

Meaning of the Mission to Serve Children with Special Needs by Nuns: A Narrative Review

Yulia Eugenius Marni Beribe¹, Juliana M. Y. Benu², Indra Yohanes Kiling³

^{1,2,3}Psychology Department, faculty of Public Health, University of Nusa Cendana

Email: * yulianberibe@yahoo.com , juliana.benu@staf.undana.ac.id,

indra.kiling@staf.undana.ac.id

Abstract. This narrative review aims to discuss theories related to how nuns perceive the meaning of their mission to serve children with special needs. Nun is a woman who offers herself and her life to God through the utterance of a promise/vows to carry out her mission through the ministry received from a Tarekat/congregation in accordance with spirituality and the statutes of religious life. One of the nuns' missions is to serve children with special needs who have abnormalities or deviations from normal conditions in their growth and development, both psychologically, physically, socially, and emotionally, which hinder activities and interactions. Nuns serve children with special needs by seeking, nurturing, caring for, educating and living together, caring for, and meeting all the needs of children with special needs who are served as in the life of a family. Nuns interpret the duty of service to children with special needs in two complete dimensions, namely the vertical and horizontal dimensions. In addition, nuns interpret this service as a life calling from God so that it becomes a motivation for them to carry out their service duties and bring happiness.

Keywords: *Nuns, Children with special needs, Mission tasks to serve*

Abstrak. Naratif review ini bertujuan untuk membahas teori-teori yang berkaitan dengan bagaimana biarawati mempersepsikan makna misi mereka dalam melayani anak berkebutuhan khusus. Biarawati adalah perempuan yang mempersembahkan dirinya dan hidupnya kepada Tuhan melalui ungkapan janji / kaul untuk menjalankan misinya melalui pelayanan yang diterima dari tarekat / tarekat sesuai dengan spiritualitas dan ketetapan hidup beragama. Salah satu misi biksuni adalah melayani anak berkebutuhan khusus yang memiliki kelainan atau penyimpangan dari kondisi normal dalam tumbuh kembangnya, baik secara psikologis, fisik, sosial, dan emosional yang menghambat aktivitas dan interaksi. Para suster melayani anak berkebutuhan khusus dengan mencari, mengasuh, mengasuh, mendidik dan hidup bersama, merawat, dan memenuhi segala kebutuhan anak berkebutuhan khusus yang dilayani seperti dalam kehidupan berkeluarga. Biarawati memaknai tugas pelayanan kepada anak berkebutuhan khusus dalam dua dimensi lengkap, yaitu dimensi vertikal dan horizontal. Selain itu, para biarawati memaknai layanan ini sebagai panggilan hidup

dari Tuhan sehingga menjadi motivasi bagi mereka untuk menjalankan tugas pelayanan dan membawa kebahagiaan.

Kata Kunci: Biarawati, Anak berkebutuhan Khusus

Article history:

Received: 11 February 2021

Received in revised form: 12 February 2021

Accepted: 12 February 2021

Available online: 1 March 2021

Introduction

Nun is a term for female religion which is known in ordinary society. John Paul in the Book of Canon Law (2016) said that religious women or nuns are women who offer themselves to God with their entire existence to become continuous worship to God in love in carrying out services in mission assignments. Mardani and Yulisa (2012) define nuns as those who live a monastic life and make three vows (chastity, obedience, and poverty).

Aleksander (2007) also defines a nun as a woman who voluntarily leaves her worldly life to live in a convent in a congregation and focuses herself and her life on religious life in a place of worship. Thus it can be seen that nuns are women who offer themselves voluntarily to God with all of their existence through three vows as continuous worship to God in love by carrying out services in mission assignments.

This paper will discuss concepts and recent studies on nuns, and their mission to serve particularly children with special needs. This paper hopefully can trigger further studies on nuns which remain scarce until the current date. A study on nuns will help stakeholders to formulate best practices to support these nuns.

The mission of the Nun

Mission in Indonesia is a mission that means the delegation of duties and responsibilities and because of the responsibility, there is a need for commitment in the

implementation of the mission, Woga (2012). Suparno (2007) also defines mission as a task carried out by people who follow God's call and unite their lives with God's will for the sake of human salvation, which is concretely accepted in the congregation through leaders. The Big Indonesian Dictionary defines a task as something that must be done or determined to be done. While the mission is a number of people who are sent (who are told to represent) or who serve as delegates. So, a mission is something that must be done or done by several people who are sent or who are assigned as delegates. This mission is also accepted and carried out by the nuns in every congregation as a mission in their life calling to dedicate themselves to God.

