

THE THEOLOGY OF THE BODY AS A PASTORAL APPROACH TO PREVENTING JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

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ABSTRACT

Theology of the Body is a theological and philosophical reflection that seeks to help adolescents understand their identity as human persons created in the image and likeness of God. This study aims to examine the Theology of the Body and deepen understanding of the meaning of the human body and the value of human dignity in adolescent life, based on the teachings of Pope John Paul II. The method used is library research, involving the collection of relevant literature, critical reading, and the analysis of academic sources. The findings suggest that a comprehensive understanding of the Theology of the Body can foster a greater respect for the dignity of the human person and an increased awareness of the purpose of creation. In practical terms, these insights may be applied through character education programs rooted in the spirituality of the body within Catholic schools, pastoral accompaniment for adolescents that emphasizes the body as a gift, and the development of catechetical modules that integrate Theology of the Body with contemporary issues such as pornography, premarital sex, and identity crises. The scholarly contribution of this study lies in its formation of a theoretical framework that supports further development in the fields of theology, philosophy, and moral education for youth. Moreover, this study provides space for interdisciplinary dialogue between theology and the social sciences in

addressing the complexity of juvenile delinquency in a more holistic and contextualized manner.

Keywords: Theology of the Body; Pastoral Approach; Preventing Juvenile Delinquency

INTRODUCTION

The Theology of the Body, as proposed by Pope John Paul II, is a systematic study that emphasizes the meaning and value of the human body in the context of the Christian faith, particularly in understanding human sexuality and authentic love for others. This teaching invites each human person to explore the nature of the body through the perspective of faith—an approach that regards the body as an integral part of the Divine plan. In the Christian tradition, the human body possesses inherent dignity before God, as the human person is created distinct from other creatures, endowed with reason and conscience, and entrusted with the responsibility to care for and respect both their own existence and that of others (Beetz-Kleden, 2014; Firmanto, 2020; Blegur, 2024; Tolo & Manca, 2024; Mayolla & Rynanta, 2024).

However, in an era of increasingly rapid technological advancement, the body is often treated as an object of visual consumption for particular interests, which frequently leads to the neglect of its dignity and sacred value. One phenomenon that has drawn attention in contemporary theological discourse is the shift in the meaning of the human body—from a spiritual reality to a material object subject to exploitation. Once understood as bearing the image of God, the body is increasingly stripped of its sacred value under the influence of mass media and popular culture. The phenomenon of juvenile delinquency—including promiscuity, sexual violence, drug abuse, and the commodification of the body through social media—reflects a profound crisis of values and morality, which threatens the physical, psychological, and social well-being of adolescents.

From the perspective of Pope John Paul II's teachings, he strongly emphasized the importance of caring for and respecting the body through the lens of faith, which serves as the moral foundation for life (Primus, 2014; Valdo et al., 2024). The Theology of the Body is not merely a reflection on the physical aspects of the human person, but also underlines that the body is the centre, source, and means through which human life is formed and fulfilled in its entirety, in accordance with God's will and plan (Steinberg, 2014; Santrock, 2020; Darnoto & Dewi, 2020; Susanti, 2022; Mawaddah & Prastya, 2023; Indari et al., 2023; Rabim & Made, 2023).

So far, previous literature on the Theology of the Body in Indonesia highlights the relevance of this theme in the context of adolescent formation and sexuality education. Dessi Christanti et al. developed a psychoeducational approach for parents in guiding adolescents' sexual development, grounded in the Theology of the Body (Christanti et al., 2025). This initiative seeks to equip Catholic parents to assist their children in navigating sexual influences and social pressures in accordance with the teachings of the Church. Meanwhile, David Rabim & Raymundus I Made critique the commercialization of the human body in consumer culture through the lens of Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body (Rabim & Made, 2023). While Christanti et al. emphasize psychoeducational support for parents, Rabim and Made underscore a cultural critique of bodily exploitation. In contrast, this present study centers on the formation of adolescents' spiritual identity and character education through the framework of the Theology of the Body.

