

# The Contribution Of Christian Religious Education In Character Development Of Persons With Disabilities Based On Jean Vanier's Theological Perspective

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**Abstract.** This study aims to explore the contribution of Christian Religious Education in developing the character of people with disabilities, grounded in Jean Vanier's perspective on inclusive community and human dignity. People with disabilities are often marginalized due to persistent social stigma, which limits their access to education, meaningful participation, and employment opportunities, particularly within faith-based educational contexts. Employing a qualitative research approach through an in-depth literature review, this study examines key concepts in Christian Religious Education, the characteristics and lived experiences of individuals with disabilities, and the challenges and strategies associated with inclusive educational practices. The findings indicate that Christian Religious Education can function as an effective empowerment framework by integrating spiritual formation with the development of social skills, self-confidence, and communal belonging. Based on Jean Vanier's inclusive vision, the study highlights practical implications for local churches, Christian schools, and faith-based communities, such as fostering inclusive learning environments, implementing participatory pedagogical models, and strengthening community-based support systems for people with disabilities. Furthermore, reducing social stigma through value-based education and community engagement emerges as a critical strategy to enhance educational participation and social integration. These findings contribute to the discourse on inclusive Christian education and offer contextual strategies applicable to local academic and ecclesial settings in promoting the dignity and empowerment of people with disabilities.

**Keywords:** Christian Character, Disability, Empowerment, Social Stigma, Theological Perspective Of Jean Vanier.

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## 1. Introduction

The existence of people with disabilities in society often does not receive full recognition, especially in terms of their potential to actively participate in various areas of life. According to Zamorano, the stigma attached to people with disabilities is a significant barrier to their access to education and employment, which in turn creates substantial social disparities (Zamorano et al., 2024). Based on research by Jean Francois Trani shows that this social stigma does not only come from public perception but also from the internalization of disability by people with disabilities themselves, which can hinder their development (Trani et al., 2020). This gap creates complex challenges, where society often marginalizes people with disabilities in the context of education and employment opportunities. (Riswari et al., 2022).

The approach of Jean Vanier, a Christian theological figure who focuses on inclusion, provides a relevant perspective in understanding this situation. Vanier emphasizes the importance of love and respect for human dignity and the need to empower people with disabilities through equal existence in the community (Schomerus & Angermeyer, 2021). In the context of Christian Religious Education, these values can serve as a foundation for building the character of people with disabilities by teaching equality and respect for the dignity of each individual (Barton, 2021). Christian Religious Education has the potential to be a means of empowerment that focuses not only on the spiritual aspect but also on developing social skills and self-confidence in people with disabilities (Alhumaid, 2022). One example developed in people with disabilities is that people with disabilities write or record testimonies about God's love in their lives. Second, involved in Bible drama activities, for example, the story of Jesus healing the sick or the story of David and Goliath. Third, given handicraft training. For instance, making tablecloths, hair ties, drink containers, pillowcases, etc.

However, although educators have recognized the concept of inclusion and empowerment through religious education, they still face significant challenges in its implementation. Riswari's research shows that many people with disabilities have not received proper education that suits their needs (Riswari et al., 2022). In addition, Zamorano Wahyuni and Riswari noted that ongoing social stigma often prevents people with disabilities from accessing quality education (Zamorano et al., 2024), (Riswari et al., 2022). Therefore, it is crucial to identify educational strategies and approaches that can reduce this social stigma and empower people with disabilities (Char & Bogart, 2022).

Jean Vanier offers a perspective that can help address this issue by emphasizing the importance of acceptance and love in the community (Schomerus & Angermeyer, 2021). Through this approach, Christian Religious Education can contribute to developing the character of people with disabilities by creating a space for them to be accepted and valued (Kozlov et al., 2021). This study aims to explore the contribution of Christian Religious Education to developing the character of people with disabilities, based on Jean Vanier's views. The primary focus of this study is to investigate how education based on love, equality, and respect for human dignity can empower individuals with disabilities and to explore how educational strategies can be implemented to mitigate the social stigma they often face (Barton, 2021).

Several previous studies refer to this study, namely Makharadze (2010), who said that community-based services can play an essential role in the social integration of people with

disabilities (Makharadze et al., 2010). Meanwhile, Kozlov (2021) emphasized the importance of daily care services in increasing the participation of people with disabilities in society (Kozlov et al., 2021). In addition, Raina (2022) said that behavioral risk factors and functional disabilities significantly impact adults' social participation (Raina et al., 2022). Another study by Choi and Yi (2022) highlighted the importance of social capital and income in the health of people with disabilities, showing that social support can improve their quality of life (Choi & Yi, 2022).

