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## Pakiglambigit (Engagement): A Sociological Study of Youth Ministry Engagement among Batan-ong Katoliko in Bukidnon

Jade Harley C. Bretaña, Clarence M. Batan, Josefina M. Tabudlong

### ABSTRACT

Batan-ong Katoliko (young Catholics) in Bukidnon live out their faith within intersecting social, cultural, economic, and religious contexts that both nurture and constrain their participation in Church life. While studies of youth ministry in the Philippines often rely on theological and developmental frameworks, sociological analyses that examine how young Catholics are positioned within institutional and relational fields remain limited, particularly in regional contexts. Guided by Bourdieu's theoretical orientation, this study approaches youth ministry as a social field structured by access to social capital, cultural legitimacy, economic resources, and symbolic recognition. Using a mixed-methods design, the research draws on survey data (n=215) and in-depth interviews (n=12), which were analyzed thematically. Findings show that batan-ong Katoliko are shaped by overlapping social, cultural, economic, and religious realities: family and peer support draw many into ministry, cultural engagement ranges from integration to distancing, economic precarity constrains but does not prevent participation, and faith is consistently affirmed as a daily compass rooted in prayer, sacraments, and family modeling. In this study, we foreground the Bisayan concept of pakiglambigit (engagement) as a locally grounded analytic that captures how young Catholics relationally enter, sustain, and shape their involvement in ministry. From this conceptual grounding in pakiglambigit, three anchors of youth ministry engagement emerge: Pagpahimutang sa Presensya (Positions of Presence), Pamatasan sa Paglahutay (Practices of Persistence), and Pamaagi sa Pagsalmot (Pathways of Participation), which illustrate how youth are positioned, sustain involvement, and create spaces of belonging within an unevenly accessible Church field. Building on these anchors, the study proposes a framework of Catholic Youth Ministry Dimensions that links youth engagement with structural and relational conditions within parish life. The study contributes a sociological perspective to Philippine youth ministry scholarship while offering practical insights for diocesan youth ministry planning grounded in the lived realities of young Catholics.

### KEYWORDS

Catholic youth, youth ministry engagement, Batan-ong Katoliko, youth ministry frameworks, sociology of religion

## INTRODUCTION

Youth occupy a significant place in the life of the Catholic Church (CBCP-ECY, 2018; Sarmiento, 2016). In the Philippines, however, discussions and practices in youth ministry do not always draw sufficiently from the everyday experiences of young people (Aguilar, Domasian, & Hartosujono, 2024; Cornelio, 2016). This pattern appears particularly in regional settings such as Bukidnon, where doctrine, liturgy, social belonging, cultural inheritance, economic limitations, and religious formation shape the lives of Catholic youth (Agoncillo, 2015).

In this study, engagement refers to the varied ways youth participate in, relate to, and experience Church life. This includes visible ministry roles as well as informal practices such as prayer, peer accompaniment, and everyday negotiations of belonging (Castillo, 2018; Agoncillo, 2015; Cornelio & Salera, 2012). Youth ministry engagement therefore extends beyond programmatic participation to include the relational and structural conditions that shape inclusion and exclusion within church life. To deepen this understanding, the study draws on the Bisayan term *pakiglambigit*, which captures engagement as a relational and contextually situated process. Rather than referring only to participation in activities, *pakiglambigit* points to how young people connect, negotiate belonging, and sustain involvement within social and religious relationships. By foregrounding this local concept, the study situates youth ministry engagement within the lived language and experience of *batan-ong Katoliko*. In doing so, the study proposes *pakiglambigit* as a locally grounded sociological concept of engagement, positioning it as a central analytic for understanding youth ministry participation in context.

Existing scholarship often portrays Filipino Catholic youth through broad institutional lenses, describing them as future leaders of the Church, recipients of catechetical formation, or participants in organized ministry programs (Arcaina, 2025). Studies frequently focus on religiosity trends, moral formation, and values education amid changing social influences (Batan, 2021; Cornelio, 2016). These works have provided important insights into faith expressions and practices among Filipino youth. At the same time, fewer studies examine how broader social, cultural, and economic conditions shape the ways young people engage with their faith. Such dynamics remain less explored in local and regional contexts outside the National Capital Region (CBCP-ECY, 2015). As a result, discussions of youth ministry sometimes remain oriented toward institutional programs rather than toward the everyday circumstances in which young people live their faith (Cornelio, 2016). These discussions point to the importance of examining youth ministry within the specific social contexts in which young people live, particularly in regional communities where everyday religious participation takes distinct forms. This gap calls for approaches that not only contextualize youth ministry but also draw from local categories that reflect how engagement is lived and understood in specific communities.

This concern becomes more significant in the Philippine context, where young people constitute a large portion of the population (Arcaina, 2025). Filipino youth navigate a rapidly changing social landscape shaped by globalization, digitalization, and diverse cultural traditions (Castillo, 2024). Existing scholarship has examined various aspects of youth life, including

political participation (Curato & Calamba, 2018; Palomares et al., 2021; Ragandang & Podder, 2022), digital engagement (Cabbuag, 2025; Cleofas & Labayo, 2024), and the negotiation of religious identities (Cornelio, 2016, 2018). These studies highlight the role of institutions such as family, school, church, and the state in shaping youth experiences (Cornelio, 2016), while also pointing to the importance of recognizing local variations in youth experiences (Philipps, 2018; Swartz, 2021a; Swartz et al., 2022).

Despite the growing body of literature on Filipino youth, much of the research remains concentrated in urban or institutional settings, leaving rural and provincial experiences less examined. Many studies draw on youth experiences in Metro Manila and other urban centers where ministry programs operate through established institutional networks. Regional contexts, such as Bukidnon, present different social conditions in which participation is more strongly shaped by local parish relationships, family ties, and uneven access to resources. The perspectives of youth in Bukidnon, many of whom are Bisaya-speaking and live in agricultural communities while actively participating in church life, remain underrepresented in existing studies.

Located in the heart of Mindanao, Bukidnon is the most populous province in Region X, with a population of 1.5 million, of whom 73.4 percent identified as Roman Catholic in 2020 (PSA, 2023). Known as the “Food Basket of Mindanao” (Salonga, Borbon, & Pulhin, 2024) and recognized for its strong ecclesial presence, the province hosts a diverse population composed of settler and indigenous communities (Province of Bukidnon, 2012). The Diocese of Malaybalay, established in 1969 and elevated in 1982, plays a central role in youth formation through the Diocesan Commission on Youth (DCY), which oversees parish-based initiatives, faith formation, and leadership development (Banagbanag, 2014; Diocese of Malaybalay, 2017). Scholars such as Asuncion (2020), Castillo (2018), Cornelio (2016), Nyamnjoh and Morrell (2020), Batan et al. (2021), Cooper et al. (2021), and Breakey et al. (2021) emphasize that attention to such local contexts is essential for developing context-sensitive understandings of youth life. This attention to locality resonates with emerging efforts to articulate Mindanao-based perspectives in the social sciences, which highlight how regional experiences shape knowledge production and theoretical development. Situating youth ministry within Bukidnon therefore contributes to this broader effort to foreground Mindanawon contexts in sociological inquiry, where local experiences and language inform emerging theoretical directions.