The distinctiveness and key contribution of this study lies in its approach that places adolescents as the primary subjects in the formation of spiritual identity and self-awareness, grounded in the teachings of the Theology of the Body. This contrasts with previous studies that have focused more on psycho-educational support for parents (Christanti et al., 2025) or cultural critiques of body commodification (Rabim & Made, 2023). This research develops the Theology of the Body as an integrated pastoral framework for preventing juvenile delinquency, building bridges between theology, education, and pastoral praxis—an intersection that has not been explicitly explored in earlier scholarship. The body is understood not merely as a spiritual symbol, but as a center of ethical and moral formation, thereby expanding the Theology of the Body from a theological domain into practical education with direct implications for curriculum development and youth formation programs in Indonesia.

The main objective of this study is to examine how an understanding of the Theology of the Body, as taught by Pope John Paul II, can help adolescents recognize their identity as human persons created in the image of God and cultivate a spiritual awareness of the dignity of the human person. Furthermore, this study explores how the implementation of the Theology of the Body can foster respect for human dignity through body-centered education.

This study employs the method of library research—a systematic, analysis-based approach conducted through the collection, documentation, selection, and processing of data from various relevant reference sources. This process includes critical reading of literature, examination of related concepts, and interpretation of findings from previous studies to construct a robust

theoretical foundation (Zed, 2004; Boaheng, 2024). The sources used include Church documents, books by Pope John Paul II, scholarly journals, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and credible online publications. The selection of these sources is based on the consideration that Church documents and the works of the Pope serve as primary authorities in the teachings of the Theology of the Body, while academic and scientific literature provides conceptual and contextual frameworks that enrich the analysis.

To ensure the validity and relevance of the information gathered, the researcher applied inclusion criteria comprising: (1) sources that directly discuss the Theology of the Body according to Pope John Paul II; (2) literature addressing adolescent formation, character education, and contemporary Christian anthropology; and (3) publications with academically and theologically accountable foundations (Dekkers et al., 2022). Sources that do not meet academic standards or are irrelevant to the research focus were excluded from the analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis and theological hermeneutics. Content analysis was employed to identify thematic patterns in theological and pastoral texts and to explain the characteristics of messages contained in written sources (Badzinski et al., 2021). Meanwhile, the hermeneutical approach was used to interpret the theological meaning of texts within the context of adolescent life and the Church's pastoral praxis (Briggs, 2020). These two approaches complement each other in producing conceptual synthesis and contextual understanding of the Theology of the Body.

The validity of this method lies in the systematic nature of the analysis and the depth of interpretation of relevant primary and secondary sources. However, its limitations include reliance on available literature and the potential for interpretive bias by the researcher in reading the texts. Therefore, the findings of this study are reflective and theoretical in nature and should be further tested through field studies or empirical approaches to strengthen their application in the context of youth education and pastoral ministry.

THE CONCEPT OF THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

The Theology of the Body, as proposed by Pope John Paul II in a series of general catecheses delivered from September 1979 to November 1984, is a systematic study that reveals the glory of God's love as manifested in the existence of the human body, both male and female. Through this teaching, Pope John Paul II emphasized that the human body possesses great dignity as an embodiment of the Divine image. The body not only reflects God's love and

goodness but also plays a fundamental role in interpersonal relationships, the vocation of the human person, and the fulfillment of the purpose of creation. Thus, the Theology of the Body does not merely address the physical aspects of the human person but also explores the spiritual, anthropological, and moral meaning of bodily existence in the light of the Christian faith (Kleden-Beetz, 2014).

According to Pope John Paul II, the visible human body is a reflection of the invisible God, making it an entity that carries a symbolic and theological function in revealing the Divine presence in the world. From the perspective of the Theology of the Body, the human person is understood as *theologos*, that is, as a living theology that reveals the mystery of God through physical existence. The body is not merely a biological reality but also a means of revelation, playing a role in communicating and manifesting the eternal mystery of God within the context of worldly life. The existence of the human person not only reflects God's truth and love, but also serves as a means of revelation that brings spiritual and transcendent reality into the material world. Through the body, the human person concretely participates in divine life, making the physical dimension a manifestation of an existential relationship with the Creator (Paul II, 2005; Mayolla & Rynanta, 2024).. As a creation willed by God, the body is endowed with high dignity, becoming a tangible sign of His love in worldly life. The physical existence of humans is not merely a biological reality, but also a symbol of spiritual existence that unites the material dimension with the divine essence. This concept underscores that the human body possesses noble dignity because it contains spiritual values that unite the human person with the Creator and reinforce the harmony between the physical and spiritual dimensions of life (2009; Paul II, 2005; Blegur, 2024).