Furthermore, Lersilp identified various barriers and facilitators in using assistive technology for children with special needs, indicating that access to technology can improve their social participation (Lersilp et al., 2018). Finally, Dusseljee (2010) found that social skills and available support greatly influence people with disabilities' participation in daily activities (Dusseljee et al., 2011). This study shows that many factors affect the social participation of people with disabilities, and it is essential to develop a comprehensive approach to address these challenges.

Thus, this study seeks to bridge the gap between marginalization and empowerment of persons with disabilities through Christian Religious Education. That is important to ensure that persons with disabilities are recognized as individuals with potential and as members of society who deserve respect and empowerment in every aspect of their lives (Njelesani et al., 2022). This study is expected to provide new contributions to the existing literature by highlighting the role of Christian Religious Education in empowering persons with disabilities and identifying effective strategies to reduce the social stigma they face.

The research method used in this article is a qualitative approach with a literature study. This study explores the contribution of Christian Religious Education in developing the character of people with disabilities based on Jean Vanier's perspective. In this context, the researcher will collect and analyze relevant literature sources, including books, journal articles, and other documents related to Christian religious education, the character of people with disabilities, and the concept of inclusion and empowerment (Fadli, 2008). The research process begins with identifying and collecting sources that discuss Christian religious education and its impact on people with disabilities.

The researcher will analyze the values taught in Christian Religious Education and explore how these values can empower people with disabilities in society. In addition, the researcher will also consider Jean Vanier's perspective on love, respect for human dignity, and acceptance in the community as a framework for understanding how education can function as a tool for empowerment.

This method also critically analyzes the challenges faced in implementing inclusive education, such as social stigma and lack of access to quality education. The researcher will explore strategies and approaches to reduce this stigma and increase the participation of people with disabilities in education. Thus, this study aims to provide new insights into how Christian Religious Education fosters the character development of people with disabilities and identify concrete steps to enhance their inclusion and empowerment in society.

## 2. Jean Vanier's Theological Perspective

### *Imago Dei* (Image of God)

Jean Vanier, the founder of the L'Arche community, emphasized that every human being, including persons with disabilities, possesses inherent dignity because all are created in the image of God (*Imago Dei*). From this perspective, human worth is not determined by physical, intellectual, or social capacities but is intrinsic to human nature as God's creation. Recognition of the *Imago Dei* thus functions as a foundational theological and ethical principle for empowering persons with disabilities and for dismantling the stigma frequently attached to disability in many social and cultural contexts (Kozlov et al., 2021). Building upon this foundation, Vanier's philosophy provides a robust conceptual basis for inclusive education, which understands inclusion not merely as physical access to educational settings but as full participation, acceptance, and recognition within the academic community (Florian, 2008). This framework challenges deficit-based perspectives that associate disability with moral or spiritual inadequacy and instead promotes respect, acceptance, and social inclusion (Kaplan & Celik, 2023). In line with contemporary educational theory, the *Imago Dei* perspective calls for pedagogical practices that celebrate diversity and require teachers to develop the competencies and attitudes necessary to respond to the varied needs of learners (Hikmat, 2022). Consequently, integrating Vanier's values into teacher education and educational policy contributes to the development of equitable, humanizing, and inclusive learning environments, while strengthening advocacy for the dignity and rights of persons with disabilities within educational systems (TOWNSEND et al., 1993).

Recognizing this dignity is also reflected in social interactions within the community. In the L'Arche community, people with disabilities are not only seen as individuals who need help but also as members who have valuable contributions to the community. It shows that recognizing the *Imago Dei* can create an inclusive environment where everyone is valued and empowered to participate in social life (Planella Ribera & Pallarès Piquer, 2018).

Researchers observed that Christian religious education and the values of *Imago Dei* can be integrated into the curriculum to teach future generations about the importance of respecting each individual's dignity. Education based on the recognition of human dignity can help reduce stigma and discrimination against people with disabilities and promote acceptance and inclusion (Sider, 2012). Based on Raina's research, education that emphasizes human values and dignity can contribute to individual character development. In this context, Vanier's approach can be a model for Christian religious education that focuses not only on the spiritual aspect but also on forming inclusive social character and respect for differences (Raina et al., 2022).

