation. Economic and environmental issues are the responsibility of other disciplines." Another student expressed, "I want to connect my faith with real-world issues, but I don't have the tools or training to do so systematically." These statements reveal a deep-seated paradigmatic divide between spiritual formation and socio-economic engagement. The institutional capacity table reveals significant variation across institutions in their readiness to integrate SDGs.

Institution A has no SDG center or office and SDGs are addressed only informally with no faculty training or budget allocation.³⁰ Institution B has no SDG center but offers one elective course with limited training and minimal budget. Institution C has an ad hoc committee with SDGs embedded in two courses, some faculty training, and moderate budget allocation. Institution D has no SDG center, no SDG integration in curriculum, no faculty training, and no budget allocation. These findings suggest that transformation requires not only technical capacity but also a paradigmatic shift in understanding the relationship between theological education and sustainable development.³¹ The importance of inner dimensions such as social values, beliefs, and spiritual transformation in supporting sustainability is relevant to theological education, which often focuses on spiritual and ethical aspects. The research also indicates potential for collaboration between various actors, including religious institutions, to advance the sustainability agenda.

²⁹ Rini, Paramitha, Arifianto, and Jaya, "Contribution of Christian Religious Education," 338-350.

³⁰ Ambariyanto and Utama, "Educating Higher Education Institutions," 02015.

³¹ Christine Wamsler, "Contemplative Sustainable Futures: The Role of Individual Inner Dimensions and Transformation in Sustainability Research and Education," in *Sustainability and the Humanities* (Cham: Springer, 2018), 359-373.

Institutional Capacity Limitations and Curriculum Transformation Resistance

The research found that limitations in human resource capacity, funding, and resistance to change are primary factors hindering theological curriculum transformation.³² This finding is consistent with Wahyuningrat, Harsanto, Fitrah, Yamin, and Luthfi, who highlighted institutional resistance as a significant barrier to educational innovation. The findings also confirm Ambariyanto and Utama, who emphasized the importance of interdisciplinary curriculum reformulation and faculty training. The research reveals that institutions often lack adequate resources in financial, infrastructural, and staff training forms to support curriculum change. The barrier frequency table demonstrates the prevalence of various obstacles across the 18 participants.

Funding limitations were cited by 14 participants, with one stating, "We lack budget for faculty training or curriculum development." Faculty resistance was reported by 11 participants, with one asking, "Why change what has worked for decades?" Lack of SDG understanding was the most frequently cited barrier, mentioned by 15 participants, with one admitting, "I don't know how SDGs relate to theology." Institutional inertia was noted by 9 participants, with one observing, "The accreditation system doesn't reward SDG integration." Time constraints were mentioned by 12 participants, with one stating, "We are already overloaded with existing requirements." Analytically, this resistance can be explained through an institutional perspective, where organizations tend to maintain normative stability rather than undertake risky innovation.

The lack of faculty training in integrating theological values with SDG indicators reinforces curriculum stagnation. Thus, theological education transformation requires not only content change but also academic culture change and pedagogical capacity building. In some cases, institutions lack academic capacity to develop innovative curricula, as seen in African graduate programs facing challenges due to weak institutional capacity.³³ Teachers often feel uncomfortable with changes that disrupt their professional identity, as observed at Unitec Institute of Technology where resistance

³² Wahyuningrat, Harsanto, Fitrah, Yamin, and Luthfi, "Effectiveness of Implementing," 08001.

³³ W.K. Amde, D. Sanders, and U. Lehmann, "Building Capacity to Develop an African Teaching Platform on Health Workforce Development: A Collaborative Initiative of Universities from Four Sub Saharan Countries," *Human Resources for Health* 12, no. 1 (2014): 31.

emerged because teachers' beliefs and practices were not aligned with curriculum transformation initiatives. Institutional resistance does not always reflect a lack of commitment to new goals but can reflect conflicting organizational purposes. The "Big Assumptions" process helps identify unchallenged institutional beliefs that can hinder change, while discourses that maintain existing policies and practices as "reasonable" or "fair" are often used to reject change agendas, as seen in gender equality efforts in higher education.³⁴

