

Extent of Youth Participation in San Miguel Arkangel Parish Church Activities

Russel John L. Gerarde¹, Fr. Ronnie L. Torres, OMI, Ph.D., D.Litt.(hc), PDTQM, FRIEdr²,
Sr. Mary Ann B. Rhudy, OND³

^{1,3}Notre Dame Center for Catechesis, Cotabato City, Philippines-9600

²Saint Nicholas School, Phitsanulok, Thailand, 65000

Email address: lambertorusseljohn@gmail.com, brorontorres2@gmail.com, srhudyond@gmail.com

Abstract— The researcher observed that many young people at San Miguel Arkangel Gapok Parish were not actively participating in church activities and programs. Consequently, the researcher provided assistance to help young people understand the requirements for church participation. This study aimed to determine how often the participation of the youths in the Eucharist, church Programs, and their Membership church organization in the San Miguel Arkangel Gapok parish is. This study described the level of participation of 37 youth respondents aged 12-30 (10 male and 27 female) from the different chapels and barangays under the Gapok Parish Church. The researcher used a descriptive quantitative research design. The self-constructed interview guide questionnaire underwent face and content evaluation to establish and maintain its validity and reliability. The data collection for this study involved face-to-face interviews where the researcher went to the houses of the respondents to provide survey questionnaires to the participants. The data generated by the research instruments were analyzed and interpreted by using a mean. According to the responses, they participate in the Eucharist occasionally, which denotes sporadic instances of the behavior or comment but not as frequently as a response of "often". It is sometimes the case that parishioners participate at an average frequency in church programs with the rating of "sometimes". The activity or statement on the scale indicated by "sometimes" occurs occasionally, but not as frequently as "often." Regarding their readiness to participate in church programs and the advantages they would receive, the respondents gave positive comments. Regarding involvement in religious organizations, the vast majority of parishioners have never belonged to one. Creating an intervention program to increase youth participation in the Eucharist involves addressing their unique needs, interests, and challenges. The suggested framework for such a program: Understanding Youth Needs, Educational Initiatives, Peer Involvement, Technology Integration, Interactive Workshops and Retreats, Inclusive Events, Mentorship Programs, Community Service Opportunities/Outreach Programs, Regular Feedback, and Adaptation. Remember, the success of the intervention program relies on building a sense of community, relevance, and inclusivity, making the Eucharist a meaningful and enriching experience for the youth (Kancher et al, 2006).

Keywords—Eucharist: Membership: Ministry: Program: Youth.

I. INTRODUCTION

Youth involvement is one of the vital elements that greatly shape the future of the church. Young people bring vitality, fresh perspectives, and renewed enthusiasm to the faith community, making their participation in the church essential (Williams, 2019). By engaging youth in church activities and

encouraging them to take on leadership roles, the church can ensure that the next generation of leaders is prepared to carry on the traditions and values of the faith.

Youth participation in the church fosters personal growth and development. By joining youth groups, attending church events, and taking on leadership roles, young people can develop self-confidence, enhance their leadership skills, and deepen their spiritual connection to God. They can also form meaningful relationships with other members of the faith community, providing them with a sense of belonging and support (Zhang et al 2008). Enabling young people to develop a personal relationship with Jesus actively supporting positive youth development and fostering healthy values and life skills are crucial steps to ensuring their spiritual growth. As the church fails to develop youth as leaders, it puts their future leadership in jeopardy and neglects youth spiritual growth opportunities.

However, only a handful of youths actively participate in the Church activities and attend the eucharist. One reason why youth distance themselves from the church is due to a lack of connection with the church community (Holy See, 2019). This suggests that the sense of community and belonging that many young people crave may not be present within the church. Without a strong connection to the church community, youth may feel isolated and unsupported, leading them to seek fulfillment elsewhere.

Another reason why youth may distance themselves from the church is due to disagreement with church doctrine or practices (Gantt, 2018). As young people begin to form their own beliefs and opinions, they may find that certain aspects of church teachings do not align with their values or worldview. This can lead to a sense of dissonance and discomfort, ultimately causing them to distance themselves from the church. Additionally, if they perceive that the church is not willing to address or adapt to their concerns, they may feel even more alienated (Benda, and Corwyn. 2001).

Perception of hypocrisy or judgment within the church community can also contribute to youth distancing themselves from the church. If young people perceive that the church community is hypocritical - preaching one set of values but not living up to them - or judgmental - condemning others for their beliefs or actions - they may feel disillusioned and disenchanted with the church. media, where instances of hypocrisy or judgment can be quickly shared and amplified.

