

Christian Ethics in a Globalized Nigerian Society and Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly shaping global societies, and Nigeria is no exception. Within the wider framework of globalization, AI technologies are transforming governance, communication, education, and economic structures. While these innovations create development opportunities, they also raise serious ethical concerns in the Nigerian context. The central problem lies in the ethical tension between technological advancement and the preservation of human dignity, justice, and communal values. In Nigeria, challenges such as high unemployment, digital inequality, algorithmic bias, and the misuse of technology for surveillance or manipulation intensify the moral dilemmas posed by AI. These realities demand a critical response from Christian ethics, which has historically shaped Nigeria's moral and cultural landscape. This paper adopts a theological-ethical methodology, employing contextual analysis and hermeneutical reflection. It critically engages literature on AI and globalization, while interpreting these issues through Nigerian realities and African communal values. The findings reveal that Nigerian churches and Christian ethics are underprepared to address the ethical challenges of AI. If neglected, the church risks becoming irrelevant in guiding society through technological change. The study recommends a contextual ethical framework that integrates biblical principles, Nigerian communal values, and global moral discourse. Such a framework can help the church engage AI responsibly, protect human dignity, and promote justice. In conclusion, the paper argues that constructive theological engagement is essential to ensure that AI in Nigeria serves humanity rather than undermines it.

Keywords: Christian ethics, Artificial Intelligence, Globalization, Human Dignity

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a defining force in shaping contemporary societies, influencing nearly every aspect of human life, including communication, governance, education, and even religious expression. Within Nigeria, AI is steadily transforming healthcare, education, finance, and ministry practices, creating both opportunities and moral tensions.¹⁸ The global spread of AI through the forces of globalization offers efficiency and innovation; yet it simultaneously raises ethical questions concerning human dignity, equity, and the preservation of African communal values.

¹⁸U.G, Ehirim, Artificial Intelligence and Health care Delivery in Nigeria: Legal and Ethical Dimensions of Patients' Rights to Safety, *Indonesian Journal of Sharia and Socio-Legal Studies* (2024).

The premise of the problem lies in the collision between technological advancement and moral responsibility. As AI systems are increasingly deployed in Nigeria, they often operate without adequate ethical frameworks grounded in Christian moral theology or African contextual values.¹⁹ For instance, AI applications in education and healthcare sometimes reflect algorithmic bias, where systems reproduce inequalities due to skewed or non-representative data. This leads to ethical concerns over fairness, justice, and truth, values that are central to Christian moral thought.²⁰ Furthermore, as churches and theological institutions adopt AI in preaching, pastoral care, and administrative work, they face questions of authenticity, data ethics, and the risk of reducing ministry to mechanized processes devoid of empathy or spiritual discernment.²¹

This study employs a theological-ethical methodology, drawing upon contextual hermeneutics and qualitative analysis of relevant Nigerian cases. It critically engages recent scholarship on AI, globalization, and ethics, while interpreting these realities through the lens of Christian theology and African communal philosophy.

The essence of this inquiry is to propose an ethical framework that enables the Nigerian church and Christian scholars to engage artificial intelligence constructively. Such engagement must ensure that AI remains a servant to human flourishing and divine purpose, rather than an instrument of dehumanization or moral erosion. By integrating biblical principles with indigenous ethical sensibilities, this research seeks to illuminate a pathway for moral discernment in an era increasingly governed by technology.

Christian Ethics is the theological discipline concerned with determining right and wrong from the standpoint of divine revelation and the teachings of Jesus Christ. It seeks to guide Christian conduct in personal, social, and global dimensions.

"The moral framework rooted in the teachings of Christ and Scripture, guiding believers' conduct toward God and fellow humans."²²

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Refers to the development of computer systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as reasoning, perception, decision-making, and learning.²³

¹⁹D. A. Akinpelu and Simisola O. Akintola, Navigating the Legal and Ethical Terrain of Artificial Intelligence in Enhancing Patient Safety in Nigeria, *JIPIT: Journal of Intellectual Property and Information Technology* (2024).