Absence of Contextual and Operational Economic Theology Models

A key finding is the absence of conceptually and operationally integrated economic theology models in theological higher education. This finding aligns with Saragih and Djami, who developed entrepreneurship theology concepts as responses to faith-based economic empowerment needs.³⁵ However, this research shows that such approaches remain partial and unintegrated into formal education systems. The primary difference between this research and previous studies lies in the effort to build a model that is not only normative-theological but also pedagogical and applicative. The comparison table between existing economic theology approaches and the proposed contextual theonomy model reveals significant differences.

Existing approaches focus on entrepreneurial activity, use normative-theological frameworks, operate in church congregation contexts, lack SDG integration, and aim for economic empowerment. The proposed contextual theonomy focuses on faith-economy-sustainability integration, uses pedagogical-operational frameworks, operates in higher education curriculum contexts, explicitly integrates SDGs, and aims for transformative praxis and impact. The absence of integrative models causes fragmentation between faith and economic practice, so theological education fails to function as an agent of socio-economic transformation.³⁶ Gao noted the absence of significant theological responses to market economic reforms in Chinese Christianity, despite serious social problems resulting from such reforms.

³⁴ Pat O'Connor and Kate White, "Power, Legitimizing Discourses and Institutional Resistance to Gender Equality in Higher Education," in *Palgrave Studies in Gender and Education* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 187–207.

³⁵ Saragih, "Fungsi Gereja," 12–23; Djami, "Menuju Teologi Kewirausahaan," 45–67.

³⁶ Gao, "A Contextual Theology without Context," 38–68.

Schwarzkopf observed that economic theology often focuses on concepts like economy, money, and markets but lacks understanding of how markets function practically in specific social and cultural contexts.³⁷ Singh argued that existing economic theology perspectives discuss doctrine and moral reflection more than creating operational models applicable in real economic contexts. There is a need to develop economic theology models that are contextual, meaning relevant to specific social, cultural, and economic situations, and operational, meaning practically applicable to address economic problems such as poverty, inequality, and sustainability. Contextual economic approaches, as proposed by heterodox economic theory, can inspire the integration of theological values with economic policies oriented toward human and planetary wellbeing. The research indicates that limited empirical data is a significant barrier to evaluating the effectiveness of theology-based economic empowerment programs.

SDGs as Part of Theological Mission: Between Discourse and Practice

The research found that SDGs are not fully understood as integral to theological mission, despite various local practices demonstrating integration potential.³⁸ This finding aligns with Abubakar and Andrew, who showed that churches can contribute to SDG implementation through education, conservation, and community empowerment programs. However, this research shows that such practices remain fragmentary and unintegrated into systematic theological frameworks. The difference between discourse and practice can be explained by the lack of theological frameworks capable of explicitly articulating the relationship between faith and sustainable development. The SDG mapping table to theological education reveals potential connections between specific SDGs and theological concepts.

SDG 1 (No Poverty) connects to diakonia and stewardship, integrating into community economics courses. SDG 4 (Quality Education) connects to teaching ministry, integrating into pedagogical training. SDG 8 (Decent Work) connects to vocational calling,

³⁷ Stefan Schwarzkopf, "Markets And Marketization," in *The Routledge Handbook of Economic Theology* (London: Routledge, 2018), 112–124.

³⁸ J. Abubakar, *The Bible and Sustainability: Bringing Biblical Passages and Practices into the Ecological Debate* (London: Routledge, 2024), 89–112; D. Andrew, "War on Waste: The Contributions of Pentecostal Eco-Theology in Creating Inclusive, Safe, Resilient, and Sustainable Communities," *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 52, no. 1 (2024): 1–18.

integrating into entrepreneurship programs. SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) connects to justice and imago Dei, integrating into social ethics courses. SDG 13 (Climate Action) connects to creation care, integrating into environmental theology, while SDG 17 (Partnerships) connects to koinonia, integrating into interfaith and community collaboration.³⁹ Pentecostal theology, through pneumatological imagination, addresses SDGs such as hunger, water resources, energy, climate action, marine conservation, and terrestrial ecosystems, integrating social justice, ecological repentance, and inclusivity.