The study by Cruz and Maeseneer also emphasizes that recognizing the *Imago Dei* can strengthen relationships between community members. When each individual is recognized as the image of God, social interactions will be based on mutual respect and appreciation, which in turn can create a more harmonious and inclusive environment. This is especially important in diverse communities, where differences are often a source of conflict (De Cruz & De Maeseneer, 2014). The recognition of the *Imago Dei* also has a profound spiritual dimension. In Vanier's view, the experience of God's presence in the lives of individuals with disabilities can serve as a reminder that God works through human weakness to demonstrate

His power. It underscores the importance of people with disabilities as witnesses of faith in the wider community (Dusseljee et al., 2011).

Additional studies show that inclusive communities like L'Arche can serve as social laboratories, implementing values of love, acceptance, and respect for diversity. By involving people with disabilities in various aspects of community life, they are empowered and help other community members understand the true meaning of love (Hassouneh et al., 2011).

Furthermore, Vanier emphasized that people must translate the Imago Dei into concrete actions in everyday life. It means that communities, both religious and secular, must commit to creating safe and supportive spaces for people with disabilities where they can feel accepted and valued. In this context, the church has a prophetic responsibility to be an example in fighting for social inclusion and justice for all members of society. We must implement the recognition of the Imago Dei as both a theological concept and a practical principle in community life (Planella Ribera & Pallarès Piquer, 2018).

### **Inclusive Community**

Jean Vanier offers a theological perspective emphasizing the importance of inclusive communities as places of spiritual and social healing. In his book *Becoming Human*, Vanier states that communities should be spaces where differences are respected and accepted. He asserts that through this acceptance, individuals can experience spiritual and social growth (Coley, 2017). This view is particularly relevant in Christian education, which aims to educate spiritually and instill social values such as love and inclusivity. Christian education can catalyze building communities that support each other and value diversity.

The importance of Christian religious education in creating an inclusive community, according to research conducted by Dami, states that pedagogy based on inclusion and social justice can create a safe learning environment for all students, including those with special needs. In this supportive community, people with disabilities can find a safe place to grow and participate (Anselmus Dami et al., 2023). It shows that inclusivity is about providing physical access and building relationships of mutual respect. In addition, religious moderation taught through Christian religious education, as conveyed by Nugroho, can help the younger generation understand the importance of love and tolerance so that they can create a more inclusive environment (Nugroho & Sari, 2023).

Anderson underscores the importance of hospitality in a Christian educational environment, stating that biblical hospitality should be a characteristic of a classroom that welcomes diversity. This approach enhances the learning experience and reflects the core Christian values of acceptance and love (Anderson, 2011). Anderson further emphasizes the importance of interdependence in the community as the theological foundation of inclusive education (Anderson, 2006). This concept supports Vanier's view of the connectedness of individuals in a community, where each member complements and supports one another to create a harmonious environment.

An inclusive community based on values of love and acceptance provides opportunities for people with disabilities to feel valued and have a role in social life. Mpofu points out that such a community recognizes the existence of vulnerable individuals and values diversity as a strength. Christian religious education has the potential to overcome the stigma that people with disabilities often face by instilling values of empathy and respect for the dignity of each individual (Mpofu, 2019).

Pollefeyt's hermeneutical approach strengthens inclusivity by encouraging open dialogue between different religious views (Pollefeyt, 2020). This concept aligns with Vanier's view of a community that accepts and values every individual, regardless of their background. In addition, this approach further emphasizes the role of Christian religious education in creating an environment that supports holistic learning while embracing diversity. Finally, the relevance of Christian religious education in creating an inclusive community also includes adaptation strategies to an increasingly diverse society. Tan said religious education is essential in building students' character and morality through teaching multicultural values (Tan, 2022). Thus, Christian religious education must continue to develop to meet society's needs and create a generation that can build a just, equal, and respectful society.

Thus, Jean Vanier's theological perspective emphasizes building inclusive communities based on love, hospitality, and supportive relationships. These principles provide a strong foundation for Christian Religious Education, which can create an environment that strengthens the spiritual aspect and promotes social well-being. By implementing these values in the curriculum, Christian Religious Education can contribute significantly to building a community that supports each individual's holistic growth.