As a result, this perception of hypocrisy or judgment can also be exacerbated by the prevalence of social youth who may feel that the church is not a safe or welcoming space for them, leading them to seek spiritual fulfillment elsewhere. In conclusion, youth distancing themselves from the church can be attributed to a variety of reasons, including a lack of connection with the church community, disagreement with church doctrine or practices, and perception of hypocrisy or judgment within the church community (Holy See, 2005). To address these issues and foster greater engagement with young people, it is important for the church to actively listen to their concerns, adapt to their changing needs, and create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all (McGill, 2022).

The motivation for this work came from the researcher's observation that many young people at San Miguel Arkanghel Gapok Parish do not participate in church activities or programs. The researcher, a young catechist, is troubled by the fact that many young people attend church seldom at all. To help the youth be transformed, enable them to serve God, and further develop their faith—something that young people in today's world desperately need—the researcher hopes to address their needs or the motivations behind their involvement in the church.

Many of the young people in the Gapok parish are not highly involved in the church and its programs, the researcher discovers while interviewing those who are between the ages of 12 and 30, as they will be considered youth at that point. While some respondents said they were preoccupied with their jobs, others said they weren't very involved in church activities or weren't interested in attending one.

Particularly if they live close to a church, many young people do not participate in church activities. Many young people only attend church when they are compelled to attend or are already members. Nearly all the young people at the San Miguel Arkanghel Gapok Parish are studying when the researcher conducts this study.

Furthermore, practically all the youth already knew how to use the technologies that were in use at the time. In the church, almost all the young people are far from home. Some are young people who live too far away to walk because the mountainous environment is not particularly accommodating to large groups of people. However, young people are taken aback by the fact that they are still relatively inactive in the church and its programs, even near the church.

1.1 Research Questions

This study aims to determine the frequency of the participation of the youths in the Eucharist, church Programs, and their Membership church organization in the San Miguel Arkanghel Gapok Parish. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions.

1. What is the extent of participation among respondents in church activities in terms of the: Eucharist, church programs, and memberships in church organizations?
2. What intervention could be recommended to increase participation in church activities?

II. METHODOLOGY

The researcher used a convenient sampling design. This study described the level of participation of 37 youth respondents aged 12-30 (10 male and 27 female) from the different chapels and barangays under the San Miguel Arkanghel Gapok Parish. The self-constructed questionnaire underwent face and content evaluation to establish and maintain its validity and reliability. The data generated by the research instruments were analyzed and interpreted by using a mean. The data collection for this study involved face-to-face interviews where the researcher went to the houses of the respondents using the interview guide questions to the participants. The study's scores and interpretation were as follows: 5 - Almost Always: This indicates that the behavior or statement on the scale is true or applicable consistently, or nearly always. 4-Often: This denotes that, while not always, the behavior or statement listed on the scale happens frequently or regularly. The third option, "Sometimes," denotes that the behavior or statement on the scale happens sporadically or sporadically, but not as frequently as "often." 2-Almost Never: This indicates that the behavior or statement on the scale is seldom true or appropriate, or that it happens infrequently. 1 - Never: This indicates that the behavior or statement on the scale is not true, applicable, or ever occurs.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

RQ 1. What is the extent of participation among respondents in church activities in terms of the: Eucharist, church programs, and memberships in church organizations?

TABLE 1. The extent of participation in the Eucharist in terms of frequency.

Respondents	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Total	12	0	14	2	9	37

Table 1. shows how respondents participate in the eucharist. Of the 37 youth participants, 4 are always, 1 are often, 26 are sometimes, 3 are rarely active in the church, and 3 are never active in the church. The frequency of participation of the youth is sometimes actively attended in the Eucharist. Some churches celebrate it daily, while others do so weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or even less frequently. Many churches encourage participants to prepare themselves spiritually before receiving the Eucharist.

The level of participation in the Eucharist, also known as Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper, can vary widely among individuals and communities within Christianity (Alikin, 2010). This may involve prayer, confession of sins, and reflection on one's relationship with God and others. The level of participation in the Eucharist can also be influenced by an individual's personal faith and spiritual practices. Some Christians may place high importance on receiving the Eucharist regularly as a means of experiencing spiritual nourishment and communion with God, while others may participate less frequently or not at all for various reasons (Todd, 2010). The culture and expectations within a particular church community can also impact participation in the Eucharist (Kilmartin, 2012). In some communities, regular attendance at Eucharistic celebrations may be strongly encouraged or even required for membership and participation

in other church activities. In others, there may be more flexibility and acceptance of varying levels of participation. Individual beliefs about the nature and significance of the Eucharist can also impact participation. Some Christians believe in the doctrine of transubstantiation, which holds that the bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Christ during the Eucharistic prayer, while others hold to a symbolic or memorial view of the Eucharist. Beliefs about who should receive communion and under what circumstances can also vary among different Christian traditions (Igor, 1981). Family upbringing plays a significant role in shaping youth attitudes toward religion and religious practices. Families prioritizing religious observance are more likely to have youth actively participating in the Eucharist. The influence of peers can also impact youth participation in the Eucharist. Youth who have friends actively involved in religious activities are more likely to participate themselves (Salvy et al, 2008). The extent to which youth perceive the Eucharist and other religious rituals as relevant to their lives can affect their participation. Overall, participation in the Eucharist is influenced by a complex interplay of theological beliefs, personal faith practices, and communal expectations within the broader Christian community (JI and Tameifuna, 2011).