Islamic theology, particularly through Maqasid al-Shari'ah, aligns with SDGs by emphasizing stewardship, moderation, and equity, with practical applications including Islamic Green Finance projects like green sukuk for reforestation and renewable energy.⁴⁰ Sufi-inspired interpretations of the Qur'an promote inclusivity, environmental stewardship, and social justice, contributing to poverty reduction, gender equality, and ecological balance. Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia integrate theological values into teaching practices, contributing to quality education, climate action, and partnerships, combining faith, knowledge, and action to align spiritual formation with sustainability outcomes. A faith-based narrative is proposed for teaching SDGs through e-learning platforms, particularly in remote areas, integrating theological principles into higher education to support SDGs. Religious actors, including Islam and Christianity, play a role in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, with interfaith dialogue addressing tensions and stereotypes, while the integration of eco-spiritual values into global sustainability efforts emphasizes harmony between human development and environmental integrity.

Reconstruction of Contextual Theonomy as an Integrative Model

As a response to these challenges, this research offers the "Reconstruction of Contextual Theonomy" model as an integrative framework connecting theology, education, and sustainable development.⁴¹ The model extends contextual theology concepts by incorporating economic dimensions and SDG indicators into an operational

³⁹ M.S. Kgatle and J. Chigorimbo, "From Altar to Action: Customising the Pneumatological Imagination to Sustainable Development," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 45, no. 1 (2024): 1–9.

⁴⁰ M.O. Rafique and K.M. Raza, "Islamic Green Finance: A Marriage of Ethics and Environmental Responsibility in Light of Maqasid Al-Shari'ah," in *Islamic Green Finance: Towards Ethical and Environmentally Responsible Investing* (London: Routledge, 2025), 78–95.

⁴¹ Stepanova, "Theology in Context," 7–18; Wright, "Church School Ministry," 145–62.

pedagogical framework. The model consists of three interconnected dimensions: theological foundation, contextual analysis, and transformative praxis. The theological foundation dimension includes biblical mandate for cultural engagement, stewardship and justice principles, and incarnational theology. The contextual analysis dimension includes socio-economic context assessment, cultural and local wisdom engagement, and needs and asset mapping.

The transformative praxis dimension includes critical pedagogical methods, economic empowerment projects, and SDG-aligned outcomes measurement. The main contribution of this model lies in its ability to bridge the spirituality-economy dichotomy and systematically integrate faith values with socio-economic practices. Theoretically, it enriches contextual theology studies with sustainable development dimensions. Practically, it provides guidance for theological education institutions in designing relevant, transformative, and impact-based curricula. The operational framework table for contextual theonomy details the components, key elements, implementation strategies, and assessment indicators.

The theological foundation component includes biblical exegesis, systematic theology, and ethics, implemented through integrated theological reflection, and assessed through theological literacy and value alignment. The contextual analysis component includes social analysis, cultural studies, and economics, implemented through contextual research projects, and assessed through contextual understanding and needs assessment. The transformative praxis component includes critical pedagogy, community engagement, and entrepreneurship, implemented through service-learning and internships, and assessed through economic impact and SDG contribution. The implications of this model include strengthening institutional capacity, reforming SDG-based curricula, and developing economic empowerment programs integrated with church mission. However, this research also has limitations, particularly in its limited location, relatively small participant numbers, and qualitative approach that does not allow quantitative impact measurement.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Analysis of SDG Integration in Theological Education

The findings on SDG integration gaps in theological higher education can be analyzed through several theoretical lenses that both support and challenge the research

conclusions. Institutional theory, as applied by Wahyuningrat, Harsanto, Fitrah, Yamin, and Luthfi, explains how organizations tend to maintain normative stability through isomorphic pressures, which accounts for the resistance to SDG integration observed in this study.⁴² This theoretical perspective supports the finding that institutions prioritize accreditation and academic excellence over sustainability contributions. However, critical pedagogy theory, drawing on Freire's concept of praxis, challenges this institutional inertia by arguing that education must be transformative and liberating, calling for active engagement with social realities rather than passive acceptance of existing structures.⁴³