²⁰H.Musa, AI-Driven Solutions for Ethical Challenges: Exploring the Potential for Christian Academics to Mitigate Corruption in Colleges of Education in the North West Zone of Nigeria, *ATBU Journal of Science, Technology and Education* (2025).

²¹I. G. Ajibola, Tech-ing the Sacred: Exploring the Ethical Considerations of Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Religious Education, *ATBU Journal of Science, Technology and Education* (2025).

²²N. Herzfeld, *Technology and Religion: Remaining Human in a Co-Created World*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2009, 33-35.

²³J. Jeffers on Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*, 4th ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2017, 14-16.

Globalization: The process by which economies, societies, and cultures become integrated through a global network of trade, communication, and technology.²⁴

A. Christian Ethics and Social Relations

Christian ethics is the theological discipline that seeks to discern and practice the moral will of God as revealed in Scripture and embodied in Jesus Christ. Rooted in the doctrine of the imago Dei (Gen. 1:26–27), it affirms that every human being possesses inherent dignity and moral worth. This conviction demands that all technological advancement, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), serve humanity's flourishing under God's sovereignty. As Waters asserts, technology must remain "a servant of human good rather than a master that redefines humanity."²⁵ Christian ethics integrates Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience to interpret moral challenges in context. In Nigeria, where rapid globalization and digital expansion are reshaping social life, the Church is called to provide moral guidance that upholds justice, truth, and community. Omenka observes that without a theological language for digital ethics, "the Church risks silence in the moral governance of technology."²⁶ Thus, Christian ethics functions as both a prophetic and pastoral voice, critiquing technological misuse while guiding society toward responsible innovation rooted in divine purpose.

B. Artificial Intelligence, and Ethical Crisis

Artificial Intelligence (AI) represents one of the most transformative technologies of the 21st century, yet its misuse poses severe ethical challenges to humanity. AI's promise of efficiency, accuracy, and decision-making process is often shadowed by its capacity for manipulation, dehumanization, and injustice. Scholars note that AI, while created to assist human progress, increasingly reflects the moral distortions of its creator's bias, greed, and control.²⁷

In Nigeria, the ethical crisis surrounding AI manifests in several forms: algorithmic discrimination, digital manipulation, and the erosion of truth through disinformation. Algorithmic bias, for instance, reproduces systemic inequalities in access to employment, credit, and healthcare, reflecting the social prejudices embedded in data systems.²⁸ This digital injustice conflicts with the Christian moral vision of the imago Dei, which affirms that every person bears God's image and deserves equal dignity.²⁹

²⁴K. Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa*. Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992, 78-80.

²⁵B. Waters, *Christian Moral Theology in the Emerging Techno culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2022), 16.

²⁶C.N. Omenka, "Digital Literacy and the Nigerian Church: An Ethical Imperative," *Nigerian Journal of Theology and Ethics* 15, no. 1 (2023):60.

²⁷A. Birhane, "Algorithmic Injustice : A Relational Ethics Approach," *Patterns* 4, no. 8 (2023):100785.

²⁸C.N. Omenka, "Digital Literacy and the Nigerian Church: An Ethical Imperative," *Nigerian Journal of Theology and Ethics* 15, no. 1 (2023):55-58.

²⁹N. Herzfeld, *Technology and Religion: Remaining Human in a Co-Created World* (West Conshohocken PA: Templeton Press, 2009), 44 - 46.

Another layer of misuse is the rise of AI-generated disinformation, particularly during elections. The use of deep fakes and automated bots to spread propaganda threatens democratic integrity and undermines moral truth. As Folarin and Iwuagwu argue, “AI has become a weapon in the politics of misinformation, eroding public trust and fostering moral confusion.”³⁰ Because of unguided access to AI, some have created (cloned) mechanized companions (AI friend) to meet their sexual desire and companionship, this undermine the place of love, marital intimacy, companionship, and Communal values (fellowship with one another).