Fully surrendering oneself to God in carrying out one mission as a nun is formally manifested in 3 forms of vows, namely the vows of purity, poverty, and obedience (Suparno, 2016). The church law formulating a vow (votum) is a promise that has been freely considered to offer one's full self to God in the church, pronounced before God and the competent church authorities (Book of Canon Law, 2016). Sipe and Goergin (in Suparno, 2016) mention there are three main pillars of religious life to carry out missionary tasks through various services, namely: (1) unity, which means that there is motivation due to the desire to follow God; (2) apostolate, means helping others; and (3) community, which means living in one congregation.

Services in the form of tasks or work performed by nuns in carrying out mission assignments that have been received from congregations/orders through their leadership are regulated in the Canon Law Book (2016) concerning consecrated life. Consecrated life is a life that is freely chosen with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit to follow Christ and offer oneself to God for the honor of God, building the church and the salvation of the world, and being involved in ministry. Based on the above review, it can be concluded that the mission of a nun is a task that must be done or carried out by a nun who has offered herself and her life through the utterance of a promise or vow

to carry out the works of service received from an ordo or congregation that supports her in accordance with the spirituality of life.

Nuns in carrying out their mission duties adhere to the three vows that are pronounced, the rules and ways of life (statutes) as well as the vision and mission of the tarekat or congregation that covers the vocation of devotional life. Missionary tasks carried out by nuns in the congregation are carried out in various forms of services including pastoral care, health, education, social services, services to poor and neglected people, to services for people with disabilities or special needs (Kebingin, 2018).

The Child with Special Needs

The World Health Organization (WHO) states that one of the other terms for children with special needs is a disability, which is an inability to carry out certain activities or activities like normal people, which is caused by conditions of loss or disability, both psychological, physiological, or structural abnormalities or anatomical function. The conditions of children with special needs vary, such as physical disabilities, mental disabilities, and a combination of physical and mental disabilities which have an impact on their adaptability so they need support and assistance (ILO, 2006).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments (IDEA in Desiningrum, 2016) classify children with special needs as follows:

- a) Children with physical disabilities
 - 1) Blindness, namely the non-functioning of the part (low vision) or the whole (blind) sense of sight as a channel for receiving information in daily activities as it should be.
 - 2) Deaf, namely children who lose all or part of their ability to hear so that they are not or less able to communicate verbally.
 - 3) Impairment, which is a child who has a permanent disability or disability in his / her movement (bones, joints, muscles).

- b) Children with emotional and behavioral disorders.
 - 1) Tunalaras, namely children who have difficulty adjusting to the environment and behaving not in accordance with applicable norms. These children often show symptoms from an early age (Kiling-Bunga, Halla, & Kiling, 2016).
 - 2) Children with communication disorders (speech impaired), namely children who experience abnormalities in sound, language, language content, or language functions.
 - 3) Hyperactivity, psychologically hyperactive is a disorder of behavior that is not normal, caused by neurological dysfunction and the main symptom of not being able to control movement and focus attention.
- c) Children with intellectual disabilities
 - 1) Mentally retarded, namely children who actually experience obstacles and retardation in intellectual mental development far below the average so that they experience difficulties in academic, communication, and social tasks.
 - 2) Slow learners, namely children who have intellectual potential slightly below normal but are not yet mentally retarded (usually have an IQ of around 70-90).
 - 3) Children with special learning difficulties, namely children who actually experience difficulties in special academic tasks, especially in terms of reading, writing, and arithmetic or math skills.
 - 4) Gifted children are children who have extraordinary talents or abilities and intelligence, namely children who have the potential for intelligence (intelligence), creativity, and responsibility for tasks (task commitment) above children of their age (normal children), so as to realize their potential to be a real achievement, requires special education services.
 - 5) Autism, which is a child's developmental disorder caused by a disturbance in the central nervous system which results in disturbances in social interaction, communication, and behavior.

- 6) Indigo is a human being who is born with special advantages that are not shared by humans in general.