This study responds to this gap by examining the social, cultural, economic, and religious contexts that shape the lives of *batan-ong Katoliko* in Bukidnon. It conceptualizes youth ministry engagement through *pakiglambigit*, using this local concept to examine how faith and participation are lived and negotiated within these conditions. In doing so, it proposes a place-based perspective that complements existing studies by foregrounding local experiences that are often less visible in national-level discussions. Scholars and pastoral workers can use these contextual insights to advance scholarship and develop pastoral initiatives that respond to the everyday realities of young Catholics.

Within these contexts, young Catholics navigate multiple social and institutional conditions that shape how they participate in and relate to Church life. This article examines youth ministry engagement as *pakiglambigit*, a locally grounded and relational process through which *batan-*

ong Katoliko participate in, negotiate, and sustain their involvement in Church life. By centering pakiglambigit as its main analytic, the study examines youth engagement not only as an empirical concern but as a relational process shaped by local conditions. From this, three anchors of youth ministry engagement are articulated: Pagpahimutang sa Presensya (Positions of Presence), Pamatasan sa Paglahutay (Practices of Persistence), and Pamaagi sa Pagsalmot (Pathways of Participation). These anchors explain how young Catholics negotiate their place within the Catholic field. The study also proposes Catholic Youth Ministry Dimensions that outline how ministry structures may respond through recognition, accompaniment, inclusion, relevant formation, and equitable resources. Together, these frameworks offer a sociologically informed approach for understanding youth ministry engagement as pakiglambigit, a locally grounded form of relational participation rooted in the lived faith of batan-ong Katoliko in Bukidnon. By advancing pakiglambigit as an analytic concept, the study contributes to broader sociological discussions on engagement while foregrounding Mindanawon perspectives in knowledge production.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the last few decades, scholars have increasingly focused on understanding youth globally (Philipps, 2018). Scholars emphasize that youth does not represent a static stage but rather a socially constructed category that cultural, political, and institutional interpretations continuously shape (Harlan, 2016; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005). Globally, societies often define youth relationally by contrasting young people with elders or by marking life milestones rather than relying on age alone (Krishnan & Sethuramalingam, 2017). These debates show that social structures and cultural contexts produce fluid and shifting definitions of youth.

In the Philippine context, however, the development of youth studies has remained relatively limited and uneven. As Lanuza (2004) noted, research on Filipino youth has often been segmented and sporadic, relying heavily on Western theoretical models and policy frameworks rather than sustained theoretical development. This reliance on imported categories, often inattentive to cultural nuance, has limited the emergence of studies that situate Filipino youth within their own contexts, though more recent efforts at indigenization have begun to address this gap (Chan, 2023; Swartz et al., 2022). Earlier works such as Bulatao's (1966) concept of split-level Christianity and Jocano's (1997/2019, 1998) studies on rural religiosity already pointed to tensions between institutional doctrine and everyday religious life. These foundational perspectives set the stage for broader debates about how Filipino youth themselves are defined, understood, and positioned within society.

The term kabataan itself remains fluid and varies across agencies. Government discourse defines youth as ages 15-30 under Republic Act No. 8044 (Youth in Nation-Building Act), while the United Nations applies the 15-24 range (United Nations for Youth, 2013; Atanoza-Megriño, 2024). Beyond legal definitions, Filipino youth are consistently regarded as a vibrant and dynamic generation, celebrated as the "hope of the nation" yet navigating lives shaped by globalization, digitalization, and enduring cultural traditions (Aguilan, 2020; Asuncion, 2020). Diverse social, cultural, economic, and

political contexts shape their experiences. (Arcaina, 2025), identity (Chan, 2023; Harlan, 2016), and civic engagement (Atanoza-Megriño, 2024; Curato & Calamba, 2018).

Scholars often frame youth transitions as movements between school and work, dependence and autonomy, or formation and service (Puyat, 2005). Yet scholars caution against reducing youth merely to a stage of “becoming” (Harlan, 2016). Instead, research has underscored the pressures of economic precarity, including interrupted education, unstable employment, and the “istambay” phenomenon (Batan, 2012). In post-conflict areas such as Marawi, these vulnerabilities intersect with displacement and limited access to schooling (Cornelio & Calamba, 2022). Youth identities are also shaped by barkada (peer) networks, digital communities, and cultural traditions (Arcaina, 2025; Cornelio, 2016).

Studies of Filipino youth highlight their visible participation in politics and activism, from the Martial Law era to contemporary governance through the Sangguniang Kabataan (Amante, Tabigue, & Lumintao, 2024; Asuncion, 2020). Yet scholars question the depth of youth representation and the risks of tokenistic participation. Activism likewise intersects with the Church’s moral concerns around drugs, sexuality, and Western influence (Cornelio & Lasco, 2020), while interfaith initiatives have shaped youth engagement in peacebuilding (Cornelio & Salera, 2012; Ragandang & Podder, 2022).

Religiosity remains central to Filipino youth life. Scholars have studied Catholicism, the country’s dominant religious tradition, through the lenses of belief, practice, and spiritual agency (Aguilar et al., 2024). Cornelio (2011b, 2016) describes Filipino Catholic youth as engaging in “reflexive spirituality,” adapting institutional religion to personal, relational, and generational meanings. Other research explores coping strategies (del Castillo & Alino, 2020), interfaith dialogue (Cornelio & Salera, 2012), and campus-based socialization (Mañez & Yabut, 2022). The National Catechetical Study (Batan, 2021) underscores the formative role of catechesis across parishes, schools, and public spaces.

Castillo (2018) responded to Cornelio by unpacking the categories of “youth” and “religiosity,” offering theoretical clarity. Aguilar et al. (2024) observed generational gaps in adherence to Catholic teachings, while Arcaina (2025) emphasized the Church’s role in promoting youth development through social justice. The Directory for Catechesis (Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization (PCPNE), 2020) stressed the need for catechesis grounded in Filipino values and realities. Together, these sources point to the importance of context-aware catechesis.

Educational institutions, especially Catholic schools and university-based organizations, play a crucial role in shaping youth identities and values (Cornelio, 2011a, 2016, 2018; Lituañas, 2017). The National Catechetical Study (NCS) 2021 Participatory Action Research and Intervention (PARI) Project highlights the ongoing need for pastoral presence, digital literacy, and responsive catechetical tools in religious education (Batan, 2021).

Recent scholarship has shifted toward critical, decolonial, and participatory paradigms (Cooper, Swartz, Batan, & Kropff Causa, 2021). Scholars emphasize engaging youth as co-creators of knowledge rather than mere subjects (Harlan, 2016), with ethnographic and qualitative approaches gaining traction in the Philippines (Cornelio, 2016; Lanuza, 2004). These studies show that religiosity among Filipino youth is often negotiated in

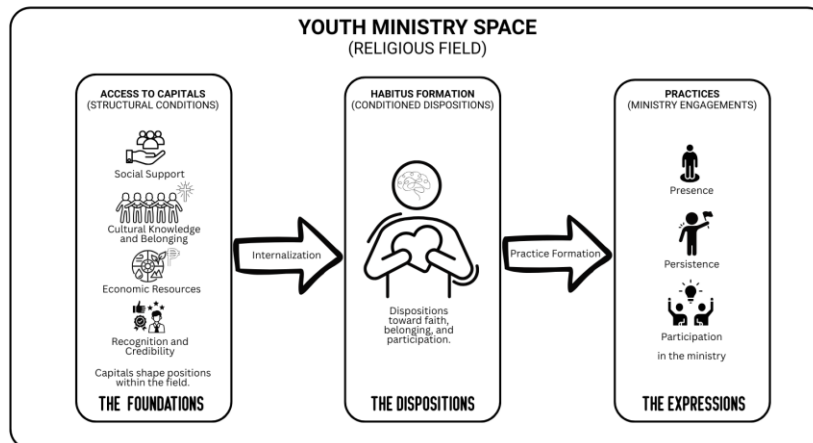
everyday life, where institutional teachings intersect with personal interpretation and social relationships (Agoncillo, 2015; Mañez & Yabut, 2022). Collectively, this literature underscores that Filipino youth live at the intersections of institutional religion and personal spirituality, global pressures and local traditions, aspiration and constraint.