The finding that SDG integration remains sporadic aligns with Amorós Molina, Helldén, Alfvén, and Biermann, who found through scoping review that SDG integration occurs more frequently in high-income countries and in disciplines like engineering, business, and social sciences, while problem-based approaches are more common in low- and middle-income countries.⁴⁴ This contextual variation supports the argument that theological education in Indonesia faces specific challenges related to resource constraints and disciplinary boundaries. However, the finding that SDG 4 (Quality Education) often becomes a priority while holistic approaches to all SDGs remain lacking, as noted by Alcántara-Rubio, Valderrama-Hernández, Solís-Espallargas, and Ruiz-Morales, suggests that theological institutions may be selectively engaging with SDGs in ways that reinforce existing priorities rather than transforming them.⁴⁵

The research finding that the disconnect is more conceptual than administrative challenges purely technical approaches to SDG integration. Al Kez, Lowans, and Foley found that many higher education institutions support SDGs theoretically but face economic, administrative, and cultural barriers to practical implementation.⁴⁶ This supports the argument that paradigmatic shift is necessary before technical implementation can succeed. However, Leal Filho, Frankenberger, Salvia, and Ávila argue that a framework for implementation can help institutions integrate SDGs strategically

⁴² Wahyuningrat, Harsanto, Fitrah, Yamin, and Luthfi, "Effectiveness of Implementing," 08001.

⁴³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 72–86.

⁴⁴ Á. Amorós Molina, D. Helldén, T. Alfvén, and O. Biermann, "Integrating the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals into Higher Education Globally: A Scoping Review," *Global Health Action* 16, no. 1 (2023): 2190649.

⁴⁵ Lucía Alcántara-Rubio, Rocío Valderrama-Hernández, Carmen Solís-Espallargas, and Jorge Ruiz-Morales. "The Implementation of the SDGs in Universities: A Systematic Review." *Environmental Education Research* 28, no. 4 (2022): 1585-1615.

⁴⁶ Dlzar Al Kez, Christopher Lowans, and Aoife Foley. "Sustainable Development in Third Level Programs: Distilling a Pathway to a True Net-Zero Education" *Sustainability* 16, no. 5 (2024): 1998.

into curriculum, policy, and practice, suggesting that technical and conceptual dimensions are mutually reinforcing rather than sequential.⁴⁷ The importance of inner dimensions such as social values, beliefs, and spiritual transformation in supporting sustainability, as noted by Wamsler, provides theoretical support for the theological foundation dimension of the proposed model, challenging purely secular approaches to sustainable development by arguing that spiritual and ethical transformation is essential for sustainability.⁴⁸

Institutional Resistance and Curriculum Transformation: A Theoretical Synthesis

The findings on institutional capacity limitations and curriculum transformation resistance can be analyzed through multiple theoretical frameworks that reveal both supporting and conflicting perspectives. The institutional perspective, as articulated by Bowe, Lahey, Kegan, and Armstrong, explains resistance through the concept of "Big Assumptions" — unchallenged institutional beliefs that hinder change.⁴⁹ This theoretical framework supports the finding that institutions maintain normative stability through taken-for-granted assumptions about theological education's purpose. However, Keesing-Styles, Nash, and Ayres found that resistance at Unitec Institute of Technology emerged because teachers' beliefs and practices were not aligned with curriculum transformation initiatives, suggesting that resistance is not merely institutional but also personal and identity-related.⁵⁰

The finding that funding limitations are a significant barrier aligns with Kazakbaeva's observation that in Kyrgyzstan, curriculum reform occurred only at the structural level without planned capacity building, such as adequate professional training and teaching resources.⁵¹ This supports the argument that financial and human resource

⁴⁷ Walter Leal Filho, Fernanda Frankenberger, Amanda Lange Salvia, Ulisses Azeiteiro, Fatima Alves, Paula Castro, Markus Will, Joost Platje, Violeta Orlovic Lovren, Luciana Brandli, Elizabeth Price, Federica Doni, Mark Mifsud, Lucas Veiga Ávila. "A Framework for the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in University Programmes." *Journal of Cleaner Production* 299 (2021): 126915.