In addition, Santrock (2009), also discusses children with special needs including:

a) Down Syndrome

Down syndrome or twins worldwide is a disorder that occurs due to abnormalities in chromosome development, namely on chromosome 21. Down syndrome has the same characteristics and is unique to all people, namely: upward-sloping eyes, wide nose, thick neck, face. flat, short fingers, and muscles that tend to be weak.

b) Children with Concentration and Hyperactivity Disorders

Children with Attention and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a developmental disorder, characterized by impaired self-control, problems with attention and attention, as well as hyperactivity and impulsivity that causes children to have difficulty behaving, thinking, and emotional control.

c) Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a group of developmental disorders involving a spectrum with various symptoms, abilities, and various levels of limitations such as communication disorders, social interactions, and repetitive movements from mild to severe degrees.

d) Cerebral Palsy

Cerebral palsy is a disease that includes a lack of muscle coordination, trembling or speech defects that are not clear which is most commonly caused by a lack of oxygen at birth (Meberg & Broch in Santrock, 2009). Based on some of the classifications of children with special needs above, it can be concluded that those included in the group of children with special needs are individuals with disturbances or obstacles in the physical, psychological, social, and emotional fields.

Children with special needs with various obstacles, both one barrier and two obstacles at the same time will harm development including, communication development, movement development, cognitive development, social and emotional development, and concept and self-image development (Sunanto, 2013) Seeing this impact, it is necessary to have special and ongoing guidance and services in order to help children with special needs in minimizing the impact of the obstacles they have. Ideally, parents particularly fathers need to provide the needed care for these children (Sailana et al., 2016). Children with special needs need more intensive services besides parental nurture and care (Tafuli et al., 2016).

Services for Children with Special Needs by Nuns

Services for children with special needs are services provided by someone (teacher, coach, caregiver, or trainer) to another person (children with special needs) to meet their needs. These services are needed to help children to have a quality of life (Kiling-Bunga & Kiling, 2017a; Kiling-Bunga & Kiling, 2017b). Services for children with special needs are also provided by nuns in carrying out their mission of calling for religious life. Judging from the statute or way of life in the congregation, it is found that there are special services for children with special needs who are part of the services of nuns in mission assignments. Statutes or ways of life with services to children with special needs, including (a) living with children with special needs/disabilities, poor, and neglected; (b) forming groups for people with special needs and associations to strengthen service work; (c) providing services with due regard to local culture without differentiating ethnicity, religion, and ethnicity; (d) formation of cadres of leaders to be responsible for service (Statute of ALMA Puteri in Derung 2018). This is the duty of the nuns, namely to assist and empower people with special needs, especially services to children with special needs and also to the neglected poor. Nuns carry out this mission to realize the gospel and its relationship with God in ministry (Book of Canon Law, 2016). This is the duty of the nuns, namely to assist and empower people with special

needs, especially services to children with special needs and also to the neglected poor. Nuns carry out this mission to realize the gospel and its relationship with God in ministry (Book of Canon Law, 2016). This is the duty of the nuns, namely to assist and empower people with special needs, especially services to children with special needs and also to the neglected poor. Nuns carry out this mission to realize the gospel and its relationship with God in ministry (Book of Canon Law, 2016).

One of the service missions carried out by nuns is service to children with special needs known as the mission of love, namely nuns doing social work and efforts to seek, nurture, care for, educate and live together with people with disabilities (Derung, 2018). In doing these missions, nuns need to show empathy and unconditional positive regard to help them in their interaction with people with disabilities (Kiling-Bunga & Kiling, 2017c). The service of nuns in mission assignments is not only for children with special needs who live together with them, such as in an orphanage or dormitory, but also move outward to the wider community for the general public, especially the poor, with special needs and neglected people regardless of ethnicity, religion, and race (Gaudium In Christo, 2007 in Derung, 2018). Nuns nurture, care for, and also provide for all the needs of children with special needs who are served with their own hands as well as their own family life.

Meaning of the Mission by Nuns

Missionary duties to nuns are tasks that must be carried out or carried out by nuns who have offered themselves and their lives through the utterance of promises or vows to carry out the service duties received from a tarekat or congregation that oversees them in accordance with the spirituality of the tarekat. Nuns carry out various kinds of missionary tasks, one of which is service to the poor and neglected, especially to children with special needs. Children with special needs with various conditions, namely the presence of physical disabilities, mental disabilities, and a combination of physical and mental disabilities have an impact on the ability to participate in life so

that there is a need for support and assistance from others (ILO, 2006). Therefore, service, in particular, will help them to be more independent in interacting, socializing, and carrying out activities in living their lives as nuns do.

Services to children with special needs are carried out by nuns as one of the mission duties because nuns have a duty to help and empower people with special needs and also poor people who are neglected as a manifestation of the gospel and their relationship with God (Canon Law, 2016). Services to children with special needs are carried out in accordance with the statute or way of life and the example of the spirituality of the congregation or tarekat which houses them and the vows or promises that become the means of service. This service is manifested in all the activities and jobs that are carried out every day by nuns as people who are specifically called to dedicate themselves to God.