Pope John Paul II emphasized that human dignity exists from the beginning of life, from the moment of conception in the womb, because human beings are creatures that possess a unity between the physical and spiritual dimensions (Paul II, 2005). The divine presence is not only reflected in human existence, but is also manifested in every action and relationship expressed through the body. Thus, the body acts as an instrument of revelation that actualizes the mystery of creation and reveals God's love as the foundation of all life (Paul II, 2005; Valdo et al., 2024; Kleden-Beetz, 2014; Kayaman, 2025).

Theology of the Body is currently being developed as a living spirituality that helps adolescents understand sexuality in a holistic and responsible amid the challenges of the digital age (Prihartanti & Andalas, 2025). The study by Rabim & Made (2023) also critiques the exploitation of the body in consumer culture,

which contradicts the dignity of the human person as a reflection of God. This perspective is reinforced by the understanding that the body is a sign that embodies both spiritual and divine reality. Thus, Theology of the Body offers a relevant anthropological and spiritual framework for responding to the crisis surrounding the meaning of the body and sexuality, while also serving as a critique of the objectification of the body in contemporary popular and digital culture.

The document *Gaudium et Spes* affirms that the dignity of the human person is rooted in their identity as a creature created in the image and likeness of God (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1965). This concept emphasizes that the human person possesses intrinsic worth that does not depend on social, economic, or physical status, but on their very existence as a reflection of the Divine. As the image of God, the human person is called to live a life that reflects God's love, justice, and wisdom. This identity is foundational for understanding human existence in the world and for embracing the human person's responsibility toward creation and fellow human being.

The first dimension of the human person as the image of God concerns their relationship with the Creator through the profound spiritual dimension of their being. The human person, as a rational being endowed with intellect and free will, has the capacity to establish a personal relationship with God. This relationship is realized through prayer, spiritual reflection, and moral actions that align with the Divine will (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1965). This spiritual capacity provides the human person with an awareness of their ultimate purpose and their vocation to seek the truth and to live in harmony with Divine law.

THEOLOGY OF THE BODY AS A PASTORAL APPROACH TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Adolescence, meaning "to grow toward maturity," is a developmental phase encompassing physical, mental, emotional, and social changes that influence the formation of an individual's identity as they transition from childhood to adulthood. The age range for adolescence is generally considered to span from 12 to 21 years and is characterized by the search for identity, the development of abstract thinking, and changes in patterns of social interaction (Santrock, 2020b). Beyond psychological development, social and cultural contexts also play a significant role in shaping adolescents' self-concept. Environmental influences such as family, peers, and media substantially affect their thought patterns and behaviors. Positive social support has been shown to help adolescents navigate developmental challenges and enhance psychological well-being (Steinberg, 2014). Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of

adolescence is crucial for parents, teachers, and communities in fostering an environment that promotes the holistic and optimal development of adolescents (Gunarsa, 2008).

Adolescents increasingly play a significant role in contemporary society, particularly in the social and political spheres, demonstrating a growing participation and awareness of public issues. However, they also face numerous challenges in adapting to the demands of modern life, including academic and social pressures, as well as expectations placed upon them as the future of both the nation and the Church (Steinberg, 2014). These challenges can significantly affect mental health and identity formation, thereby necessitating strong social support systems provided by families, peers, and communities (Santrock, 2020b). The capacity to foster harmonious relationships and engage in constructive dialogue is a vital component in building adolescents' psychological resilience, enabling them to overcome uncertainty and doubt during their transition to adulthood (Arnett, 2014; Steinberg, 2014; Indari et al., 2023). In this context, Pope John Paul II emphasized that adolescents have a fundamental role in embodying the teachings of the Gospel in their lives. He asserted that the transformation of the world largely depends on their active participation in living out Christian values. Adolescence is viewed as a dynamic phase marked by inner exploration, existential questions, and the potential for restlessness, anxiety, and frustration—factors that require attentive pastoral accompaniment by the family, the Church, and society, so that adolescents may develop character and actualize their vocation according to God's will (Tse, 2011). In this regard, adolescents' social interactions become a crucial factor in shaping the trajectory of their lives, particularly when confronting serious social threats such as drug abuse. Pope John Paul II identified drug abuse as a grave danger to adolescents because of its destructive effects on physical and mental health, as well as on the quality of social life (Paul II, 2005).

Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) in 2024 recorded 2,057 complaints of children's rights violations, 409 of which involved adolescents aged 15–17 as victims of physical and psychological violence. This age group ranks second highest after toddlers, indicating the vulnerability of adolescents to various forms of violence within family, educational, and social environments. These figures highlight the urgent need to strengthen child protection systems that are responsive to adolescents' specific needs and to increase public awareness regarding their rights. Preventive and rehabilitative efforts—based on a multidisciplinary approach—are essential to fostering a safe and supportive environment for the holistic development of adolescents.

Meanwhile, data from the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN) indicate a concerning trend in sexually active behavior among Indonesian adolescents: 74% of males and 59% of females aged 15–19 reported having engaged in sexual intercourse. Globally, although rates of juvenile delinquency decreased by 18% between 2016 and 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) documented a 65% increase in cases of armed violence involving adolescents. This trend suggests a behavioral shift toward more extreme forms of delinquency, necessitating an interdisciplinary response that includes values-based sexuality education, family resilience, and community-based social interventions.

Within the framework of the Theology of the Body, empirical data on violence and risky sexual behavior among adolescents underscores the urgent need to re-examine the dignity of the human person and the human body as a divine gift to be respected and protected. As taught by Pope John Paul II, the Theology of the Body affirms that the body is not merely a biological reality but a spiritual medium that expresses God's love and facilitates meaningful relationships between the human person and God. When adolescents experience physical and psychological violence, as reflected in the 409 reported cases involving 15–17-year-olds (KPAI, 2024), or engage in sexually active behavior (BKKBN data), it signals a deeper crisis in understanding the sacred value of the body and sexuality as part of a divine vocation.

The Theology of the Body offers a values-based framework for sexuality education that emphasizes not only self-mastery but also the development of an awareness of one's spiritual identity as a person created in the image of God. In this vision, the body is not an object of exploitation or a mere outlet for desire, but a place of the revelation of love. Therefore, sexuality education rooted in the Theology of the Body is a vital strategy for cultivating adolescents' moral and psychological resilience and for preventing behaviors that degrade the dignity of the human person. This approach also necessitates the active involvement of families, the Church, and broader communities in fostering a transformative support system—one in which adolescents' bodies are cherished as reflections of God's love rather than commodified by a permissive culture.

Social phenomena in Indonesia reinforce this urgency. In Ponorogo, 191 junior high and high school students applied for marriage dispensations due to early pregnancy, the majority of them under the age of 19 (Pebrianti, 2023). In the digital realm, UNICEF reports that up to 56% of incidents involving the online sexual exploitation of children go unreported, highlighting both a weak

protection system and a lack of awareness regarding the dignity of the human person. These facts indicate that adolescents' bodies are increasingly treated as objects rather than as subjects endowed with spiritual and moral value. When the body loses its sacred meaning, adolescents become more vulnerable to identity crises, psychological disorders, and social isolation.

The Theology of the Body affirms that the human body is a visible sign of the invisible—the spiritual and the divine. The body is not merely a biological function or an object of moral regulation, but a living sacrament that expresses God's love and serves as a means of forming meaningful relationships. When adolescents' bodies are exploited—whether through violence, promiscuity, or a permissive culture—it harms their spiritual identity as persons created in the image of God. Therefore, a pastoral and educational approach rooted in the Theology of the Body is essential for cultivating adolescents' awareness that their bodies are gifts bearing moral and spiritual responsibilities. The body must not only be protected from violation but also respected as a sacred space for the revelation of God's love. Holistic support from the family, Church, and community is essential to enable adolescents to actualize the dignity of the human person in a life aligned with God's will (Santrock, 2020; Rodriguez, 2023; Kayaman, 2025).

While Christian theology-based approaches possess significant ethical and spiritual value, they must be examined critically and contextually. In today's pluralistic and multicultural society, adolescents no longer grow up in culturally or religiously homogeneous environments, but instead navigate a diverse spectrum of values, ideologies, and moral frameworks (Taylor, 2007; Santrock, 2020). The formation of adolescent identity is shaped not only by Church teachings but also by media, educational institutions, economic realities, and complex socio-political dynamics (Marcia, 1980; Rodriguez, 2023). Consequently, a purely theological approach—if disconnected from contemporary social realities—risks being reductionist and less effective in addressing the multidimensional challenges of the holistic development of adolescents.