⁴⁸ Wamsler, "Contemplative Sustainable Futures," 359–373.

⁴⁹ Constance M. Bowe, Lisa Lahey, Robert Kegan, and Elizabeth Armstrong, "Questioning the 'Big Assumptions'. Part II: Recognizing Organizational Contradictions That Impede Institutional Change," *Medical Education* 37, no. 8 (2003): 723–731.

⁵⁰ Linda Keesing-Styles, Simon Nash, and Robert Ayres, "Managing Curriculum Change and 'Ontological Uncertainty' in Tertiary Education," *Higher Education Research and Development* 33, no. 3 (2014): 496–509.

⁵¹ Roza Kazakbaeva, "From Language of Enemy to Language of Opportunity: Understanding Teacher Resistance to Curriculum Change in English Language Teaching and Learning in Kyrgyzstan," *Journal of Educational Change* 24, no. 2 (2023): 317–343.

constraints are interconnected and require simultaneous attention. However, Thomas argues that enabling institutional transformation to engage a diverse student body requires necessary conditions and facilitating factors that go beyond funding, including leadership, infrastructure, and inclusive culture.⁵² This perspective challenges purely economic explanations of resistance by emphasizing organizational culture and leadership. The finding that lack of SDG understanding is the most frequently cited barrier supports the need for faculty training and development.

Amde, Sanders, and Lehmann found that building capacity to develop an African teaching platform on health workforce development faced challenges due to weak institutional capacity to integrate new programs.⁵³ This supports the argument that capacity building is essential for curriculum transformation. However, Bukhari, Abutaheen, Jawad, and Zaidi demonstrated through a certificate course in health professions education that targeted training can effectively build faculty capacity, suggesting that barriers are surmountable with appropriate interventions.⁵⁴ The finding that institutional inertia is reinforced by accreditation systems that do not reward SDG integration aligns with O'Connor and White's observation that discourses maintaining existing policies and practices as "reasonable" or "fair" are often used to reject change agendas.⁵⁵ This supports the argument that systemic incentives must be aligned with transformation goals. However, Crawford, Drake, and Rohrbacher found that instituting large-scale change at a research-intensive university required coordinated leadership and supportive infrastructure, suggesting that institutional transformation is possible with strategic intervention.⁵⁶

⁵² Liz Thomas, "Chapter 8 Enabling Institutional Transformation to Engage a Diverse Student Body: Necessary Conditions and Facilitating Factors." *International Perspectives on Higher Education Research* (Leeds, UK: Emerald Publishing, 2011).

⁵³ Amde, Sanders, and Lehmann, "Building Capacity," 31.

⁵⁴ Mulazim Hussain Bukhari, Ali Abutaheen, Fatema Jawad, Shahzad Anwar, Hassan Nasrullah, Ali Mehdi, Asad Ali Shah, Tabassum Zehra, Iffat Batool Syed, Ali Ayub, Musarrat Ul Hasnain, and Shabih H Zaidi. "Conference Report on First Certificate Course in Health Professions Education at College of Medicine, University of Kerbala, Iraq." *JPMA. The Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association* 70, no. 3 (2020): 32207445.

⁵⁵ O'Connor and White, "Power, Legitimizing Discourses," 187–207.

⁵⁶ J. Crawford, R. Drake, and C. Rohrbacher, "Instituting Large Scale Change at a Research Intensive University: A Case Study," *Management Education* 28, no. 3 (2014): 1–18.