### **3. Education Perspective of Jean Vanier**

#### **Inclusive Education in Christianity**

Inclusive education in the Christian context focuses on adapting teaching methods and materials to meet the needs of people with disabilities. It is important because inclusive education is not just about providing physical access but also ensuring that all students can actively participate in the learning process, regardless of their abilities. Chalwell says educators must develop an inclusive philosophy and understand how to integrate individual educational goals into the general curriculum (Chalwell et al., 2024). It includes using diverse approaches to teaching, such as project-based learning and technology, to support students with special needs.

In Christian education, teaching should include values that support inclusion, such as love and acceptance. Sarfo notes that Christian schools can play a role in bridging differences by integrating Kingdom values into their educational process (Sarfo, 2023). In this way, educators teach students to appreciate differences and understand the importance of serving one another, which lies at the heart of Christian teaching. In addition, developing teaching materials that are relevant and accessible to all students is essential to creating an inclusive learning environment.

The importance of teacher training cannot be ignored either. According to research conducted by Kurata, inclusive education requires adequate training for educators to understand the needs of students with disabilities and the best way to support them in the educational context (Kurata, 2023). Teachers must equip themselves with the right strategies to address the challenges that students with special needs may face, enabling them to contribute actively in the classroom.

Furthermore, Chalwell's research shows that strong leadership in a Christian educational context can facilitate the implementation of inclusive values in the school culture (Chalwell et al., 2024). Christian school leaders should support and trust teachers to carry out

their roles, creating a supportive environment for all students, including those with disabilities. This suggests that support from the management level is critical to the success of inclusive education. Worsley also emphasized the importance of stakeholder consultation in designing an inclusive education approach (Worsley, 2018). This approach involves teachers, students, parents, and communities to ensure that all voices are heard and integrated into the education process. By involving various parties, inclusive education can be more effective in meeting the needs of all students.

Finally, we cannot overstate the importance of creating open and inclusive spaces for dialogue in Christian education. According to Worsley, inclusive dialogue can help bridge the gap between different perspectives and create a more cohesive community (Worsley, 2018). In this way, Christian education can serve as a tool for building understanding and acceptance among students from different backgrounds.

Inclusive education focuses on physical accessibility and creating an environment that accepts and values differences. For this inclusivity to be implemented well, comprehensive teacher training, support from educational leaders, and collaboration from various parties are needed. With this approach, inclusive education can have a positive impact on all students.

### **Character Development through Christian Religious Education**

Developing the character of people with disabilities through Christian religious education is important in creating an inclusive and supportive environment. Jean Vanier, a figure known for his contributions in promoting the rights of people with disabilities, emphasized that everyone, regardless of their physical or mental abilities, has the same dignity and value. In the context of Christian religious education, this means that educators must design education to value and acknowledge the existence of all students, including those with disabilities. Thus, Christian religious education teaches spiritual values and builds strong and inclusive characters, which value differences and support the growth of all students (Anderson, 2011).

Christian religious education can serve as a bridge to build character for people with disabilities by emphasizing love, acceptance, and respect for differences. In this context, Christian religious education teachers have a critical role. They are responsible for delivering teaching materials and creating a safe and supportive environment for all students. With a loving and understanding approach, teachers can help students with disabilities feel accepted and valued in the school community (Munthe et al., 2023). It is crucial in building self-confidence and positive character in people with disabilities.

Based on research conducted by Khairuddin shows that Christian religious education teachers need to have a deep understanding of their students' special needs. Collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers is very important to ensure that students with disabilities receive effective learning experiences (Khairuddin et al., 2016). When Christian religious education teachers collaborate with other teachers, they can design teaching strategies that are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of students with disabilities, thereby creating a more positive and supportive learning atmosphere (Sukandar, 2022).

In addition, character education applied in the context of Christian religious education can significantly impact the social and emotional development of students with disabilities. Through a loving and understanding approach, teachers can help students with disabilities

overcome the stigma and social challenges they often face. (Kayama et al., 2019) Thus, Christian religious education serves as a means to teach spiritual values and as a bridge to build the character and self-confidence of students with disabilities in the school community.