To avoid an overly theological and reductionist approach, churches and Christian educational institutions are encouraged to design thematic and contextual curricula for adolescent development. Each weekly or monthly theme could address relevant issues—such as mental health, social media pressure, or environmental justice—while linking them to values drawn from the Christian faith through Bible study, group discussions, and personal reflection. These themes may be reinforced through practical methods such as faith journals, case studies, and social action projects that allow adolescents

to apply Christian principles in real-life situations. Learning materials should be created with flexibility and interactivity, incorporating digital media, short videos, and communication platforms familiar to adolescents (Livingstone, 2014; Rodriguez, 2023). This strategy aligns with the principles of experience-based education and contextual theological reflection, which emphasize the active engagement of adolescents in their identity formation process (Bevans, 2002).

In addition, churches can form interdisciplinary teams composed of clergy, religious teachers, psychologists, and youth facilitators to design and implement development programs. Activities such as cross-value seminars, small-group mentoring, and pastoral counseling can be organized regularly to support the holistic formation of adolescent identity. Churches may also collaborate with schools, local communities, and social organizations to broaden learning opportunities and increase adolescents' engagement with social issues (Santrock, 2020; Marcia, 1980). Through such efforts, faith education becomes not only a space for doctrinal instruction but also an arena for character development and spiritual formation that is relevant, reflective, and socially transformative. This approach empowers adolescents to critically and constructively integrate their faith with the complex realities of life in a pluralistic world (Taylor, 2007).

CROSS-DISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

In the context of the Theology of the Body, the approach to adolescents experiencing violence and risky sexual behavior must be enriched with a holistic anthropological and spiritual perspective. The Theology of the Body, as taught by Pope John Paul II, affirms that the human body is not merely a biological entity or an object of moral regulation, but rather a living sacrament that expresses God's love and serves as a means of fostering meaningful relationships between human beings and God.

Pope John Paul II's vision of the body as a medium of divine revelation and an expression of human dignity is in line with the perspectives of contemporary theologians such as Setiawan, Müller, and Haack. Setiawan (2022) argues that sexuality and the body are transcendent expressions of human dignity as the image of God, not merely biological realities. The body is not merely a biological instrument, but also a sacrament that reveals the divine mystery in human life. This idea is further reinforced by Müller's work, which explores the contribution of the Christian tradition to the understanding of human dignity and rights through four key dimensions: anthropological, moral, legal, and practical. He places particular emphasis on the *imago Dei* paradigm and

the dignity of the human person. Müller argues that Christian thought offers a strong foundation for ethical narratives and engagement, but warns that interpretations that ignore the universal aspects of this paradigm can hinder comprehensive understanding—thus calling for ongoing ecumenical dialogue (Müller, 2020). Similarly, Haack emphasizes that human dignity, as an expression of transcendence, can only be fully understood through Christian theological anthropology—particularly through this concept, in which the body becomes the place of revelation of God’s love and the ethical foundation for social relations (Haack, 2012).

All three emphasize that the body is a spiritual manifestation of human identity as the image of God. In the Theology of the Body, the body is not only biologically functional but also sacramental—expressing divine mystery and serving as an ethical basis for social and moral engagement. This perspective broadens the understanding of human dignity as a unity of body and soul, which has intrinsic value from the beginning of life. This theological vision is in line with *Gaudium et Spes*, a key document of the Second Vatican Council, which affirms that human dignity is rooted in the identity of human beings as creatures made in the image and likeness of God (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1965).

This document emphasizes that human value does not depend on social, economic, or physical status, but rather on human nature as a reflection of the Divine. As bearers of God’s image, humans are called to live in love, justice, and wisdom, and to be responsible for creation and their fellow human beings. Therefore, both the Theology of the Body and *Gaudium et Spes* emphasize the integral spiritual and social role of the body in realizing human dignity and fulfilling the human calling.