Despite the growing body of research, significant gaps remain, particularly in regional contexts. Much of the existing research examines youth participation within urban or institutional contexts, leaving regional settings comparatively less examined. Little attention has been paid to how economic hardships and cultural hybridity shape youth religiosity outside Metro Manila. Moreover, few studies adopt a sociological lens to analyze youth ministry itself, its organizational structures, social dynamics, and the role of youth ministers. Addressing these gaps requires localized, mixed-methods, and participatory approaches that foreground the voices of Bisaya-speaking youth and situate Catholic ministry within the lived realities of everyday faith.

Overall, these studies show that institutional structures, cultural expectations, and everyday social relationships shape Catholic youth engagement in the Philippines. While theological and pastoral studies often focus on faith formation and moral development, sociological perspectives highlight how young people navigate religious institutions through networks of support, cultural belonging, and access to resources. This study builds on these insights by examining youth ministry as a social space where participation is shaped by relationships, opportunities, and constraints. By situating youth ministry within these broader social dynamics, the study contributes a sociological lens that connects individual faith practices with the structural conditions that enable or limit youth engagement.

## **SOCIOLOGICAL LENS**

This study draws on the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu to examine the faith lives of *batan-ong Katoliko* in Bukidnon. His concepts of field, capital, habitus, and practice (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1990) provide a lens for understanding youth ministry not simply as a program or set of religious activities, but as a social field where relationships, expectations, and struggles for legitimacy continuously unfold. Rather than treating ministry as a fixed institution, this paper employs a relational interpretation of Field Theory, viewing it as a dynamic space where youth negotiate visibility, recognition, and access. In this sense, youth ministry becomes a lived arena of interaction, shaped as much by informal ties and symbolic hierarchies as by formal structures or doctrinal content.



**Figure 1.** Analytical Logic of Youth Ministry Engagement

Figure 1 summarizes the analytical logic guiding this study. Drawing from Bourdieu's framework, youth ministry is conceptualized as a religious field where different forms of capital shape the conditions of participation. Access to social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capital forms the foundations that position young people within the ministry space. These conditions are internalized through habitus, producing dispositions toward faith, belonging, and participation. Such dispositions are then expressed through observable practices of participation in ministry life, including presence, persistence, and participation. Understanding these expressions requires examining how access to different forms of capital structures participation within the youth ministry field.

Within this relational field, different forms of capital shape the foundations of participation (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital, such as support from family, peers, and mentors, often opens doors to participation, while cultural capital, ranging from liturgical fluency to the ability to connect Catholic norms with local traditions, marks some as more legitimate participants than others. Economic capital determines who can afford sustained involvement, and symbolic capital, in the form of prestige or spiritual credibility, elevates some youth into leadership roles while leaving others less visible. These capitals, as Bourdieu (1984) emphasized in *Distinction*, rarely operate in isolation; they work relationally, producing subtle hierarchies of recognition within the Church.

The notion of habitus clarifies how these structural conditions are internalized as dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). Formed through family, community, and prior church encounters, habitus shapes how youth carry themselves in ministry settings, whether with ease and confidence or with hesitation and uncertainty. Some feel naturally at home in ecclesial spaces, while others struggle to find belonging. Yet, as Bourdieu (1990) argued, these dispositions are not rigid; they can shift as youth encounter new roles, communities, and opportunities within the religious field.

Within this framework, engagement is understood not only as practice but as *participation*, a relational process through which youth navigate

positions, mobilize resources, and sustain belonging within the religious field. This concept bridges Bourdieu's logic of practice with locally grounded expressions of participation, allowing the analysis to capture how engagement unfolds in context rather than as an abstract category.

This study distinguishes participation as visible and programmatic involvement in ministries and activities, and *pakiglambigit* as the broader relational expressions of faith that sustain belonging, such as prayer, peer mentoring, or accompaniment. This distinction shows that faith cannot be reduced to institutional participation alone. Drawing on Bourdieu's logic of practice, the analysis emphasizes that meaningful expressions of faith are often relational, negotiated, and unrecognized by formal structures, yet remain central to youth identity and belonging. Youth ministry can therefore be examined not simply as institutional participation but as a relational field in which social conditions shape how young Catholics enter, sustain, and negotiate their engagement. Within this field, *batan-ong Katoliko* emerge not as passive members but as positioned actors navigating a contested and relational religious arena. Youth ministry thus becomes a space where recognition, legitimacy, and belonging are continually negotiated. This framework allows the study to interpret engagement as practices shaped by positions within the field, access to capital, and everyday negotiations within the Church.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2021), integrating quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews to examine the social, cultural, economic, and religious contexts shaping the lives of *batan-ong Katoliko* in Bukidnon. The design captures both breadth (survey patterns) and depth (interview narratives), allowing statistical trends to be interpreted alongside lived experiences. Bukidnon, known for its cultural diversity and agricultural economy (Salonga et al., 2024), provides a meaningful setting for examining Catholic youth life in a regional context.

The quantitative component consisted of a survey administered to 215 Catholic youth, aged 18-30, who were active members of parishes under the Diocesan Commission on Youth (DCY) of the Diocese of Malaybalay. The survey formed part of a broader research project on *batan-ong Katoliko* and focused specifically on youth experiences related to Church participation, family and peer influences, cultural dynamics, economic conditions, and access to religious support. Responses were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), and descriptive statistics were used to identify patterns of engagement and contextual trends across localities in the province.

The instruments were reviewed by youth ministry practitioners prior to field deployment to ensure their relevance to parish-based contexts. The survey questionnaire was pilot-tested with Catholic youth leaders and members to assess clarity and contextual appropriateness. Feedback from this pilot stage informed minor revisions to the instrument. Internal consistency of the scaled items was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which indicated acceptable reliability across the major constructs. These procedures strengthened the instrument's reliability in capturing the conditions shaping youth ministry engagement. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research

Integrity and Compliance Office (RICO) of Mindanao State University–Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT). All participants provided informed consent after being fully briefed on the study's objectives.

To complement and deepen the survey findings, the qualitative component involved in-depth interviews with 12 youth leaders from various parishes across the diocese, including upland indigenous-influenced communities and lowland urban centers. These interviews provided insights into how young Catholics navigate faith within their social and cultural environments. The data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically using MAXQDA, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2020) reflexive thematic analysis. This process surfaced key themes and also allowed the study to move beyond code frequency to focus on meaning-making, combining inductive insights from youth narratives with deductive interpretation through Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, habitus, and practice. The integration of both datasets enabled the interpretation of statistical patterns alongside qualitative accounts of youth ministry engagement.