Wrzesniewski (2003) reveals that one aspect of work is working as a call so that work is a source of self-meaning. Nuns who view work as a vocation recognize and believe that the work they do can contribute to the social environment or work as a means of serving themselves and others. Individuals, in this case, feel that the motivation to work comes from within, and with this work orientation, the nuns feel happy with the work they are doing. The main interest in work is because of the calling of life. Motivation in work is important since it will affect performance and loyalty (Kiling & Bunga, 2015). The work a nun does to serve children with special needs is known as a mission of love where the nuns do their work and social work by seeking, nurturing, building, and educating, and living together and providing for all the children with special need in the life of a family (Derung, 2018).

Work as a vocation becomes a source of meaning as expressed by Wrzesniewski (2003) in line with that expressed by Rosso, Dekas, and Wrzesniewski (2010) who emphasize and explain that one of the sources of the meaning of work is a life of spirituality, is something that leads to connection. to the sacred includes a higher or

transcendental power, guiding power or energy, or belief system. In addition, the existence of sacred calling (sacred calling), which is the role of spiritual life, means that work focuses on sacred vocations where the call appears from internal cues to certain types of work. This sacred calling is seen as an invitation from God to carry out God's will specifically with complete submission.

Besides, Bouman (2004) also reveals that spirituality, which is a state or experience, can provide meaning, self-integrity, or a feeling of being connected to oneself, others, nature, and God. This view is in line with that expressed by Michel (2001) regarding the spirituality of Christian life, namely an awareness of responding to God which includes a vertical (personal) dimension and a horizontal (social) dimension that is fully lived and integrated. The vertical dimension concerns the relationship or relationship between humans and God, while the horizontal dimension concerns the relationship between humans and others, the environment, and responsibility for life.

From the perspective of the spirituality of Christian life, the meaning of the mission of service to children with special needs is related to two dimensions, namely: (a) the vertical dimension, where there are faith and conviction that nuns have as religious women who voluntarily surrender themselves and dedicate their lives to God. in carrying out God's will; (b) the horizontal dimension, where nuns build relationships with others, accept and carry out the mission of serving children with special needs by living together caring for, caring for, fostering and fulfilling the needs of children with special needs as a form and form of submission and dedication to carry out God's will. Service to children with special needs as a form of actual and concrete living of faith. There needs to be a balance between spiritual and social aspects so that nuns are able to internalize and apply to the task of service in Christian living spirituality to be better able to answer the call of the Lord and manifest in service to others, especially to children with special needs.

Conclusion

The task of sending services for children with special needs to nuns is interpreted through the spirituality of life as a religious person which is manifested in all the tasks and work undertaken to provide services to children with special needs. This ministry task is interpreted and lived as a sacred calling or a holy call from God by fully submitting oneself to carry out God's will to serve children with special needs. This meaning becomes a motivation for nuns to serve children with special needs and makes nuns feel happy in the services they provide. These tasks are carried out in accordance with the promises or vows spoken, spirituality or statutes, or the way of life of the tarekat and are seen as a life calling from God by loving and serving others.

References

- Aleksander (2007). *I am the image of God*. Medan: Pioneer Media Development.
- Bouman, TJ (2004). *Spirituality at Work: An Exploratory Sociological Investigation of the Ford Motor Company*. (Unpublished Thesis). London School of Economics and Political Science, London
- Code of Canon Law. (2016). *The order of consecrated life*. Jakarta: Indonesian Bishops' Conference.
- Derung, TN (2018). ALMA puteri and the local church. *Reinha's Journal*. 8 (6), 79-92.
- Derung, TN (2018). Change in Behavior of Putri ALMA Candidates in Call of Celibacy. *Catechetical and Pastoral Journal (SAPA)*. 3 (2), 35-56.
- Desiningrum, DR (2016). *Psychology of Children with Special Needs*. Yogyakarta: Psychology.
- The ILO Code of Practice on the Treatment of Persons with Disabilities in the Workplace*. (2006). Jakarta: ILO Publication. Retrieved January 21, 2020. From www.ilo.org/jakarta.
- Indonesia Dictionary. (2020). KBBI. Retrieved on 21 January 2020 from <https://kbbi.web.id/html>.

Kebingin, BY (2018). Tent-Making missionary: an implication for addressing the signs of the times. *Reinha's Journal*. 8 (6), 29-48.