The Theology of the Body approach offers a holistic preventive strategy that encompasses spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions. This aligns with Erik Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development, which posits that adolescence is a critical stage of identity formation versus role confusion. Adolescents require a healthy environment for exploration, robust social support, and deep value-based education in order to form a stable identity (Erikson, 1968; Kamilla et al., 2022; Julieta, 2023). In this regard, Santrock emphasized that adolescent development involves the interaction of biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional aspects, which collectively shape an individual’s self-concept and behavior (Santrock, 2020a). The Theology of the Body complements this psychological framework by offering a spiritual foundation that affirms the body as both a gift and a responsibility—never merely a biological mechanism or moral object.

A study by Kalalo et al. (2025) demonstrates that a holistic Christian educational

approach—integrating spiritual, social, emotional, and physical dimensions—has a positive impact on the personal development and the psychological well-being of adolescents. In this framework, teachers and teachers serve not only as academic instructors but also as spiritual mentors who nurture adolescents’ emotional and mental development, enabling them to face the challenges of the digital age with integrity and wisdom. Accordingly, the Theology of the Body functions not only as a theological doctrine but also as a practical foundation for designing comprehensive, relevant, and transformative educational and pastoral interventions for today’s adolescents.

The implementation of the Theology of the Body in Catholic settings, particularly for adolescents, can be effectively realized through catechesis that is informed by Erikson’s psychosocial development theory—especially the fifth stage: identity versus role confusion. Erikson noted that adolescence (approximately ages 12–18) is a pivotal period for forming self-identity, during which individuals explore values, beliefs, and social roles that will shape the direction of their lives. At this stage, adolescents are especially vulnerable to identity confusion when they lack sufficient guidance from both social and spiritual environments.

The Theology of the Body, as articulated by Pope John Paul II, provides a robust spiritual framework to assist adolescents in understanding their bodies as both gifts and vocations—not merely biological or moral entities. The body is viewed as a living sacrament that manifests divine love and facilitates communion between humans and God. Through catechesis grounded in the Theology of the Body, adolescents are encouraged to recognize the dignity of the human person and their own bodies as images of God, empowering them to cultivate a holistic identity encompassing spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions.

Catechetical programs have shown the effectiveness of this approach. Psycho-educational sessions offered to parents and caregivers of adolescents have deepened their understanding of bodily dignity and sexuality within the framework of Catholic faith. Catechetical materials—addressing themes such as “Who am I?”, “Body and soul,” “Sexuality and purity of heart,” and “Hope and the future”—have supported adolescents in developing identities aligned with Gospel values, helping them to resist role confusion often exacerbated by peer pressure and a permissive cultural climate.

Thus, the Theology of the Body is not merely a set of moral teachings; it is a relevant and transformative pastoral approach that supports adolescents in their search for identity. When integrated with Erikson’s developmental theory, the Theology of the Body functions as a spiritual intervention that strengthens

identity formation, prevents role confusion, and guides adolescents toward a responsible and faith-grounded adulthood rooted in the love of God.

According to Pope John Paul II, every believer has the right to receive proper catechetical instruction, and religious leaders have the responsibility to provide it. Catechesis plays a crucial role in shaping adolescents' understanding of the faith and fostering a profound respect for the dignity of the human person. Adolescents are often drawn to the pursuit of worldly pleasures that can obscure the deeper meaning of life. Therefore, faith formation through catechesis is an essential means of guiding them to discover the true purpose of life and to build meaningful relationships with God and others.

Through catechesis, adolescents are led to develop attitudes and behaviors that align with the Divine will, enabling them to live according to moral and spiritual values. In addition to nurturing their understanding of the faith, catechesis contributes significantly to character formation, equipping adolescents to face contemporary challenges with firm Christian principles. Thus, this form of education serves as a compass for adolescents in fostering harmonious relationships with God, others, and the environment in a sustainable way, helping them to fulfill their vocation as evangelizers in daily life (Keron & Tarihoran, 2024).

Next, specific implementation strategies will be described, involving pastoral agents within the Catholic Church, including the integral role of parents in the family and Catholic teachers in educational institutions. These efforts form part of a systematic approach to accompanying and holistically shaping adolescents. The active involvement of these agents is crucial in transmitting the values of the Theology of the Body through catechesis, character education, and contextual spiritual formation, in order to strengthen adolescents' understanding of the dignity of the human person, self-identity, and moral responsibility in the light of the Catholic faith.