## RESULTS

This section integrates survey findings from 215 Catholic youth with interview data from 12 youth leaders across the Diocese of Malaybalay. Findings are presented in three parts: first, the participant profile provides an overview of respondents' demographic and socio-economic backgrounds; second, the contextual realities describe how social, cultural, economic, and religious factors shape the lives and faith of *batan-ong Katoliko* in Bukidnon; and third, the integrated findings bring together the quantitative patterns and qualitative themes to highlight the overall portrait of young Catholics in the province and the key contexts that influence their engagements.

### Participant Profile

Respondents were 18-30 years old ( $M = 21.93$ ) and reported an average of 7.43 years in youth ministry, indicating long-term engagement into early adulthood. Most identified as female (60.9%), followed by male (26.0%) and LGBTQ+ (13.0%), reflecting women's strong presence in ministry leadership alongside visible gender diversity. Two-thirds (67.9%) were Bisaya and 15.3% were Lumad (Manobo, Higaonon, Bukidnon, Tagulwanen), with the remainder tracing Ilonggo, Cebuano, Boholano, Waray, Ilocano, or Tagalog roots, mirroring the province's settler and indigenous mix. Educational attainment was high (57.7% in college; 29.3% graduates). Economically, 65.1% lived below the poverty threshold (₱12,030/month) and 19.5% were low-income; most were students (60.9%) or full-time workers (23.3%), balancing ministry with study and work.

**Table 1:** Selected Demographic Indicators of *Batan-ong Katoliko* Respondents in Bukidnon

Indicators	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Age of Respondents	18	30	21.93	2.975
Years in the Ministry	1	23	7.43	4.017

Survey indicators point to strong family support for faith (M = 1.12) and rare peer pressure to compromise values (M = 3.30). Youth reported moderate community engagement (M = 1.75) and discussed religion at home roughly monthly (M = 2.99). Cultural traditions were highly valued (M = 1.45) but exerted only moderate influence on identity (M = 2.04); culture–Church conflict was uncommon (M = 3.00). Financial difficulty moderately affected participation (M = 2.47). Most expressed a strong need for spiritual guidance (M = 1.14) and said their Catholic faith had strengthened over time (M = 1.15).

The qualitative phase involved 12 youth leaders aged 21–28 from diverse parish settings: urban lowland, rural upland, and indigenous communities, providing a cross-section of Bukidnon’s socio-cultural realities. Most participants were employed or actively serving in parish youth ministries, and all held current leadership roles. Ethnolinguistic backgrounds included Bisaya, Ilonggo, Talaandig, and Higaonon. Family income and education varied from low-income to middle-income households and from college to postgraduate levels. Thematic analysis surfaced patterned experiences across contexts: socially, faith was relationally cultivated through family ties, peer mentorship, and ministry friendships but sometimes contested by familial expectations; culturally, participants described pride in indigenous heritage alongside uncertainty or selective reinterpretation; economically, they reported barriers to participation but also practical strategies and communal supports; religiously, they framed faith as both moral compass and spiritual anchor formed through prayer, sacraments, and early exposure to Church life.

**Table 2:** *Batan-ong Katoliko* Respondent Characteristics

Indicator	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	131	60.9
Male	56	26.0
LGBTQ+	28	13.0
Total	215	100.0
<b>Ethnicity Group</b>		
Bisaya	146	67.9
Lumad	33	15.3
Visayas Group	29	13.5
Luzon Group	7	3.3
Total	215	100.0
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
High School Level	7	3.3
High School Graduate	17	7.9
College Undergraduate	124	57.7
College Graduate	63	29.3
Postgraduate	4	1.9
Total	215	100.0
<b>Monthly Family Income</b>		
Less than 12,030	140	65.1
12,030 - 24,060	42	19.5
24,060 - 48,120	20	9.3
48,120 - 84,210	12	5.6
84,210 - 144,360	1	.5
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Student	131	60.9
Employed full-time	50	23.3
Employed part-time	12	5.6
Unemployed	12	5.6
Self-employed	10	4.7
Total	215	100.0

Table 3: Profile of the *Batan-ong Katoliko* Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Educational Qualification	Family Income	Employment Status
Sidya	25	Female	Talaandig	College Graduate	₱12,030 - 24,060	Full-time Employed
Hayana	22	Female	Bisaya	Postgraduate	₱12,030 - 24,060	Full-time Employed
Rand	25	Gay	Bisaya	Postgraduate	₱12,030 - 24,060	Full-time Employed
Farah	22	Female	Cebuano	College Undergraduate	Less than ₱12,030	Student
Hena	21	Female	Bisaya	College Undergraduate	Less than ₱12,030	Student
Chandra	23	Female	Talaandig	College Graduate	₱12,030 - 24,060	Employed full-time
Gena	22	Female	Ilonggo	College Undergraduate	Less than ₱12,030	Employed part-time
Gendra	28	Female	Bisaya	College Graduate	₱24,060 - 48,120	Employed full-time
Kian	25	Male	Bukidnon	College Graduate	Less than ₱12,030	Employed full-time
Jay	23	Male	Higaonon	College Graduate	Less than ₱12,030	Student
Jeya	27	Female	Bisaya	College Graduate	₱12,030 - 24,060	Employed full-time
Liya	21	Female	Bisaya	College Undergraduate	₱48,120 -84,210	Student

### Contextual Realities of Catholic Youth

The qualitative interviews with 12 youth leaders, drawn from both upland indigenous communities and lowland urban centers, provided depth to the survey results. Thematic analysis identified four interrelated contexts shaping Catholic youth life in Bukidnon.

#### *Social Contexts: Relationships as the Foundation of Faith*

Relationships formed the primary gateway into ministry. Many youth began serving after being invited by relatives or encouraged by parish friends. Involvement was often cemented by the shared experiences of *barkada* networks, where ministry became an extension of friendship.

Family was a source of both support and tension. Supportive households provided moral encouragement and practical help, but others questioned the time and resources spent on Church work, particularly when it conflicted with household duties. Gender norms also shaped this dynamic, as young women were often expected to balance ministry with caregiving and domestic responsibilities. One youth leader summarized the interplay of friendship and faith:

*“Sila ang mga tao nga naay una nga impluwensya kanako... kung ang akong pamilya dool sa Ginoo ug ang mga tawo nga nagapalibot nako posible nga mas dool ako sa Ginoo.”* (They were the people who first influenced me... if my family and

those around me are close to God, it's likely I will be too.) -  
Rand, 25, Gay

These findings highlight the importance of relational support systems in shaping how youth enter and remain involved in ministry. These relational ties also appear to sustain long-term engagement, as many participants described encouragement from peers, family members, and mentors as key reasons they continued serving in ministry over several years. Leadership roles: choirs, altar service, parish youth councils, and diocesan events were often described as formative, building confidence, organizational skills, and a sense of purpose. However, access to visible leadership tended to flow through existing networks. For female leaders in particular, the “double duty” of ministry and home obligations required careful negotiation with family and mentors to remain active.

### *Cultural Contexts: Negotiating Heritage and Belief*

Cultural identity in Bukidnon was neither monolithic nor passive; it was actively lived, selected, or set aside. A set of participants described enculturated Catholic practice like wearing indigenous attire during festivals, integrating local music and gestures like *pagmamano* (raising the elder's hand to touch one's forehead), and honoring ancestral narratives in parish events. This integration deepened belonging and made faith feel “at home” in local soil, particularly where parish leaders intentionally created space for cultural expression.