Economic Theology Models: Theoretical Critique and Synthesis

The findings on the absence of contextual and operational economic theology models can be analyzed through theoretical perspectives that both support and challenge the research conclusions. Gao's contextual analysis of Sino-Christian theology revealed that contemporary theology lacks significant responses to market economic reforms, indicating a broader pattern of theological disengagement from economic realities.⁵⁷ This supports the finding that theological education fails to connect faith with economic practice. However, Saragih's entrepreneurship theology concept, developed through qualitative field research, demonstrates that theological frameworks can position economic activity as integrated with church mission, suggesting that the gap is not inevitable but rather a result of disciplinary fragmentation.⁵⁸

The finding that existing approaches remain partial and unintegrated aligns with Schwarzkopf's observation that economic theology often focuses on concepts like economy, money, and markets but lacks understanding of how markets function practically in specific social and cultural contexts.⁵⁹ This supports the argument that theological reflection on economics must engage with empirical economic realities. However, Singh argues that economic theology of late antiquity discussed doctrine and moral reflection rather than creating operational models, suggesting that the gap between theological reflection and economic practice is historically persistent rather than uniquely contemporary.⁶⁰ The finding that limited empirical data is a significant barrier to evaluating theology-based economic empowerment programs aligns with Perezniето and Taylor's argument that the absence of baseline data and evaluation indicators hinders accurate impact analysis.⁶¹ This supports the need for evidence-based practice in theological education.

However, Angel-Urdinola, Semlali, and Brodmann found that non-public provision of active labor market programs in Arab-Mediterranean countries faced similar data limitations, suggesting that this challenge is not unique to theological programs but

⁵⁷ Gao, "A Contextual Theology without Context," 38–68.

⁵⁸ Saragih, "Fungsi Gereja," 12–23.

⁵⁹ Schwarzkopf, "Markets and Marketization," 112–124.

⁶⁰ Devin Singh, "The Economic Theology Of Late Antiquity," in *The Routledge Handbook of Economic Theology* (London: Routledge, 2020), 98–111.

⁶¹ P. Perezniето and G. Taylor, "A Review of Approaches and Methods to Measure Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls," *Gender & Development* 22, no. 2 (2014): 233–51.

reflects broader evaluation deficits in social interventions.⁶² The finding that economic empowerment impacts vary depending on social, cultural, and economic contexts, as documented by Gupta and Roy in India, supports the argument that contextual analysis is essential for effective economic theology.⁶³ However, Eggers del Campo and Steinert found through systematic review and meta-analysis that female economic empowerment interventions can both reduce and increase intimate partner violence risk, suggesting that economic empowerment has complex and sometimes counterintuitive effects.⁶⁴ Kibris and Nelson similarly found that female income generation in Turkey had complex effects on intimate partner violence, supporting the need for nuanced contextual analysis.⁶⁵ The synthesis of these theoretical perspectives suggests that contextual theonomy must integrate theological reflection with rigorous contextual analysis and evidence-based evaluation to be effective and responsible.

SDGs as Theological Mission: Theoretical Integration and Critique

The findings on SDGs as part of theological mission can be analyzed through theoretical frameworks that reveal both convergences and tensions. Kgatle and Chigorimbo's Pentecostal theology, through pneumatological imagination, addresses SDGs by integrating social justice, ecological repentance, and inclusivity, broadening the eschatological message to encompass practical contributions to sustainable development.⁶⁶ This supports the argument that SDGs can be integrated into theological frameworks without compromising theological integrity. However, this approach may be criticized for potentially subordinating theological eschatology to developmental agendas, raising questions about the relationship between divine action and human effort in sustainability. The finding that SDG 4 (Quality Education) often becomes a priority while holistic approaches remain lacking aligns with Torres' observation that SDG

⁶² D.F. Angel-Urdinola, A. Semlali, and S. Brodmann, *Research Papers in Economics Non-Public Provision of Active Labor Market Programs in Arab-Mediterranean Countries: An Inventory of Youth Programs* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2010), 1–18.

⁶³ Indrani Gupta and Arjun Roy, "What Really Empowers Women? Taking Another Look at Economic Empowerment," *Journal of Social and Economic Development* 25, no. 2 (2023): 13–31.

