

## Participation of senior high school students in community activities and their sense of belonging

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ISSN: 2243-7770  
Online ISSN: 2243-7789

OPEN ACCESS

Received: 24 February 2026  
Available Online: 2 April 2026

Revised: 27 March 2026  
DOI: 10.5861/ijrsm.2026.26020

Accepted: 30 March 2026

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### **Abstract**

Engagement in community activities is essential for fostering youth's social development and strengthening their ties to the community. Although youth engagement has been extensively examined in numerous studies, the relationship between senior high school students' sense of belonging and their participation in community activities at private Catholic institutions has received comparatively limited scholarly attention. This study aimed to determine the relationship between senior high school students' sense of belonging at Divine Word College of San Jose and their participation in community activities during the 2025-2026 academic year. A total of 412 students, from both Grade 11 and Grade 12, were selected via stratified random sampling to participate in the study, which employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design. A 30-item modified questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale was used to collect the data. The data were analyzed using the weighted mean and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The findings indicated a high level of acceptance, strong social relationships, a sense of emotional security, and moderate participation in community activities. Additionally, the findings showed a strong positive correlation between participation and sense of belonging. The results indicate that students who participate more in community activities tend to feel a stronger sense of belonging. Lastly, the statistically significant, moderately to strongly positive correlations suggest that greater involvement in community activities is associated with higher levels of belonging, particularly regarding acceptance, interpersonal connection, and emotional equilibrium. Consequently, schools and community stakeholders are advised to strengthen youth-centered programs and collaborative activities that promote active participation and inclusive environments.

**Keywords:** community activities, sense of belonging, youth participation, senior high school, Catholic school

## **Organizational culture, knowledge sharing and employee innovative performance: Basis for machine manufacturing industry organizational learning framework**

### **1. Introduction**

Young people make a great contribution to building a community. As Hamilton (2024) points out, with their intense energy and new perspective, they can offer new ideas that older generations have not noticed or considered. Whiting (2024) also emphasizes the importance of young people participating in community activities. This enables them to define their responsibilities and practice their leadership skills, helping them prepare for future challenges. Additionally, young people's ability to interact with others helps them share ideas and information more easily. It encourages others to do the same, especially through social media platforms, as stated by Anderson and Jiang (2018). Furthermore, the study of Tabanao et al. (2025) indicates that numerous young people help in their communities. For example, they join clean-up drives and outreach programs that their schools often organize. Many young people participate in community activities, such as clean-up drives and outreach programs, often conducted by schools in which they are members, as noted by Tabanao et al. (2025). Many of them also volunteer for community service at the direction of the Philippine government or consider or take action to help those less fortunate than themselves. (Castillon, 2022; Tabanao et al., 2025). That this kind of engagement is evident is very clear in the study conducted by Mabazza et al. (2025), which found that many Filipino students engage in community work in various forms. However, the degree of engagement may depend on the form of community work.

These studies show that Filipino students continue to be involved in the Philippines' community service efforts and environmental service efforts. Their involvement exemplifies ongoing community engagement. By doing good things, young people display positive examples. This representation shows that, no matter their age, they can still make a difference. As stated in Rojas (2020), young people are indeed the "hope of the future." It discusses that the decisions they make today will contribute to what might happen in society tomorrow. However, not all young people can feel that they are part of their communities. Calawa et al. (2023) observed that many individuals lose interest or feel disconnected from their community due to insufficient opportunities in their area or a belief that their contributions go unrecognized or unappreciated. This lack of connection can weaken their emotional bond with the community and reduce their motivation to join. Hence, Lopez and Baya (2025) point out that young people's participation in community activities is important because it fosters a sense of belonging and connection. When young people feel accepted and appreciated, they are more likely to get involved, which benefits both them and the community. While several studies have been conducted elsewhere, little is known about the participation of Senior High School students in community activities at private Catholic schools such as Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ). Most earlier studies focused only on participation rates, awareness levels, or types of activities, but not on how participation relates to students' sense of belonging. It is very important to address this research gap to understand better how students' participation in community activities enhances their sense of belonging.