TABLE 2. The extent of participation in the Church program in terms of frequency.

Respondents	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Total	12	0	14	2	9	37

Table 2. shows the frequency of their participation in the program of the church. Of the 37 youth participants, 12 are always, 14 are sometimes, 2 are rarely active in the church, and 9 are never active in the church. Many churches and religious organizations have specific programs and initiatives aimed at engaging youth in religious activities, including the Eucharist. These can range from youth-focused worship services to youth retreats and educational programs (Holy See, 2018).

The level of participation in church programs can vary widely depending on factors such as the size and demographics of the congregation, the types of programs offered, the level of community engagement, and individual preferences and priorities. Here are some factors that can influence participation (Todd, 2010). Churches offer a wide range of programs catering to different interests and needs, such as worship services, Bible studies, prayer groups, youth groups, outreach programs, community service initiatives, and social events. The level of participation may vary depending on the availability and appeal of these programs. Here are some common levels of participation in some churches, especially those with deeply engaged members and strong community ties, participation in programs can be high across all age groups. This might include regular attendance at worship services, involvement in small groups or Bible studies, volunteering for community service projects, and participation in youth or children's programs (Vanco, 2023). Many churches experience moderate levels of participation, with a core group of committed members who are actively involved in programs and activities, while others attend

services less frequently or participate sporadically in other events. Some churches struggle with low participation rates, often due to factors such as demographic shifts, changing cultural attitudes toward religion, or ineffective outreach strategies. In these cases, only a small percentage of members may be actively involved in church programs, while many others attend infrequently or not at all. Participation levels can also vary seasonally, with higher attendance during religious holidays or special events and lower attendance at other times of the year (Hanna, 2020). Overall, the level of participation in church programs is influenced by a combination of factors including the church's mission and vision, the effectiveness of its leadership and programming, the needs and interests of its members, and broader societal trends (Barthelemy, 2019).

TABLE 3. The extent of participation in the Memberships in Church Organization in terms of frequency.

Respondents	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Total	4	0	9	2	22	37

Table 3. shows participants who participate or experience the outreach program if they have membership or position in the church. Of the 37 youth participants, 4 are always, 9 are sometimes, 2 are rarely active in the church, and 22 are never active in the church.

The levels of participation in the Eucharist, church programs, memberships, and church organizations can vary greatly depending on numerous factors including religious denomination, cultural context, individual beliefs, and societal trends. Here are some general observations (Hoge and Petrillo, 1978). Some churches struggle with low participation rates, often due to factors such as demographic shifts, changing cultural attitudes toward religion, or ineffective outreach strategies. In these cases, only a small percentage of members may be actively involved in church programs, while many others attend infrequently or not at all. The frequency of membership organization in churches can vary widely depending on factors such as the denomination, size of the congregation, cultural context, and the specific structure and practices of the church. Membership organizations within churches typically refer to groups or committees formed within the congregation to facilitate various aspects of church life, ministry, and governance. Churches that make efforts to modernize worship styles and incorporate contemporary themes may attract more youth participation. With the rise of digital platforms, some churches have utilized technology to reach out to youth, offering online worship services, discussions, and educational materials related to the Eucharist and other religious practices. Despite efforts to engage youth, many churches face challenges in retaining youth participation in religious activities, including the Eucharist. Factors such as competing priorities, secular influences, and questioning of religious beliefs can contribute to lower participation rates among youth. In regions where Christianity is deeply ingrained in the culture and where regular attendance at religious services is common, youth participation in the Eucharist tends to be higher. Conversely, in regions where secularism or other religions predominate, youth participation may be lower (Benda, and Corwyn. 2001). Many churches

have various organizations and ministries within their communities, such as men's and women's groups, youth groups, choirs, outreach programs, and mission teams. Participation in these organizations can provide opportunities for fellowship, spiritual growth, and service within the church and the broader community (Burgest, 2020).

RQ 2. What intervention framework may be recommended to increase participation in church activities?

Youth participation in the Eucharist can be increased through an intervention initiative that addresses their unique needs, interests, and obstacles. Taking into consideration the results of the study, the intervention framework is shown below.