ACTORS FOR THE PREVENTION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Adolescents need to be equipped with fundamental values that can shape their character and support their development in a positive direction. In guiding adolescents towards a dignified adulthood, various actors have strategic roles, especially the family as the first and primary educational community. Pope John Paul II emphasized that the family is a community of love and life, which serves as the foundation for the formation of the human person. In this context, parents act as the primary educators who instill essential human values, particularly the value of love. This love becomes the foundation for

adolescents to develop respect for the dignity of every human person and to foster a spirit of harmony and peace within their social environment (Wijaya, 2009).

In addition to parents, catechists (faith educators) play a crucial role in guiding adolescents in understanding and living the Christian faith. As teachers and spiritual mentors, catechists help adolescents to deepen their knowledge of the teachings of Christ, so that they may personally encounter the presence of God in their lives. Through the process of faith formation, adolescents are not only introduced to moral and spiritual values, but are also encouraged to internalize the message of salvation offered by Christ. Catechists thus contribute significantly to the formation of the religious character of adolescents, which can guide them towards a meaningful life aligned with Christian values (Pope John Paul II, 2016). In the development of adolescent faith and character, catechists have a strategic role in teaching two main aspects: First, the understanding of religious values. Through structured and continuous catechesis, catechists assist adolescents in internalizing and deepening their faith. This process not only involves understanding Christian doctrines and teachings but also encourages adolescents to integrate spiritual values into their daily lives; Second, the formation of social awareness in adolescents. At this stage of development, adolescents often face various value conflicts, attitudinal struggles, and social responsibilities. Catechists play a crucial role in guiding them towards positive behaviors by encouraging participation in activities that foster their potential. Through a community-based approach, adolescents can learn to appreciate diversity, develop empathy, and abandon attitudes and behaviors that are not in accordance with Christian values. With consistent, faith-based, and value-oriented accompaniment, catechists contribute to forming adolescents who are faithful and have high social responsibility (Paulus, et.al., 2020).

In addition to parents and catechists, Catholic Religious Education teachers have an important role in guiding adolescents towards a deeper understanding of the faith and the dignity of the human person. In his address (lecture) to Catholic educators in New Orleans in 1987, Pope John Paul II emphasized that Catholic educators have the primary responsibility to convey the truth about the dignity of the human person, who is created in the image and likeness of God. Catholic Religious Education (PAK) teachers are not only responsible for imparting religious knowledge but also serve as spiritual guides who accompany students to live in the light of Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, Catholic Religious Education (PAK) teachers also function as counselors, who provide pastoral attention to the various challenges

faced by adolescents. As counselors, teachers are called to conduct a careful and comprehensive discernment regarding the difficulties experienced by their students, so that the guidance they offer can effectively help adolescents to find solutions that are aligned with Christian values. Through this holistic approach, the role of Catholic Religious Education (PAK) teachers becomes essential in the formation of adolescents who are faithful, who possess a well-formed character, and who demonstrate high social responsibility (Sukarman, 2021).

BUILDING POSITIVE ATTITUDES AND RESPECTING HUMAN BODY

Pope John Paul II taught that the human body possesses a profound spiritual and moral dimension, serving as a means of self-expression that reflects the soul and the personality of the human person. From the perspective of the Theology of the Body, the human person is called to understand the body as a sign of God's presence in the world, so that its use should always reflect gratitude for the Divine gift and deep respect for the dignity of the human person.

For adolescents as the next generation, developing an awareness of the true meaning of the body is a crucial aspect of character formation grounded in Christian values. The positive use of the body—through acts of service to others, the expression of creativity, and the building of healthy interpersonal relationships—is a concrete form of respect for human dignity. With this understanding, adolescents can foster a responsible attitude in using their bodies as instruments for realizing authentic love and peace in social life.

One of the positive attitudes that must be fostered and developed in adolescents is active participation in World Youth Day (WYD). This event is a manifestation of Saint John Paul II's profound pastoral concern for young people. It serves as a platform for dialogue, deepening of faith, and the strengthening of a solid Christian identity amid the complexities and challenges of contemporary society.

World Youth Day (WYD) offers various activities that strengthen spirituality and foster a spirit of communion, such as the celebration of the Eucharist, the procession of the WYD Cross, communal prayers, artistic and cultural performances, religious music concerts, as well as social outreach and community service. Through participation in these activities, adolescents not only experience a personal encounter with Christ but also strengthen their solidarity as members of the living and dynamic Body of the Church. By instilling the value of involvement in WYD, adolescents are invited to become more aware of their vocation as part of a community of faith that contributes

to building a world more deeply rooted in love and peace (Natalia, 2021).