The ethical crisis of AI thus transcends technology; it is theological. When humans create tools that harm others or obscure the truth, they misuse divine creativity and distort stewardship. Christian ethics insists that technology must serve life, justice, and truth; when it does otherwise, it becomes idolatrous.³¹

C. Globalization, Effect, and Moral Decadence

Globalization, often celebrated for connecting societies, has also intensified moral and cultural complexities. Marshall McLuhan described the world as “a global village”. This captured the revolutionary impact of technological advancement on human interaction, a description that aptly captures Nigeria’s digital experience, where technology links the sacred and the secular but also blurs the moral boundaries that Christian ethics seeks to protect.³²

It integrates economies and cultures through technology, yet simultaneously homogenizes values, weakens local identities, and commodifies human relations.³³ In Nigeria, globalization is most visible through media, migration, and market systems driven by Western technological models.

One major challenge of globalization is cultural displacement, the gradual erosion of indigenous moral values under the pressure of global consumer culture. African communal ethics, once centered on solidarity and responsibility, is increasingly replaced by individualistic and utilitarian values.³⁴ In this digital era, AI reinforces globalization by standardizing knowledge and decision-making, often marginalizing non-Western perspectives.

Another challenge is economic inequality. Globalization has widened the gap between technologically advanced nations and developing countries. Nigeria’s dependency on imported

³⁰A.O.FolarinandR.O.Iwuagwu, “Artificial Intelligence and Electoral Manipulation in Nigeria: An Ethical Appraisal,” *African Journal of Information Ethics* 12, no. 1 (2024):35-52.

³¹B.Waters, *Christian Moral Theology in the Emerging Techno culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2022), 15-18.

³²M. McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: Mc Graw-Hill, 1964, 6.

³³S.N.Nwokah, “Globalization and African Identity: A Theological Response,” *African Theological Review* 64, no. 2 (2023):211-226.

³⁴A. E. Orobator, *Religion and Faith in Africa: Confessions of an Animist* (Maryknoll, NY:Orbis Books,2018),63-67.

digital infrastructure deepens vulnerability to exploitation and data colonization.³⁵ Zuboff's concept of "surveillance capitalism" illustrates how global tech corporations extract and monetize human experience, turning people into data commodities without consent.³⁶

For Christian ethics, these challenges demand critical engagement. Globalization must not be viewed merely as an economic process, but as a moral and spiritual struggle, testing humanity's commitment to justice, equity, and truth.

D. Christian Integrity, Globalization and Artificial Intelligence

Integrity is the moral consistency of truth, honesty, and uprightness in human conduct, an essential aspect of Christian virtue that upholds human dignity. Christian ethics provides a moral compass amid the uncertainties of technological globalization. Rooted in Scripture and the theological tradition, it offers a framework for discerning the proper relationship between human creativity, moral responsibility, and divine sovereignty.

From the biblical perspective, technology is part of humanity's vocation to "till and keep" the earth (Gen. 2:15), reflecting the mandate of stewardship. However, stewardship demands accountability. When technology becomes autonomous or morally unrestrained, it challenges God's moral order.³⁷

Theologically, the misuse of AI in globalization is a modern form of the Tower of Babel, a pursuit of godlike autonomy through innovation. Christian ethics therefore calls for humility, moral restraint, and justice-oriented design in technology. Waters cautions that "technological advancement without ethical maturity leads to a techno culture that idolizes efficiency over virtue."³⁸

In response, the Church must reassert a theology of technology, emphasizing that all innovation must serve the *Missio Dei*; God's redemptive purpose in creation. This entails prophetic critique of unjust systems and pastoral guidance for responsible digital citizenship. Nigerian churches, with their moral authority, must thus engage AI not with fear, but with theological wisdom and ethical clarity. Without integrity there would be no dignity.

E. The Nigerian Church, Human Dignity and Artificial Intelligence

Human dignity is at the center of Christian moral theology. The *imago Dei* (Gen. 1:27) affirms that human worth is inherent, not earned through utility or intelligence. AI, however, risks

³⁵F. O. Akinwale, "Digital Colonialism and Nigeria's Technological Dependence," *Journal of African Policy Studies* 7, no. 1 (2024):49- 64.

³⁶S. Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (New York: Public Affairs, 2019), 88-93.