Others reported cultural distance. Some grew up in urbanizing spaces or schools where indigenous practices were not emphasized; others simply lacked opportunities to learn about tribal customs in parish life. For these youth, Catholic identity was shaped more by catechetical content and digital Catholic media than by inherited cultural forms.

A third pattern was selective discernment: youth who evaluated specific practices as *patuo-tuo* (superstitions) or as inconsistent with Church teaching and chose to let them go. This process was often described without hostility, as a faith-informed sorting of what to retain and what to release. Parish context mattered; where clergy and lay leaders encouraged careful integration and offered catechesis that named both convergence and limits, youth reported more confidence in navigating heritage and doctrine. As one participant reflected:

*“We’re very happy nga nadala siya... karon na-strengthen ang collaboration sa indigenous nga mga traditions ug church traditions.”* (We’re happy it’s now embraced... today there’s strengthened collaboration between indigenous traditions and Church traditions.) - Jay, 23, Male

Some participants also noted that parish practices sometimes shaped how cultural traditions were received, particularly when indigenous customs were viewed as incompatible with church activities. Overall, cultural engagement bridged a spectrum from enrichment to uncertainty to discerned

distance, with institutional openness and formative accompaniment shaping where individual youth located themselves along that spectrum.

#### *Economic Contexts: Constraints and Collective Resourcefulness*

Material conditions were a significant, though not determinative, factor in participation. The majority of respondents came from low-income households, and interviews described the very practical costs of ministry life: fare to parish or diocesan centers, registration fees, uniforms or attire, and time away from work or study. Such costs shaped which events were feasible and how often youth could say yes.

Yet the narratives were equally marked by resourcefulness. Some youth saved allowances over months or took short-term jobs to fund travel and fees; others shared rides, borrowed attire, or coordinated schedules to minimize lost income. Participants also described parish-level *income-generating projects (IGPs)*, pooled sponsorships, and improvised assistance from priests and older youth that made attendance possible for those unable to afford. One participant said:

*“Before mga regional, national na kailangan bitaw’g hundreds or thousands... kay gasave man ko or ako man gyud ginapangandaman akoang pag-serve.”* (For regional or national events that require hundreds or thousands, I really save up and prepare for them.) - Gena, 22, Female

These patterns suggest that economic limitations do not necessarily lead to disengagement when relational support and shared ministry commitments remain strong. In this area, the data show both constraint and community: economic precarity, limited mobility, and consistency, but collective practices (saving, sharing, sponsoring) kept the door open. Youth framed these efforts less as exceptional heroism and more as ordinary stewardship attached to their vocation to serve.

#### *Religious Contexts: Faith as Compass and Daily Practice*

Participants consistently described Catholicism as a lived framework that ordered choices and provided strength in stress, study, and work. Faith was not presented as a set of occasional rituals but as a daily discipline – *pagtinguha sa matag adlaw* (striving every day) – expressed in prayer, service, and intentional relationships. The survey’s strong desire for spiritual guidance was echoed in interviews emphasizing the value of formation sessions, recollections, retreats, and peer-led sharing.

Many pointed to specific practices (regular Mass, the rosary, Eucharistic adoration) as the habits that stabilized prayer life and gave language to struggle. Parish-based catechesis helped connect personal devotion with sacramental doctrine, while ministry responsibilities created natural pathways to apply learning in service and leadership.

Early exposure mattered. Numerous participants narrated growing up in households where parents or older siblings modeled service (altar serving, choir, charismatic groups) making ministry a familiar pattern. Even in mixed-faith homes, a supportive parent (often the mother) kept Catholic practice alive through accompaniment to Mass and encouragement for parish activities. As one participant described:

*“Hinay-hinay nabago sad akong kinabuhi... sa akong makanunayon nga pag simba sa matag adlaw ug pag-ampo sa santos nga rosaryo... nadawat jud nako ang nag-awas nga grasya.”* (My life gradually changed... through daily Mass and praying the holy rosary... I truly received abundant grace.) - Hena, 21, Female

Taken together, the religious context is marked by consistent practice supported by formation, sacramental life, and intergenerational modeling-patterns that the quantitative data mirror in reported growth in faith over time.

**Table 4:** Analysis of the Field of *Batan-ong* Katoliko

Domain	Descriptive Survey Findings	Narrative Summary of Contextual Realities	Implications to Bourdieu's Capital Type
Social	Family religious support is high (mean=1.12); peer pressure against faith is rare (mean=3.30). Respondents are moderately active in community (mean=1.75).	Faith is relational - shaped by family, friends, and leadership roles; participants form religious identity through socialization, but also face familial conflict.	Social ties are key to participants involvement. Programs may strengthen intergenerational and peer-based support.
Cultural	The majority of participants report strong valuation of family culture (mean=1.45) and moderate influence of local culture on identity (mean=2.04).	Culture enriches faith for some, but others feel culturally disconnected or reject practices deemed superstitious.	Cultural inclusion in faith spaces is uneven. Ministries may engage youth in meaningful cultural reflection and enculturated practice.
Economic	The majority come from low- to middle-income families; financial difficulty moderately affects participation (mean=2.47).	Participants face financial barriers but remain active through saving, parish support, and community solidarity.	Economic status affects Church access. Supportive, flexible, and low-cost models ensure youth inclusivity.
Religious	Mass attendance is weekly (mean=3.09); most have	Faith is a moral compass formed	Faith is deeply rooted in practice

	long years in ministry (mean=7.43); strong need for spiritual guidance (mean=1.14).	through liturgy, prayer, service, and community; formation and family influence are central.	and people. Ministry may sustain spaces for spiritual growth, formation, and moral discernment.
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Overall, these social, cultural, economic, and religious patterns illustrate that youth engagement in ministry emerges from interconnected relational conditions rather than from programs alone.

**Portrait of *Batan-ong Katoliko* in Bukidnon: Integrated Findings**

Together, the quantitative and qualitative results highlight how the lives of *batan-ong Katoliko* in Bukidnon are shaped by overlapping social, cultural, economic, and religious contexts. Survey data showed strong family support for faith and infrequent peer pressure to compromise values, while interviews confirmed that relatives and friends were the primary gateways into ministry, sustaining participation through encouragement and shared responsibilities. At the same time, both data sets pointed to tensions, particularly for young women who balanced ministry with domestic expectations.

Cultural findings likewise reflected a spectrum of engagements. Quantitatively, cultural traditions were highly valued but had only moderate influence on identity; qualitatively, some youth actively integrated indigenous practices into parish life, others had limited exposure, and some distanced themselves from practices they considered inconsistent with Catholic teaching. Parish openness to cultural expression emerged as a key factor in shaping these outcomes.

Economic conditions were consistently marked by constraint. Two-thirds of respondents lived below the poverty threshold, and financial difficulty moderately affected participation. Interviews gave depth to these numbers, illustrating how youth saved allowances, shared rides, or joined parish-sponsored initiatives to remain involved despite limited means.

Finally, religious identity was strongly affirmed across both datasets. Surveys indicated a heightened need for spiritual guidance and a strengthening of faith over time, while interviews described faith as a daily compass rooted in prayer, sacraments, and formation. Early exposure through family members often established lasting patterns of ministry involvement, reinforced by parish-based catechesis and leadership opportunities.