In addition to the above, what is urgent is the importance of developing inclusive and relevant teaching materials for all students, including those with disabilities, which is an important step. Effectively designed teaching materials can support students in understanding, internalizing, and applying character values in everyday life. It is in line with Vanier's thinking, which emphasizes that education must respect the uniqueness of each individual and provide space for them to grow (Watts, 2009). Therefore, Christian religious education not only focuses on teaching spiritual values but also plays an important role in forming an inclusive and resilient character that respects diversity and encourages the development of all learners.

Christian religious education has a responsibility to address the needs of students with disabilities through the adaptation of teaching methods, the use of technology, and the provision of supportive resources. These steps enable Christian religious education to be an effective means of helping students develop character and skills in society. This approach also reflects the values of love and acceptance at the heart of Christian teachings (Sandford et al., 2022). To achieve these goals, Christian religious education teachers need training to understand the conditions of students with disabilities. This training includes inclusive teaching strategies, effective communication with students with disabilities, and efforts to build positive relationships with them. With these competencies, teachers can act as agents of change who create an inclusive learning environment for all students (Sandford et al., 2022).

Thus, Christian religious education must view the character development of people with disabilities as an ongoing process. It requires commitment from all parties, including teachers, parents, and other communities, to continue to support and encourage students with disabilities on their journey. By creating an inclusive and supportive environment, Christian religious education can help people with disabilities develop strong, confident characters and contribute positively to society.

### **Curriculum Strategies in Christian Religious Education for Persons with Disabilities.**

An inclusive and effective curriculum is essential in Christian religious education to support the character development of students, including those with disabilities. Munthe's research shows that educators should design an inclusive curriculum to meet the needs of all students, including those with physical disabilities. This design includes the development of relevant teaching materials and the application of teaching methods that are accessible to all students (Munthe et al., 2023). By integrating theological and pedagogical values, the curriculum can be a powerful tool in creating a learning environment that supports and empowers all individuals. An inclusive approach to Christian education must involve collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community. Hasugian emphasized the importance of this collaboration in creating an inclusive and transformative educational environment (Hasugian, 2019). Involving all stakeholders can build a sense of ownership and shared responsibility in the educational process. This is in line with Jean Vanier's view, who emphasized the importance of the community in supporting individuals with disabilities and creating a space where everyone can contribute and feel valued.

Educators must base curriculum reform in Christian religious education on in-depth research and a thorough understanding of students' needs. Wilkerson suggests that an

evidence-based approach to curriculum design can produce relevant and effective materials to support students' character development (Hasugian, 2019). It includes using innovative teaching methods and an assessment system that is fair to all students. With this approach, the curriculum meets academic needs and supports students' spiritual and moral development.

The role of teachers in implementing Christian religious education is crucial, especially in building a strong foundation of faith for children. Munthe et al. assert that effective teachers can utilize engaging teaching strategies, such as storytelling, to make religious education more relevant and accessible to all students, including those with special needs. (Munthe et al., 2023). In addition, close collaboration between teachers and parents is key to creating an environment that supports the development of children's faith (Hasugian, 2019). It creates a synergy that can strengthen students' learning experiences.

When developing a Christian religious education curriculum, it is important to adopt an inclusive and responsive approach to students' needs. Wilkerson suggests a curriculum designed to meet students' needs can enhance learning effectiveness (Wilkerson, 2023). It includes diverse assessments and innovative teaching methods, all of which contribute to student character development. Thus, Christian religious education can be a powerful tool for creating a more inclusive and supportive community for all individuals.

With this approach, Christian religious education can effectively create an environment that supports students with special needs while promoting inclusive values in society. Continuous assessment of the implementation of the curriculum is essential to ensure its effectiveness in the educational context. It will allow Christian religious education to continue to adapt and develop, creating a sustainable, positive impact for students with disabilities.

#### **4. Theology of Love in Jean Vanier's Perspective**

##### **Love as the Basis of Relationships**

Love as the basis of relationships in Christian religious education is essential, especially in the context of accepting people with disabilities. In John 13:34-35, Jesus taught that love is the first commandment that His followers must follow. This unconditional love creates an environment where everyone, including those with disabilities, feels accepted and valued (Draper, 2018). Jean Vanier emphasizes that genuine love and acceptance of people with disabilities are the essence of healthy community life (Draper, 2018). In education, this means that educators must design the curriculum to reflect the values of love, allowing every student to participate actively, regardless of their abilities.