³⁷M.S. Burdett, "Artificial Intelligence and Theological Anthropology," *Theology and Science* 20,no.2 (2022):178-194.

³⁸B. Waters, *Christian Moral Theology in the Emerging Techno culture*, 92-94.

reducing human beings to data points and consumers, undermining this theological truth.³⁹ Though AI has positively impacted Christian ministry in Nigeria by:

1. Enhancing evangelism through digital platforms and AI-powered translations.
2. Improving administration and church communication.
3. Enabling online theological education and Bible study tools.

However, these benefits must be balanced with theological vigilance. AI should serve as a servant of mission, not a substitute for discernment. Technology can facilitate the spread of the gospel, but it cannot replace human conscience or divine inspiration.

AI is an effective tool for advancement and Evangelism but it can never replace Human intelligence. Of course AI depends on Human intelligence to operate. In Nigeria, where unemployment and inequality already challenge human dignity, the automation of jobs through AI worsens economic exclusion. Moreover, algorithmic profiling threatens personal identity and privacy, creating a form of “digital slavery.”⁴⁰ This phenomenon demands that the church become a moral advocate for the preservation of human dignity in technological policy.

The Nigerian church must engage AI as both a pastoral and prophetic responsibility. Pastorally, it must educate believers on ethical technology use, guarding against addiction, manipulation, and false information. Prophetically, it must challenge corporate and governmental misuse of AI, aligning national policies with moral justice and human rights. As Omenka observes, “the church in Nigeria must recover its moral voice in the digital public sphere or risk irrelevance.”⁴¹

Through ethical teaching, social engagement, and partnership with academia, the church can model a redemptive vision where technology enhances, rather than diminishes, human dignity.

Recommendations

1. Theological seminaries should incorporate courses on AI Ethics and Christian Theology to prepare future ministers for ethical leadership in the digital age. This would address future ethical dilemmas of AI.

³⁹J. J. Davis, *Theology, Disability, and the New Genetics: Why Science Needs the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 27-29.

⁴⁰C. E. Okafor, “Inter disciplinary Approaches to AI Ethics in Africa,” *Journal of African Technological Studies* 6, no. 2(2024):41-55.

⁴¹C. N. Omenka, *Digital Literacy and the Nigerian Church*, 59-61.

2. Denominational bodies should establish digital ethics committees to monitor and regulate AI use in ministry and communication.

3. Christian universities should promote AI research that aligns with moral theology and indigenous African values, reducing dependency on Western frameworks.

4. Churches should: organize workshops on AI awareness, integrity in digital use, and online truth verification.

Establish a Nigerian Ethics and Technology Commission to research, advice, and train church leaders on AI and digital ethics, ensuring continuous moral engagement.

Promote Digital literacy in Congregations, enabling believers to navigate AI platforms responsibly and avoid misinformation.

5. Nigerian theologians should collaborate with policymakers to ensure AI governance reflects ethical and biblical principles of justice, truth, and human dignity.

6. The Nigerian church must: speak prophetically against misuse of technology, such as fraud, surveillance abuse, or misinformation, upholding the gospel's ethical witness.

7. Advocate for Ethical AI Legislation, urging the government to adopt Christian and African moral values in policy-making, particularly regarding data rights and algorithmic transparency.

8. Reassert Human Dignity in National Discourse, affirming that all technological progress must serve human welfare and reflect divine justice.

9. Christian Organization (CAN), should encourage Faith-science Dialogue, creating partnerships between theologians, computer scientists, and policymakers for shared ethical accountability.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence and globalization are reshaping the moral landscape of Nigeria, challenging both the Church and society to rediscover the ethical core of human existence. Technology, though morally neutral, becomes dangerous when detached from divine purpose and human accountability.

Christian ethics offers a redemptive path one that re-centers technology on the service of humanity, grounded in love, justice, and stewardship. The Nigerian church must therefore rise as a prophetic conscience in this digital age, ensuring that AI and globalization advance not the idol

of progress, but the kingdom of God's righteousness. Only when technology is guided by moral vision can it truly participate in God's creative and redemptive work in the world.

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