⁶⁴ Isabel Eggers del Campo, and Janina Isabel Steinert, "The Effect of Female Economic Empowerment Interventions on the Risk of Intimate Partner Violence: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse* 23, no. 3 (2022): 810-826.

⁶⁵ Arzu Kibris and Phillip Nelson. "Female Income Generation and Intimate Partner Violence: Evidence from a Representative Survey in Turkey." *Journal of International Development* 35, no. 6 (2023): 963–978.

⁶⁶ Kgatle and Chigorimbo, "From Altar to Action," 1–9.

integration in higher education through teaching often focuses on selected goals rather than comprehensive engagement.⁶⁷

This supports the argument that theological institutions may selectively engage with SDGs in ways that reinforce existing priorities. However, Ferdinan, Abdillah, Rahman, and Bahtiar demonstrated through case study of Muhammadiyah boarding schools that integrating theological values into teaching practices can contribute to multiple SDGs simultaneously, suggesting that holistic integration is possible.⁶⁸ The finding that faith-based narratives can be proposed for teaching SDGs through e-learning platforms, as suggested by Gottschalk and Winther-Nielsen, supports the argument that theological education can engage with SDGs through innovative pedagogical approaches.⁶⁹ This approach aligns with the transformative praxis dimension of the proposed contextual theonomy model. However, Sirken argues that participation mystique provides a theological perspective for achieving SDGs that emphasizes harmony between human development and environmental integrity, suggesting that theological engagement with SDGs must go beyond pedagogical technique to ontological transformation.⁷⁰

The finding that religious actors play a role in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, as documented by Williams through case study of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council, supports the argument that theological education should prepare students for interfaith engagement and peacebuilding.⁷¹ This aligns with the contextual analysis dimension of the proposed model. However, Manu, Chirongoma, and Dube's exploration of Ubuntu as a resource for reducing inequalities, promoting peace, and addressing interconnected goals like gender equality and climate action suggests that contextual theonomy must engage with indigenous philosophical resources rather than relying

⁶⁷ Débora Isabel Ramos Torres. "Contribution of Higher Education to the Sustainable Development Goals from Teaching." *Revista Espanola de Educacion Comparada* 37 (2021): 89–110.

⁶⁸ Ferdinan, Abdillah, Abd Rahman, and Abd Rahman Bahtiar, "Eco Islamic Education and Its Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals in Muhammadiyah Boarding Schools of South Sulawesi," *Discover Sustainability* 7, no. 1 (2026): 310.

⁶⁹ Johannes Gottschalk and Nicolai Winther-Nielsen. "Enabling Faith-Inspired Education on the Sustainable Development Goals through e-Learning." In *World Sustainability Series* 5 (New York, NY: Springer, 2018), 17–30.

⁷⁰ Faustinus Sirken, "Participation Mystique: A Theological Perspective in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 106, no. 1 (2025): 28.

⁷¹ D.U. Williams, "Interfaith Dialogue, Peacebuilding, and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: A Case of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC)," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Religion, Peacebuilding, and Development in Africa* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 1–18.

solely on Western theological frameworks.⁷² The synthesis of these theoretical perspectives suggests that SDG integration in theological education requires both theological depth and contextual sensitivity, engaging with diverse philosophical and religious traditions.

Reconstruction of Contextual Theonomy: Theoretical Synthesis and Model Integration

The proposed Reconstruction of Contextual Theonomy model can be analyzed through theoretical frameworks that both support and challenge its conceptual foundations. Stepanova's contextual theology framework, which balances universal Christian doctrine with local particularities through dialogical engagement, provides the theological foundation for the model.⁷³ This supports the argument that theological education must engage with specific contexts while maintaining doctrinal integrity. However, the model's integration of economic dimensions and SDG indicators may be criticized for potentially subordinating theological content to developmental agendas, raising questions about the relationship between theological normativity and contextual relevance. The finding that the model consists of three interconnected dimensions— theological foundation, contextual analysis, and transformative praxis—aligns with Bevans' models of contextual theology, which emphasize the dynamic relationship between theological tradition and contemporary context.⁷⁴