Kiling-Bunga, B. N., Halla, O., & Kiling, I. Y. (2016). Communication skills in young children with emotional disorder in kupang. *Jurnal Psikologi Ulayat: Indonesian Journal of Indigenous Psychology*, 3(1), 65-76. Retrieved from <http://jpu.k-pin.org/index.php/jpu/article/view/56>

Kiling-Bunga, B. N., & Kiling, I. Y. (2017a). Tinjauan tempat tinggal dan jenis kelamin pada kualitas hidup orang usia lanjut. *Temu Ilmiah Nasional "Kontribusi Psikologi bagi human Well-Being Indonesia"*. *Prosiding*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324007038> Tinjauan tempat tinggal dan jenis kelamin pada kualitas hidup orang usia lanjut

Kiling-Bunga, B. N., & Kiling, I. Y. (2017b). Rasa kendali kesehatan dan pengukurannya pada orang usia lanjut. *Temu Ilmiah Nasional "Kontribusi Psikologi bagi human Well-Being Indonesia"*. *Prosiding*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324006775> Rasa kendali kesehatan dan pengukurannya pada orang usia lanjut

Kiling-Bunga, B. N., & Kiling, I. Y. (2017c). Pengujian konsep psikoterapi *unconditional positive regard* pada mahasiswa perempuan. *Jurnal Psikologi Pendidikan dan Konseling: Jurnal Kajian Psikologi Pendidikan dan Bimbingan Konseling*, 2(1), 20-25. Retrieved from <http://103.76.50.195/JPPK/article/view/1827/1136>

Kiling, I. Y., & Bunga, B. N. (2015). Tinjauan motivasi berorganisasi dan budaya organisasi. *Temu Ilmiah Nasional 2015 + Call for Paper "Meningkatkan kompetensi SDM dan karakter bangsa Indonesia dalam meningkatkan produktivitas menghadapi Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN"*. 1, 40-58. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324007024> Tinjauan motivasi berorganisasi dan budaya organisasi

Mardani, AT, & Yulisa, M. (2012). *Forbidden to become a sister*. Yogyakarta: Charissa Publisher.

Nabawi, H. (2005). *Social research methods*. Yogyakarta: Gajah Mada Pres.

Rosso, BD, Dekas, KH, & Wrzesniewski, A. (2010). On the meaning of work: a theoretical integration and review. *Research in Organization Behavior*. 30, 91-127.

- Sailana, R. M., Thoomaszen, F. W., Kiling-Bunga, B. N., & Kiling, I. Y. (2016). Aksesibilitas paternal pada ayah dari anak usia dini di Kota Kupang. *Seminar Nasional "Improving Moral Integrity Based on Family". Proceeding*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Indra_Kiling/publication/324006862_Aksesibilitas_paternal_pada_ayah_dari_anak_usia_dini_di_Kupang/links/5b04d8ce0f7e9be94bdbb094/Aksesibilitas-paternal-pada-ayah-dari-anak-usia-dini-di-Kupang.pdf
- Santrock, JW (2009). Educational psychology edition 3 book 1. Jakarta: Salemba Humanika.
- Sunanto, J. (2013). Basic concept of individuals with multiple barriers. *Journal of Assessment and Intervention of Children with Special Needs (JASSI_Anakku)*. 12 (1), 73-85.
- Suparno, P. (2007). When the robe makes it hot 2. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.
- Suparno, P. (2016). Religious life in modern times. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.
- Tafuli, Y. K. E., Kiling-Bunga, B. N., Thoomaszen, F. W., & Kiling, I. Y. (2016). Persepsi lurah di kota Kupang tentang keterlibatan ayah dalam pengasuhan dan pendidikan anak usia dini. *Seminar Nasional "Improving Moral Integrity Based on Family". Proceeding*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Indra_Kiling/publication/324007033_Persepsi_lurah_di_kota_kupang_tentang_keterlibatan_ayah_dalam_pengasuhan_dan_pendidikan_anak_usia_dini/links/5b04e2470f7e9be94bdbb1e8/Persepsi-lurah-di-kota-kupang-tentang-keterlibatan-ayah-dalam-pengasuhan-dan-pendidikan-anak-usia-dini.pdf
- Woga, E. (2012). Fundamentals of missiology. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.
- World Health Organization. (2020). Disabilities World Report Retrieved 21 January 2020 from www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/chapter1.pdf.
- Wrzesniewski, A. (2003). Finding positive meaning in work. In: Cameron, KS, Dutton, JE and Quinn, RE, Eds., Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.