Vanier also advances the idea that love and acceptance should be the foundation of social interaction and education. In his book, he describes how the L'Arche community serves as a model for the larger society, where people with disabilities are accepted and valued as valued members (Draper, 2018). In his article, Draper highlights that Vanier's theological approach emphasizes the concept of "welcome" as a way of life, which creates a space for individuals with disabilities to feel included and have a place in the community. (Draper, 2018) It aligns with the view that education should create an inclusive space where everyone feels accepted and valued (Ketterlin-Geller & Crawford, 2014).

Furthermore, we can also see the importance of love in education from an inclusion perspective. In Christian education, creating a friendly and inclusive environment for people

with disabilities is a moral responsibility and reflects Jesus' teachings on love and acceptance (Carlson, 2018). Carlson's research shows that when students with disabilities feel accepted, they are more likely to participate in the learning process actively (Carlson, 2018). Therefore, Christian religious education must strive to integrate the values of love into every aspect of the curriculum and classroom interactions (Carlson, 2018).

Thus, love as the basis of relationships in Christian religious education is important not only to create an inclusive environment but also to ensure that every individual, including people with disabilities, feels accepted and valued. This creates a strong basis for building a healthy and harmonious community in accordance with the teachings of Jesus and the principles promoted by Jean Vanier in the community.

### **Empowerment Through Education**

Empowerment through education is a fundamental aspect of the theology of love taught by Jean Vanier. In Christian education, a love-based approach not only provides access for people with disabilities to thrive but also helps them overcome their limitations and find their purpose in life. Education in this framework goes beyond mere knowledge transfer; it also focuses on character building and the emotional support needed to help students face the challenges they face (Carter et al., 2016). With an inclusive approach, Christian education can serve as a tool of empowerment, allowing students with disabilities to feel empowered and in control of their lives (Domagała-Zyśk, 2017).

Jean Vanier emphasizes creating an inclusive and loving community where everyone, including those with disabilities, can feel accepted and valued. In her book, Vanier describes how education should serve as a means of building supportive and empowering relationships (Domagała-Zyśk, 2017). It aligns with the view that education should create a welcoming and inclusive environment where students with disabilities can actively participate and feel they have a place in the community (Anderson, 2011).

Research shows that an inclusive, compassionate education can increase the self-esteem and engagement of students with disabilities. For example, Carter's study found that a supportive faith community can provide a significant sense of belonging for individuals with disabilities and their families (Carter et al., 2016). Additionally, a compassionate and accepting approach to Christian education can help students with disabilities develop important social and emotional skills, improving their quality of life (Anderson, 2011).

Thus, empowerment through education in the context of Jean Vanier's theology of love does not only focus on academic aspects but also character development and emotional support. Inclusive Christian religious education can effectively help people with disabilities discover their potential and contribute positively to society.

## **5. Biblical Perspectives on Marginalization and Empowerment**

### **Jesus and Ministry to the Marginalized**

The ministry of Jesus, as depicted in the Gospels, places significant emphasis on His interactions with marginalized groups. This commitment is particularly prominent in the Gospel of Luke, which portrays Jesus as a figure of compassion who consistently advocates for those positioned at the fringes of society. A crucial statement that encapsulates this aspect of Jesus' ministry is found in Luke 14:13–14, where Jesus instructs His followers to invite the poor and the marginalized to a banquet. This teaching underscores the theme of inclusion and affirms respect for every individual's

existence, especially those who lack social recognition and status (Lukas Yuniarto Chandra, 2023). Within the broader Lukan narrative, this passage reflects the vision of God's kingdom as an inclusive space in which marginalized individuals are not only welcomed but are given a sense of belonging and dignity (Riky Riky et al., 2025).

The Gospel of Luke uniquely presents Jesus as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy concerning the Messiah's mission to the poor and the oppressed. This prophetic vision resonates strongly with contemporary realities faced by marginalized communities and highlights the continuity between prophetic tradition and Jesus' ministry (Ayuch, 2023). As Ayuch emphasizes, Luke's Gospel consistently portrays Jesus as embodying profound compassion, demonstrated through His commitment to ensuring a dignified life for all people regardless of their social or economic standing (Ayuch, 2023). Luke's narrative framework, including parables such as the Good Samaritan, vividly communicates a call to love and serve one's neighbor, while simultaneously advocating for social justice, mercy, and concrete acts of kindness toward those who suffer and are excluded.