In addition to participation in religious activities, fostering the cultural engagement of today's adolescents is an essential element in shaping their identity and character. The younger generation serves as agents of change, bringing new approaches to social realities with characteristics that are unique and distinct from those of previous generations. In the era of rapidly advancing digital transformation, adolescents are accustomed to the use of technology, dynamic lifestyles, and active interactions through social media. Their openness to diverse perspectives and cultural plurality is a defining trait, enabling more inclusive cross-cultural and social relationships. Therefore, it is essential for adolescents to continue developing dialogical, appreciative, and collaborative attitudes, so that they can prudently use the cultural potential of their time to build a more harmonious and respectful environment. By engaging in activities that promote cultural and social values, adolescents not only strengthen their own identity but also contribute to the formation of a society that is more open and respectful (Synod of Bishops, 2019).

Furthermore, social commitment is one of the defining characteristics of today's adolescents, which is reflected in their readiness and willingness to participate in various voluntary initiatives aimed at strengthening solidarity within society. This spirit of volunteerism needs to be properly directed and supported so that the potential possessed by young people—including their talents, abilities, and creativity—can be developed optimally. With appropriate guidance, social commitment becomes not only a channel for expressing compassion but also a means of fostering a sense of responsibility in fulfilling the tasks entrusted to them (Synod of Bishops, 2019).

The Synod of Bishops emphasized the importance of the participation and active involvement of adolescents in both social life and the life of the Church. This involvement encourages the emergence of new ideas and initiatives, especially in using digital communication as a tool for social mobilization and constructive political advocacy. Through meaningful participation, adolescents contribute to defending the welfare of the weakest and most marginalized members of society, thereby fostering a stronger culture of solidarity and social concern (Synod of Bishops, 2019).

Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body emphasizes the unity of body and soul as a spiritual expression that reveals God's love and affirms human dignity. This stands in contrast to secular psychological approaches, which often separate the spiritual dimension from the analysis of human behavior. Secular psychology, in many cases, operates within frameworks of materialism or atheistic naturalism, recognizing the body and mind but neglecting the soul or

transcendent aspects (Ashcraft, 2021). As a result, psychological interventions frequently focus on symptoms and behaviors rather than the spiritual roots of identity crises or juvenile delinquency.

Nevertheless, the discourse surrounding Theology of the Body is not without critique, particularly from feminist theological circles. Some feminist theologians argue that the teaching remains rooted in patriarchal frameworks, emphasizing the role of the body within heterosexual relationships and marriage, thereby offering limited space for diverse and contextualized experiences of the female body (Moulaison, 2007). Feminist theories of the body highlight how women's bodies are often subjected to social and religious control, and they frame the body as a site of resistance and transformation against oppressive norms (Cleary, 2015).

In this context, Theology of the Body must be further developed to address critical questions of gender, sexuality, and bodily justice in light of Christian faith. Some critiques also suggest that the teaching is overly idealistic and insufficiently grounded in the complex realities of adolescent life—particularly within digital culture and value pluralism (Johnson, 2001). Therefore, advancing a more inclusive and contextual theology of the body is essential to bridge bodily spirituality with contemporary social dynamics.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that an understanding of the Theology of the Body, as taught by Pope John Paul II, offers a significant contribution to the formation of adolescents' spiritual identity as persons created in the image of God. The body is understood not merely as a biological entity, but as a living sacrament that reveals God's love and presence within human relationships. In addressing contemporary challenges such as sexual disorientation and moral fragmentation, this spiritual approach provides a relevant foundation for cultivating awareness of the body as both a gift and a moral responsibility. The contributions of this research include: a) Theoretical contribution: the development of theological anthropology that views the body as a spiritual and moral expression; b) Practical contribution: a contextual and pastoral model for character education for adolescents in the digital age; c) Future research directions: recommendations for systematic and interdisciplinary educational strategies that integrate the Theology of the Body with developmental psychology, digital ethics, and Christian spirituality. Thus, this study strengthens the theological and pedagogical foundations of the Church in forming a generation of young people with spiritual integrity, moral awareness, and deep respect for human dignity as the image of God.

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