**Table 5:** Contextual Domains' Findings and Insights

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Enhancing Habitus Formation</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Sociological Insights</b>
Social	Faith is shaped by social relationships and support systems that influence participants engagements in Church life.	Many participants rely on family and peer support for ministry involvement, while others experience conflict at home over religious commitments.	Support from people around them helps participants stay active in the Church. Those without this support may feel left out or struggle to stay involved.
Cultural	Culture informs religious identity, but youth often navigate tensions between tradition and Catholic teachings.	Some participants integrate cultural elements into their faith life, while others struggle with cultural disconnection or feel the need to reject certain practices.	Not all cultural practices are accepted in Church spaces, so participants figure out what to keep and what to change in their faith journey.
Economic	Economic challenges affect access to ministry, yet participants show determination through creative and communal support.	Participants express difficulty in affording Church events but find ways to stay active through savings, work, or parish assistance.	Lack of money can make participants feel excluded, but many show strong commitment by working hard or seeking help to keep joining Church activities.
Religious	Faith is lived through consistent practices and values, guiding the daily decisions and personal growth of participants.	Religious life is expressed through prayer, service, and moral action; participants form their beliefs through experience and relationships.	Faith becomes part of everyday life, not just Church rituals. Participants learn what it means to be Catholic through regular practice and support from others.

Taken together, these findings show that youth ministry engagement is shaped by relational support, cultural negotiation, economic constraints, and everyday faith practices. To synthesize these dynamics, the study conceptualizes youth ministry engagement as *pakiglambigit*, from which three anchors emerge as dimensions of youth ministry engagement that explain how *batan-ong Katoliko* enter, sustain, and shape their involvement in the Church.

## DISCUSSION

This discussion interprets youth ministry engagement through *pakiglambigit*, a relational and locally grounded process shaped by overlapping social, cultural, economic, and religious contexts in Bukidnon. Drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, habitus, and practice (1977, 1984, 1990), the Church is approached as a structured social field where access to recognition, legitimacy, and belonging remains unevenly distributed. Within this field, *pakiglambigit* captures how young Catholics navigate, sustain, and negotiate their participation in ministry life.

The discussion proceeds in two parts. First, it interprets the anchors of youth ministry engagement that emerged from the integration of survey and interview data, highlighting youth as actors navigating constraints and opportunities within the Catholic field. Second, it examines how these anchors inform the reconfiguration of Catholic youth ministry through the Youth Ministry Dimensions framework, which responds to the conditions shaping youth engagement.

By foregrounding *pakiglambigit* as a local analytic of engagement, the study contributes to the development of context-sensitive sociological concepts grounded in Mindanao. In line with emerging discussions of "Mindanawon" perspectives in the social sciences (Cruz, 2025). This approach shows how local language and lived experience generate theoretical insights within Global South sociology. By advancing *pakiglambigit* as an analytic grounded in Bisayan language and Bukidnon contexts, the study contributes to the development of Mindanawon sociological concepts, demonstrating how local categories can function as theoretical resources rather than descriptive terms.

## ANCHORS OF YOUTH MINISTRY ENGAGEMENTS

At the center of the analysis is *pakiglambigit* (engagement), expressed through three anchors: *Pagpahimutang sa Presensya* (Positions of Presence), *Pamatasan sa Paglahutay* (Practices of Persistence), and *Pamaagi sa Pagsalmot* (Pathways of Participation), represent grounded expressions of *pakiglambigit* as it unfolds in the everyday lives of *batan-ong Katoliko*. Rather than discrete categories, they capture how *pakiglambigit* unfolds across positioning, sustaining involvement, and shaping participation within the Catholic field. Drawn from both quantitative and qualitative data, these anchors highlight youth not as passive recipients of religious programs but as actors navigating opportunities and constraints within the Catholic field. They

frame youth ministry as a social space where faith, relationships, and opportunities shape participation, and where belonging is continuously negotiated.

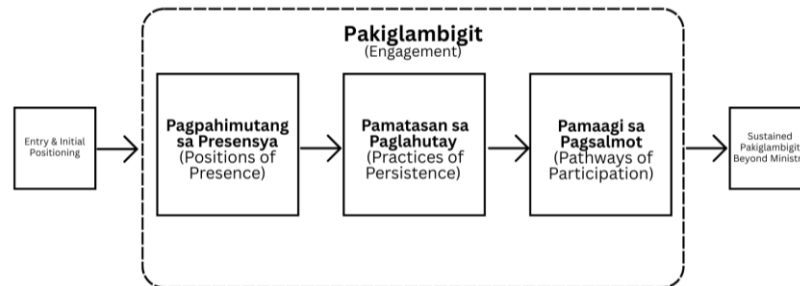


Figure 2. Anchors of Youth Ministry Engagement

Figure 2 presents *pakiglambigit* (engagement) as a relational process through which Catholic youth participation takes shape within ministry contexts. Engagement unfolds through three interrelated anchors: *pagpahimutang sa presensya* (positions of presence), which captures how youth enter and locate themselves within the ministry space; *pamatasan sa paglahutay* (practices of persistence), which reflects how they sustain involvement amid everyday constraints; and *pamaagi sa pagsalmot* (pathways of participation), which shows how they actively shape and extend their participation. Together, these anchors illustrate how youth engagement emerges not as a fixed stage but as an ongoing, negotiated process that can extend beyond formal ministry spaces into sustained forms of *pakiglambigit*.

#### *Pagpahimutang sa Presensya* (Positions of Presence)

In Bukidnon, youth presence in ministry is driven less by programs and more by relational proximity. Strong family support ( $M = 1.12$ ) and low peer pressure to disengage ( $M = 3.30$ ) underscore the centrality of social capital, connections to parents, siblings, peers, and mentors, in enabling participation. Youth from Catholic-committed families or active peer groups often gain early and sustained access to ministry.

However, this presence is unequal. Data show disparities in gender, education, and ethnicity: while women comprise 60.9% of participants and most have tertiary education, those with lower educational attainment, from indigenous backgrounds, or in low-income households often face relational or symbolic exclusion. Domestic patriarchy and differing religious affiliations at home can further constrain involvement, as illustrated by participants who described parental opposition to frequent Church attendance.

In Bourdieu's terms, these differences reflect varied positions in the religious field, with some entering as affirmed actors and others as tolerated or invisible. Symbolic capital through visibility, recognition, and moral

credibility is unevenly distributed and tied to how closely one's dispositions align with dominant expectations of piety, leadership, and gender roles (Batan, 2021; Bourdieu, 1990; Cornelio, 2016; Demerath, 1991). Belonging is thus relationally negotiated, determining whose presence is affirmed and whose voices are heard.

#### *Pamatasan sa Paglahutay* (Practices of Persistence)

Despite economic constraints, 65% of respondents live in low-income households, youth report long-term involvement in ministry (average 7.43 years). Financial strain moderately affects participation ( $M = 2.47$ ), yet interviews reveal a culture of sacrifice, resourcefulness, and self-sufficiency. Some youth work or save to fund their attendance at events, transforming limited economic capital into religious capital through credibility, service roles, and spiritual maturity.

This persistence aligns with Cornelio's (2016) observation that Filipino Catholic youth often sustain faith through peer encouragement and reflexive moral reasoning, and with Swartz's (2021a) concept of navigational capacity, the ability to mobilize scarce resources to remain engaged. In the cultural dimension, while 67.9% identified as Bisaya and many as Lumad, moderate influence of culture on identity ( $M = 2.04$ ) and rare perception of conflict with doctrine ( $M = 3.00$ ) point to fragile integration of indigenous heritage in ministry. Some embrace practices like *pagmamano* and traditional attire, while others are encouraged to unlearn customs seen as incompatible with Catholicism.