In this context, Miller argues that Jesus' ministry functions as a counter-narrative to dominant power structures that marginalize vulnerable voices. Through His teachings and actions, Jesus actively challenges social systems that perpetuate exclusion and inequality (Miller, 2015). Nevertheless, the Gospels also reveal moments of tension and limitation within the early community of disciples. For instance, the dismissal of women's testimonies concerning the resurrection by male disciples illustrates that the struggle for inclusivity persisted even among Jesus's closest followers. This tension highlights the ongoing nature of the transformation required to fully embody the inclusive vision inaugurated by Jesus (Miller, 2015).

Jesus' engagement in banquet scenes further illustrates His intention to redefine social hierarchies and communal boundaries. Hosein explains that meal-related interactions in Jesus' ministry function symbolically as acts of inclusion, directly confronting exclusionary social practices prevalent in first-century Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts. These actions reinforce the theological understanding of God's kingdom as fundamentally inclusive, extending beyond the righteous to encompass sinners, the socially ostracized, and those deemed unworthy by prevailing cultural standards (Canoy, 2019). In this way, Jesus' ministry reorients social relationships around grace rather than status.

Knitter's study states that Jesus' mission is integral and rooted in a deep sense of compassion, aiming to meet human needs holistically, including those who are marginalized (Knitter, 2005). This teaching aligns with the understanding that ministry to those who are marginalized is an actual form of love and social justice, as taught in the Bible, where concern for the poor and marginalized is at the heart of Jesus' mission (Krüger, 2011).

Jesus' ministry to the marginalized can be further analyzed within the framework of liberation theology, which emphasizes the importance of caring for those who experience injustice and oppression. In this context, Jesus taught love and invited his followers to engage in concrete actions that supported social justice (Smith & Knowles, 2021). For example, in Luke 8:1-3, Jesus is surrounded by marginalized women, an act that illustrates the inclusivity of his ministry. It confirms that Jesus' ministry encompassed all levels of society, including those often overlooked by the social norms of the time. (Sneed, 2008) Thus, ministry to the marginalized was not simply an act of mercy but an integral part of Jesus' mission that reflected universal divine love.

According to research conducted by Kruger, Jesus often interacted with those who were considered unclean or forbidden by society at that time, such as tax collectors and prostitutes. This

action was to show His love, challenge existing social norms, and invite society to see the value in every individual, regardless of their social status (Krüger, 2011). In this case, we can understand Jesus' ministry as an effort to build an inclusive community where everyone has a place and is valued (Francis & Ap Siôn, 2016).

Furthermore, Jesus's ministry to those considered unclean or forbidden by society, such as tax collectors and prostitutes, shows a revolutionary attitude towards existing social norms. This action expresses His love and an attempt to challenge and change society's views to see the value of every individual, regardless of their social status (Krüger, 2011). In other words, Jesus's ministry is an initiative to build an inclusive community where everyone is valued and has an equal place (Francis & Ap Siôn, 2016). It reflects Jesus' teachings, emphasizing that everyone has the same dignity before God.

From this perspective, ministry to the marginalized is not just charity but a call to create social justice. Jesus' teaching affirms that every human being, regardless of social or economic status, has equal value in the eyes of God (Copeland & Barnhart, 2022). Therefore, we must see ministry to the marginalized as a response to the divine call to love others and fight for justice for those who often have no voice in society. (Knitter, 2005) It requires the active involvement of humanity in supporting the weak and marginalized.

One example that reflects this principle is the parable of the good Samaritan. In this story, Jesus emphasizes that love for others knows no ethnic, social, or cultural boundaries (Smith & Knowles, 2021). This message teaches the importance of creating solidarity and unity among all people, regardless of differences (Chataira, 2021). Thus, serving the marginalized is about meeting their needs and building a more inclusive and just community.

Finally, Jesus's Ministry to the marginalized invites humanity to reflect on how to continue this mission in the modern context. In a world often divided by injustice and discrimination, Jesus's teachings remain relevant and a challenge for every individual to commit to concrete actions that support inclusion and social justice. Following Jesus's example, we invite others to be agents of change who fight for the rights of the marginalized and ensure that every individual can be heard and valued in our communities. Then, ministry to the marginalized manifests the divine calling to create a more just and loving world.