**Statement of the Problem** - This study aimed to determine the relationship between senior high school students' participation in community activities and their sense of belonging. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of participation of senior high school students in community activities in terms of frequency of participation, types of community activities, and involvement? (2) What is the level of sense of belonging among senior high school students in terms of sense of acceptance, social connections, and emotional security? (3) Is there a significant relationship between the students' participation in community activities and their sense of belonging?

**Significance of the Study** - This study aims to provide reliable knowledge on how senior high school students' participation in community activities affects their sense of belonging. This study will be beneficial for young

individuals as they develop their sense of identity as citizens in their community, resulting in them being more participative and engaging in their community. Also, for those who play an important role in creating enjoyable and engaging programs that benefit young individuals, such as youth organizations and NGOs, this study will be of great help. This can serve as a guide for them in developing more effective, enhanced community-based activities. Moreover, to better understand the needs of their young citizens and deepen their relationships with young people, this study will help the government and youth leaders encourage participation in youth activities and programs, particularly community-based ones. As well as the parents and guardians to be more supportive of their senior high school children participating in community activities, and to better understand how such participation affects their children's sense of belonging. It can also be a way for them to encourage their children to participate in community development. Similarly, this study will greatly contribute to schools and their personnel in developing youth-centered, youth-led school programs. It will encourage students to participate in activities not only at school but also in the broader community. This will also help strengthen the relationship between the school and communities by organizing youth activities that prioritize a sense of belonging. Lastly, for those who may choose this field of study in the future, this study will serve as a guide. This can be used as a basis and a reference to understand this research and related research further.

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study** - This study was conducted at Divine Word College of San Jose during the second semester of the 2025-2026 academic year, with senior high school students as participants. The scope of the research was limited to three primary areas: (1) assessing the level of student participation in community activities in terms of frequency, type, and involvement; (2) evaluating their sense of belonging, specifically through sense of acceptance, social connections, and emotional security; and (3) examining the relationship between participation in community activities and the students' sense of belonging. The study's findings are limited to the perspectives and experiences of those senior high school students enrolled at Divine Word College of San Jose during the specified academic term. However, this study had several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the results may not have represented every senior high school student because the study only includes certain strands such as Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities (ASSH), Business and Entrepreneurship (BAE), and Science and Technology (STEM) in Grade 11 and Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), Accountancy and Business Management (ABM), and Science and Technology (STEM) in Grade 12 within Divine Word College of San Jose only. It might also not have shown the lived experiences of students from other strands, schools, or places.

Additionally, due to the limited time available to conduct the study, it could not examine the long-term effects of participation in community activities on participants' sense of belonging. The accuracy of the results from the collected data might also have been uncertain, as it depended mainly on the participants' honesty in answering the survey questions. And finally, the study did not consider other influential external factors, such as family circumstances, socioeconomic background, or peer influence, which could have significantly affected its findings. Although the purpose of this research was to provide clear insights, it was also crucial to recognize the extent to which it was covered and the aspects that remained unrecognized.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This study utilized a descriptive-correlational method to provide statistical analysis of the data. This design allows the researchers to both describe the variables in the study and examine the relationship between students' participation in community activities and their sense of belonging. On the other hand, the correlational part was used to determine whether a significant relationship existed between these two variables. The descriptive part of the study examined the extent of their participation in various community activities. In contrast, the correlational part examined the relationship between participation in these activities and their sense of belonging. Similarly, Clarete et al. (2023) used a descriptive-correlational research design to describe the variables and determine whether they were related among senior high school students. This supports the use of the same research design in the present study.

**Respondents of the Study** - The respondents of this study were senior high school students enrolled at Divine

Word College of San Jose during the Academic Year 2025–2026. The total population consisted of 412 students across different academic strands. A stratified sampling technique was used to select the total number of respondents for the study based on their grade level and strands. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula, with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level to ensure the reliability of the results (Ellen, 2022). Consequently, a total of 203 students were chosen from different academic strands. This method ensured that every student had an equal chance of being chosen. It ensured the validity and generalizability of the results.