This supports the argument that theological education must be both grounded in tradition and responsive to context. However, the model's emphasis on operational and measurable outcomes through SDG indicators may be criticized for potentially reducing theological education to a technical exercise in development, potentially marginalizing the contemplative and doxological dimensions of theological formation. The finding that the model bridges the spirituality-economy dichotomy aligns with Bennett's contextual economics approach, which integrates theological values with economic policies oriented toward human and planetary wellbeing.⁷⁵ This supports the argument that theology and

⁷² B. Manu, S. Chirongoma, and M.W. Dube, "Introduction: Ubuntu, Inequality and Sustainable Development," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Ubuntu, Inequality and Sustainable Development* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025), 1–18.

⁷³ Stepanova, "Theology in Context," 7–18.

⁷⁴ Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 1–18.

⁷⁵ Juliet Bennett, "Contextual Economics: A Process-Relational Intervention For Personal And Planetary Wellbeing," *Cosmos and History* 19, no. 2 (2023): 1–36.

economics are not separate domains but rather interconnected dimensions of faithful discipleship. However, the model's reliance on SDG indicators as measurement tools may be criticized for potentially imposing secular developmental metrics on theological education, raising questions about the relationship between theological and developmental norms.

The finding that the model provides practical guidance for impact-based curriculum design aligns with Franco, Saito, Vaughter, and Takemoto's framework for implementing SDGs in university programs.⁷⁶ This supports the argument that theological education can learn from broader higher education sustainability initiatives. However, Piazza, Castiglione, and Guevara argue that universities in global transformation need to re-think curriculum integration and collaboration to co-create the future, suggesting that the proposed model should be understood as part of a broader institutional transformation rather than a standalone intervention.⁷⁷ The synthesis of these theoretical perspectives suggests that the Reconstruction of Contextual Theonomy model offers a conceptually robust and practically operational framework, while acknowledging the need for ongoing theological critique and contextual adaptation.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research confirms that the core theory of contextual theonomy in Christian Religious Education is that the integration of faith, socio-economic context, and sustainable development values (SDGs) must be realized through dialogical, reflective, and transformative pedagogical approaches so that theology does not stop at the normative realm but becomes impactful praxis. The reconstruction of contextual theonomy was successfully formulated as an integrative model capable of bridging the gap between spirituality and economic reality, connecting theological curriculum, economic empowerment, and SDG indicators systematically, thereby enhancing the socio-economic relevance of theological higher education and strengthening its role as an agent of transformation. The research contributes academically by enriching contextual

⁷⁶ I. Franco, O. Saito, P. Vaughter, and K. Takemoto, "Higher Education for Sustainable Development: Actioning the Global Goals in Policy, Curriculum and Practice," *Sustainability Science* 14, no. 6 (2019): 1621-42.

⁷⁷ Roberta Piazza, Giovanni Castiglione, and Jose Roberto Guevara, "Universities in Global Transformation: Re-Thinking Curriculum Integration and Collaboration to Co-Create Our Future," *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education* 31, no. 1 (2025): 232-243.

theology studies through the integration of economic dimensions and sustainable development within a more operational conceptual and pedagogical framework. Practically, it provides guidance for theological education institutions in designing relevant, transformative, and impact-based curricula.

The implications of this research extend to institutional capacity strengthening, SDG-based curriculum reformulation, and economic empowerment program development integrated with church mission. However, this research has limitations, particularly in its limited location, relatively small participant numbers, and qualitative approach that does not allow quantitative impact measurement. Therefore, further research is needed to test this model in broader contexts and with more diverse methodological approaches. Future research recommendations include quantitative studies to measure the impact of contextual theonomy-based curricula on student outcomes and community impact, comparative studies across different cultural and denominational contexts, longitudinal studies tracking graduates' praxis in economic empowerment and SDG contribution, and development of assessment tools specifically designed for contextual theonomy learning outcomes. The synthesis of theoretical perspectives and empirical findings suggests that contextual theonomy offers a promising framework for transforming theological education into a more relevant, transformative, and impactful enterprise that serves both the church and the broader society.

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