### **Teaching About Empowerment**

Empowerment is key to addressing the marginalization experienced by various communities, especially women and minority groups. As a process that allows individuals or groups to gain control over their lives, empowerment provides the foundation for just social transformation. In this perspective, education plays a key role in empowerment. López-Fogués asserts that education provides fundamental capabilities that encourage individuals to challenge unjust practices and identify alternative social models (López-Fogués, 2016). With a capabilities-based approach, individuals can develop their agency to participate actively in a more inclusive society.

Social innovation also plays a strategic role in empowering marginalized groups. Vázquez-Maguirre shows how social enterprises can be catalysts for change by shifting the logic of control to the logic of empowerment (Maguirre et al., 2016). This approach allows women from marginalized Indigenous communities to access resources and opportunities that were previously closed. Social innovation not only strengthens individual capacities but also positively impacts the community as a whole.

The inequalities experienced by marginalized groups, such as women in India, require a systematic empowerment approach. Tyagi emphasizes that empowerment provides tools to combat discrimination and create opportunities for equal participation in society (Tyagi & Upadhyay, 2023). Dejaeghere and Lee add that a capabilities approach can help understand educational well-being and empower marginalized children, as in Bangladesh. (Dejaeghere & Lee, 2011)

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is important in empowering youth from marginalized communities. Hilal said that TVET helps reduce poverty in Palestine and creates decent jobs (Hilal, 2019). Through access to relevant education, young people can improve their skills and contribute to their communities' social and economic development. In addition to education and social innovation, fairness in the workplace also contributes to empowerment. Kuokkanen shows that organizational fairness increases individuals' self-confidence and engagement, especially in the context of nurses. (Kuokkanen et al., 2014) Organizations can encourage individuals to feel more empowered and contribute optimally by creating a fair workplace.

People cannot ignore the spiritual dimension of empowerment. Kenmogne emphasizes that access to the Bible in various languages provides essential spiritual strength (Kenmogne, 2024). This spiritual dimension allows individuals to find meaning and purpose in their lives, complementing empowerment's social and economic aspects. Overall, teaching about empowerment in the context of marginalization shows that empowerment is a multidimensional process involving education, social innovation, organizational justice, and spiritual dimensions. With this holistic approach, marginalized individuals and communities can find the strength to face existing challenges and significantly contribute to creating a more just and inclusive society.

## 6. Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Christian Religious Education holds substantial potential to transform the paradigm of marginalization experienced by people with disabilities into one of empowerment, as articulated in Jean Vanier's theoretical framework. Vanier's emphasis on love, respect for human dignity, and communal acceptance provides a strong theological and pedagogical foundation for inclusive educational practices. When these values are intentionally integrated into Christian Religious Education curricula, they contribute to character formation, enhance self-confidence, and foster the social competencies necessary for people with disabilities to participate actively and meaningfully in society. Nevertheless, the study also reveals persistent challenges, particularly the deep-rooted social stigma surrounding disability and unequal access to quality education. This stigma is not only external, originating from societal attitudes, but also internalized by people with disabilities themselves, which can inhibit personal growth and self-actualization. In response to these challenges, Christian Religious Education must adopt innovative and contextual strategies, including the use of assistive technologies, community-based learning models, and the strengthening of social capital through collaborative engagement with families, churches, and local communities. These approaches are essential to creating inclusive learning environments that affirm dignity and promote empowerment. The findings of this study carry important implications for multiple stakeholders. For educators, there is a clear need to develop inclusive pedagogical practices that are sensitive to the diverse needs and abilities of learners with disabilities. Religious institutions are called to move beyond charitable models

toward relational and participatory frameworks that recognize people with disabilities as integral members of the faith community. For policymakers, the study underscores the importance of supporting inclusive education policies, allocating adequate resources, and ensuring accessibility within both formal and non-formal educational settings. Furthermore, this study opens avenues for future research. Subsequent studies could explore empirical evaluations of inclusive Christian Religious Education models in different cultural and institutional contexts, examine the long-term impact of community-based empowerment programs, or investigate the role of teacher training in shaping inclusive attitudes and practices. By expanding research in these areas, scholars can further strengthen the contribution of Christian Religious Education to social inclusion and the holistic empowerment of people with disabilities. In conclusion, Christian Religious Education, grounded in Jean Vanier's vision of human dignity and relational inclusion, has the capacity not only to address marginalization but also to cultivate communities of acceptance and mutual respect. Through intentional educational practice, institutional commitment, and supportive public policy, people with disabilities can be recognized as individuals with inherent value and empowered to contribute as equal members of society.

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