Understanding Youth Needs:

Conduct surveys or focus group discussions to understand the interests, concerns, and preferences of the youth in your community. Identify barriers to participation, such as lack of understanding, busy schedules, or disconnection from the religious community.

Educational Initiatives:

Develop engaging and relevant educational programs about the significance of the Eucharist and its role in the Catholic faith. Utilize multimedia resources, guest speakers, and interactive discussions to make the content more accessible and interesting for the youth.

Peer Involvement:

Establish a youth ministry or peer support group that can act as a bridge between the church leadership and the youth. Encourage peer-led initiatives, events, and discussions to create a sense of community and make the Eucharist more relatable.

Technology Integration:

Leverage technology, such as social media, podcasts, or online platforms, to share information, host discussions, and create a virtual community for youth interested in the Eucharist and church programs. Develop a user-friendly church app to provide updates, resources, and event notifications.

Interactive Workshops and Retreats:

Organize interactive workshops and retreats specifically designed for youth, addressing topics like faith, spirituality, and the Eucharist. Include elements like small group discussions, reflection sessions, and experiential activities to make the events more engaging.

Inclusive Events and Mentorship programs

Plan inclusive events, such as youth-oriented Mass services, sports fest, youth camps, and variety shows where they actively participate. Incorporate contemporary music, relevant themes, and youth-friendly language into the activity to make it more appealing.

Pair interested youth with adult mentors from the church community who can provide guidance, support, and encouragement in their faith journey. Foster a sense of belonging and connection through mentorship relationships.

Community Service Opportunities/Outreach Programs:

Integrate community service initiatives into the program, helping youth connect their faith with actions that benefit the broader community. Emphasize the link between the Eucharist and the call to serve others.

Promotion and Outreach:

Develop a marketing strategy to promote the program, using both traditional and digital channels. Collaborate with local schools, youth organizations, and community centers to expand outreach.

The success of the intervention program relies on building a sense of community, relevance, and inclusivity, making the Eucharist a meaningful and enriching experience for the youth.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

The researcher recommends implementing interventions to boost participation in church activities, specifically proposing the adoption of the suggested framework within the Parish of San Miguel Arkanghel Gapok.

For subsequent studies, the researcher suggests expanding the participants to gather more comprehensive information on the youth's situation and to better substantiate the findings.

Furthermore, for future researchers, employing a mixed-method approach is suggested to obtain a broader range of information for this study.

V. CONCLUSION

Respondents at the parish occasionally partake in the Eucharist, although there is a palpable desire among the parishioners for more frequent participation in this sacrament. They appreciate the benefits of receiving the Holy Eucharist but often find themselves lacking the time and means to do so regularly. Despite these constraints, they express a readiness to participate in church-related events and programs when they can. Remarkably, many young parishioners have never been involved in religious or church-based organizations, indicating a potential opportunity for outreach and engagement within the community.

Creating an intervention program to increase youth participation in the Eucharist involves addressing their unique needs, interests, and challenges. The suggested framework for such a program: Understanding Youth Needs, Educational

Initiatives, Peer Involvement, Technology Integration, Interactive Workshops and Retreats, Inclusive Events, Mentorship Programs, Community Service Opportunities/Outreach Programs, Regular Feedback, and Adaptation. Remember, the success of the intervention program relies on building a sense of community, relevance, and inclusivity, making the Eucharist a meaningful and enriching experience for the youth (Kancher et al, 2006).

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide Questions

Name: _____ Sex: _____

1. Gaano ka kadalas nagsisimba?
2. Gaano kadalas ka sumasali ka ba sa mga programa ng Simbahan?
3. Anong membership / position meron ka sa Simbahan?
4. Sumasali ka ba o nakaranas ng mga Outreach program sa Simbahan?

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First and foremost, I express my gratitude to God for His daily blessings, granting me wisdom and strength throughout my journey.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my advisors, Fr. Ronnie L. Torres, OMI, Ph. D., and Sr. Mary Ann B. Rhudy, OND, for their generosity in dedicating their time and patience to instruct and guide me in completing this research paper.

I am deeply thankful to the community of San Miguel Arkanghel Gapok Parish, particularly to the parish priest, Fr. Renante Aban, OMI, for their unwavering support and guidance.

I am also grateful to the NDCFC Community, OND Sisters, Staff, and Juniors, including my classmates, for their assistance and encouragement, which greatly contributed to the completion of this research paper.

Special gratitude is reserved for my family, especially my grandparents, Lolo Santy Ago Lamberto and Lola Merlyn Lamberto, whose love, inspiration, and support have been invaluable to me throughout this endeavor.

Lastly, my heartfelt thanks to all who have played a part in the creation of this paper.

Madamo Gid Nga Salamat!

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