These findings reveal that persistence is more than attendance. It is an ongoing negotiation of inclusion across economic and cultural boundaries. Youth convert available resources (time, talent, networks) into spiritual and symbolic capital to sustain belonging under precarity.

#### *Pamaagi sa Pagsalmot* (Pathways of Participation)

While Mass attendance is regular ( $M = 3.09$ ), parish involvement is only moderate ( $M = 1.75$ ), and religious discussions at home are infrequent ( $M = 2.99$ ). This suggests that formal participation does not necessarily equate to deep *pakiglambigit*. Qualitative data highlight alternative forms of involvement: small prayer groups, informal liturgical roles, mentoring, and peer accompaniment. These pathways are often relationally driven rather than programmatically assigned.

Participation is shaped by gender, education, and employment. Women, many of whom are balancing school, work, and domestic duties, often bear "double expectations," while youth from IP or less-educated backgrounds report underrepresentation in leadership. These realities show that meaningful religiosity is not confined to formal roles but thrives in informal, everyday acts of accompaniment and service.

Here, agency, access, and negotiated belonging come to the forefront. Youth create spaces for themselves, redefining participation in ways that reflect their realities. This affirms the call for relational, context-grounded formation and aligns with the value of accompaniment in ministry (Batan, 2021; Cornelio, 2016; Mañez & Yabut, 2022).

**Table 6:** Anchors of Youth Ministry Engagements Analytical Framework

Typology	Data Support	Key Question	Conceptual Theme	Core Meaning
<i>Pagpahimutang sa Presensya</i> (Positions of Presence)	Quantitative: High family support (mean = 1.12); low peer pressure (mean = 3.30) Qualitative: Youth enter ministry through relational ties with family and friends, but symbolic inclusion varies based on gender, religion in the household, and social background (Rand, 25, Gay; Chandra, 23, Female)	Who gets to belong in the religious field?	Social location and symbolic inclusion	Youth are situated in the Church field through varying degrees of relational visibility and symbolic inclusion.
<i>Pamatasan sa Paglahutay</i> (Practices of Persistence)	Quantitative: Financial difficulty (mean = 2.47); 65% from low-income households; moderate cultural-religious tension (mean = 3.00) Qualitative: Youth practice financial discipline, bear familial burdens, and navigate cultural disconnection to remain active in ministry (Sidya, 25, Female; Liya, 21, Female; Gena, 22, Female)	What barriers do youth navigate to remain engaged?	Embodied resilience and conversion of capital	Youth sustain their involvement in ministry through acts of persistence amid constraints.
<i>Pamaagi sa Pagsalmot</i> (Pathways of Participation)	Quantitative: Mass attendance high (mean = 3.09); community activeness moderate (mean = 1.75); spiritual need high (mean = 1.14) Qualitative: Youth sustain faith through friendships, informal mentoring, and non-official roles;	How do youth shape participation despite inequality?	Agency, access, and negotiated belonging	Youth navigate diverse entry points and construct meaningful modes of engagement within ministry life.

	participation is relationally nurtured (Sidya, 25, Female; Farah, 22, Female;			
<i>Pagpahimutang sa Presensya</i> (Positions of Presence)	Quantitative: High family support (mean = 1.12); low peer pressure (mean = 3.30) Qualitative: Youth enter ministry through relational ties with family and friends, but symbolic inclusion varies based on gender, religion in the household, and social background (Rand, 25, Gay; Chandra, 23, Female)	Who gets to belong in the religious field?		

The three anchors show that *batan-ong Katoliko* are not passive recipients of Catholic youth ministry programs but adaptive agents. They interpret, negotiate, and reshape their participation despite doctrinal expectations, family traditions, cultural norms, economic hardship, and peer relationships. Unequally positioned in the field, they mobilize available capital (social, cultural, economic, religious) to secure recognition, legitimacy, and belonging.

Some gain visibility through consistent service; others maintain quiet faithfulness despite marginality; still others challenge norms by bringing in cultural practices or informal ministries. These strategies demonstrate that ministry is co-constructed from below, shaped by everyday faith, relational labor, and local struggle.

The youth ministry engagement anchors of presence, persistence, and participation are not isolated patterns but pressures that youth consistently negotiate within the Church field. Each anchor raises structural questions that youth ministry must address: Presence points to issues of recognition and inclusion, addressed through the dimensions of Youth Members and Youth Ministers; Persistence highlights the challenge of sustaining involvement amid precarity, linked to Youth Ministry Resources and Youth Ministry Organization; and Participation underscores the need for meaningful pathways of belonging, which connect with Youth Formation Programs and Youth Ministry Organization. Taken together, these anchors point to

structural questions. To respond, the Catholic Youth Ministry Dimensions framework is advanced as a way of reconfiguring pastoral practice in light of the pressures youth navigate.

## CATHOLIC YOUTH MINISTRY DIMENSIONS

The findings thus informed a Framework of Catholic Youth Ministry Dimensions, adapted from Batan's (2021) fivefold catechetical structure and aligned with Global South perspectives (Cooper, Swartz, Batan, et al., 2021; Swartz, 2021b). The framework responds directly to the contextual realities of youth in Bukidnon and consists of:

1. Youth Members - Understanding who the youth are, their diversity, and what belonging means locally. In practical terms, this means that youth ministry planning may recognize differences in gender expectations, economic capacity, and cultural background when organizing activities. For instance, flexible meeting schedules or smaller community-based gatherings may help youth who balance work, school, and family responsibilities remain involved.
2. Youth Ministers - Prioritizing accompaniment over administration, with formation responsive to precarity, digital culture, mental health, and family roles. Empowerment may involve giving young people meaningful decision-making roles in parish activities rather than assigning them only support tasks. Parish youth councils, peer mentoring groups, and youth-led prayer initiatives can provide spaces where leadership skills develop through experience.
3. Youth Ministry Organization - Structuring representation, decision-making, and accountability to amplify youth voices. At the parish level, this may include transparent leadership selection, mentoring systems for new members, and opportunities for youth from different social backgrounds to gradually assume responsibilities.
4. Youth Formation Programs - Connecting doctrine with lived experience, culture, and contemporary issues through dialogical methods. Formation programs may also draw from the lived realities of youth in rural communities by discussing issues such as livelihood pressures, migration, cultural traditions, and the everyday moral decisions young people face.
5. Youth Ministry Resources - Ensuring equitable access to financial, emotional, and technological support for sustained participation. Practical responses may include transportation support for youth from distant barangays, parish fundraising

efforts for youth events, or diocesan subsidies that allow economically disadvantaged participants to attend gatherings.

These dimensions extend existing catechetical frameworks, such as those outlined in the National Catechetical Study (Batan, 2021), by moving beyond faith instruction toward the broader social and structural dynamics of ministry. While Batan emphasizes catechesis as formation across parishes, schools, and public spaces, the Catholic Youth Ministry Dimensions developed here highlight how recognition, inclusion, empowerment, and resources shape youth engagement. In this way, the framework complements catechetical approaches but also repositions youth as active agents whose *pakiglambigit* is sustained not only through instruction but also through relational belonging and structural support.

These dimensions offer a sociological-pastoral design, recognizing that ministry is shaped by access to resources, recognition, and structural inclusion. They serve as both diagnostic and visionary tools, prompting church leaders to see ministry as a relational field where presence is cultivated, persistence is honored, and participation is made possible.

The framework repositions youth ministry from a programmatic model toward a contextually grounded, relational approach. It affirms that visibility, capital, and structure matter as much as doctrine and vocation. Ministry becomes a shared fieldwork that is responsive to evolving contexts, accountable to youth voices, and rooted in justice and inclusion. This study contributes to youth ministry scholarship by applying a sociological lens to a predominantly theological discourse, echoing Cornelio (2016), Batan (2021), and Swartz (2021a) in reframing young Catholics as relational actors adapting faith within unequal contexts. The findings affirm that youth are not disengaging from the Church; they are inviting the Church to draw nearer, with structures and accompaniment attuned to their lived realities.

Taken together, the findings suggest that youth ministry engagement is shaped not only by personal faith but also by the relational and structural conditions that enable or constrain participation within parish communities. While studies of Filipino Catholic youth, particularly those conducted in Metro Manila, often document engagement through structured programs, campus organizations, and institutional ministry networks, the experiences of *batan-ong Katoliko* in Bukidnon reveal a different configuration of participation. In this regional setting, youth involvement is sustained less by formal programs and more by relational ties within parish communities. Family support, peer relationships, and everyday interactions with clergy and parish leaders become key pathways through which young people sustain their participation in Church life.

From a sociological perspective, these patterns reflect how participation within the religious field is shaped not only by individual belief but also by access to social, cultural, and symbolic resources that structure recognition and belonging within ministry spaces.

Table 7. Integrated Analysis of the Five Catholic Youth Ministry Dimensions

Dimension	Data Support (Quanti/Quali)	Argument Points	Key Results	Sociological Insights
Youth Members	Both (Quanti: M=1.12 family support; Quali: kinship & peer invitation)	Belonging is relational, not automatic; anchored in family and peer networks.	Family and friends shape entry and continuity in faith spaces.	Social capital mediates access to religious fields.
Youth Ministers	Qualitative (interviews on mentorship, leadership journey)	Leadership is rooted in presence, accompaniment, and modeling, not position.	Youth leaders emerged through encouragement, often unpaid labor.	Accompaniment creates symbolic capital that legitimizes leadership.
Youth Ministry Organization	Both (Quanti: Moderate community activeness M=1.75; Quali: structural feedback)	Organizational systems influence youth retention and recognition.	Structures are present but uneven; burnout and exclusion persist.	Institutional design distributes symbolic power and voice unequally.
Youth Formation Programs	Both (Quanti: M=1.14 spiritual desire; Quali: enculturated practices)	Formation should connect doctrine with lived experience and cultural roots.	Formation includes ritual, mentoring, and integration of tradition.	Religious habitus is formed through cultural integration.
Youth Ministry Resources	Both (Quanti: M=2.47 economic difficulty; Quali: saving, IGPs, parish support)	Material support is a condition for inclusion and consistent participation.	Youth strategize financially or rely on Church support to participate.	Economic and social capitals convert into religious capital through agency and solidarity.

These insights offer several considerations for diocesan youth ministry planning. First, dioceses may benefit from conducting localized assessments of youth participation to better understand how family support, economic conditions, and cultural backgrounds shape patterns of involvement across parishes. Second, pastoral strategies may place greater emphasis on relational accompaniment by strengthening mentorship among youth leaders, parish coordinators, and clergy. Third, diocesan structures may respond to uneven participation by allocating resources and training support to parishes facing greater logistical and financial constraints. Through these efforts, youth ministry can be approached not only as program coordination but also as a pastoral practice attentive to the everyday realities of young Catholics. By foregrounding the lived experiences of *batan-ong Katoliko* in Bukidnon, this study contributes a sociological perspective that links youth faith practices with the relational and structural conditions shaping ministry participation in regional Philippine contexts. In this sense, the study contributes to emerging Mindanawon scholarship by demonstrating how local categories such as *pakiglambigit* can function as analytic concepts, linking lived experience with theoretical development in the social sciences (Cruz, 2025).

## CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the faith and ministry engagements of *batan-ong Katoliko* in Bukidnon are shaped by intersecting social, cultural, economic, and religious contexts. Central to this analysis is the concept of *pakiglambigit*. It captures youth ministry engagement as a relational and contextually grounded process rather than a purely programmatic outcome. Viewed through Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, habitus, and practice, the Church and youth ministry emerge not only as spiritual institutions but also as structured fields where recognition, visibility, and legitimacy are unevenly distributed. Three anchors of youth ministry engagement emerged from the findings: *Pagpahimutang sa Presensya* (Positions of Presence), *Pamatasan sa Paglahutay* (Practices of Persistence), and *Pamaagi sa Pagsalmot* (Pathways of Participation). These anchors can be understood as interrelated dimensions of *pakiglambigit*, where engagement unfolds through presence, persistence, and participation as distinct but connected modes of relational involvement. These anchors reveal how young Catholics are positioned within ministry spaces, how they sustain involvement despite material and cultural limitations, and how they create spaces of belonging within parish life. Together, they show that youth engagement in the Church is relationally grounded, culturally negotiated, economically constrained yet resilient, and spiritually sustained. Building on these insights, the Catholic Youth Ministry Dimensions, namely Youth Members, Youth Ministers, Youth Ministry Organization, Youth Formation Programs, and Youth Ministry Resources, offer a sociologically grounded guide for reconfiguring ministry structures to be more context-sensitive and attentive to the lived realities of young Catholics. This framework highlights the importance of accompaniment, recognition of diversity, participatory leadership structures, relevant formation, and equitable access to resources. In this light, young Catholics emerge not as passive recipients of pastoral care but as adaptive agents navigating and reshaping the field of ministry. The future of youth ministry in

Bukidnon, therefore, depends on the Church's capacity to meet young people within their communities, cultures, and everyday struggles, cultivating inclusive spaces where they can belong, persist, and lead. By foregrounding the lived experiences of *batan-ong Katoliko* in Bukidnon, this study proposes a sociological understanding of youth ministry that connects faith practices with the relational and structural conditions shaping participation, while proposing the Anchors of Youth Ministry Engagement and Catholic Youth Ministry Dimensions as conceptual frameworks for analyzing youth engagement in regional Catholic contexts. In this sense, *pakiglambigit* contributes to emerging Mindanawon approaches to theory-building by showing how localized concepts can inform broader sociological understandings of engagement. As a conceptual contribution, *pakiglambigit* reframes engagement as a relational and situated process, offering a Mindanawon-grounded perspective that extends sociological discussions of participation beyond institutional and programmatic forms by foregrounding lived, negotiated, and context-specific expressions of faith.

#### Note on the Article:

This article forms part of a broader research agenda on *Batan-ong Katoliko* in Bukidnon. It builds on the first author's doctoral dissertation, *Batan-ong Katoliko in Bukidnon: Contexts, Challenges, and Construction of Identities*, and is further advanced through the University of Santo Tomas - Research Center for Social Sciences and Education (RCSSED) project, *Batan-ong Katoliko Lived Aspirations and Yearnings (BaKLAY) in Bukidnon*. Together, these initiatives aim to develop a sociologically grounded understanding of the contexts, challenges, identities, and aspirations of Catholic youth in the province.

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