**Research Instrument** - The study utilized adapted questionnaires from the studies of Gates et al. (2021), Doolittle and Faul (2013), Berry et al. (2007), Gyan (2021), Laurian (2004), Huguen et al. (2006), Kumawil et al. (2024), and Chen and Ma (2018) to describe the participation of senior high school students of Divine Word College of San Jose in community activities and their sense of belonging. The research questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part had 15 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale. It ranged from 5 = Always, 4 = Often, 3 = Sometimes, 2 = Rarely, and 1 = Never. It mainly assesses the level of participation of senior high school students in community activities (independent variable). Part II also includes 15 items that assess respondents' sense of belonging (the dependent variable). To determine the validity and reliability of the adapted questionnaires, the researchers sought the help of three experts in the field of research from the senior high school department. The comments and suggestions of the experts were incorporated in the first checking of the adapted questionnaires. The instrument was modified to suit the context of senior high school students while retaining the reliability and structure of the sources.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - The researchers sought approval from the senior high school principal and the research adviser to conduct the study at Divine Word College of San Jose. A formal request was submitted for permission to distribute the research questionnaires to the selected participants. After receiving approval, the researchers asked the class advisers for permission to schedule the survey. Before the survey began, the study's purpose was explained to the participants, and their voluntary participation was emphasized. They were especially assured that all information collected would be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. A copy of 203 validated questionnaires was printed and distributed to the selected sample of students from the senior high school. The researchers personally administered the survey during class hours over two days. Upon completion, all questionnaires are collected immediately to prevent data loss or duplicate responses. The data were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods to understand the relationship between senior high school students' involvement in community activities and their sense of belonging.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data** - The researchers employed the following statistical procedures to analyze the data. The data gathered from respondents is organized and analyzed in Microsoft Excel to ensure clear and reliable results. The Weighted Mean was chosen because it clearly demonstrates how the responses expanded and helps the researchers identify patterns common among the students. It was used to calculate the amount of participation of senior high school students in community activities and their sense of belonging. A 5-point Likert-type measurement tool, the Organizational Competency Scale (1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always), was used to summarize respondents' overall opinions and perspectives and to indicate how likely they are to agree with each statement. To measure the relationship between the two variables, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ) was used. This summarizes how participation changes their sense of belonging. A value near +1 indicates a strong positive correlation, meaning that increased participation is associated with a stronger sense of belonging. In contrast, a value near -1 indicates a negative correlation, in which increased participation is associated with a reduced sense of belonging. A value of 0 indicates minimal or no connection between the two.

**Ethical Considerations** - Each researcher strictly adhered to the ethical principles in conducting this study. Each of them respected the rights, privacy, and dignity of each participant. Before collecting data, they clearly explained the purpose of this research. Each student's participation was based on their consent, and they were informed that they could stop the survey at any time. Any information gathered from them was kept confidential, and none of it was disclosed to its source. This was also used solely for academic purposes and was discarded after the research was complete. The researchers also aimed to avoid bias and data manipulation to maintain honesty

and integrity. Following these principles strengthened the credibility and reliability of this study's results. Researchers also ensured equality so that every student had an equal opportunity to participate. Finally, they followed the school's ethical guidelines to maintain professionalism and transparency throughout the study.

### 3. Results and Discussions

**Table 1**

*Mean Level of Participation in terms of Frequency of Participation, Types of Community Activities, and Involvement*

Indicators (Frequency of Participation)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I attend community development activities (e.g., livelihood programs, tree planting, leadership training, disaster drills).	3.55	High
2. I take an active part in organized group activities (e.g., choir practice, sports training, school clubs).	3.73	High
3. I attend weekly worship services.	3.48	Moderate
4. I attend health-related workshops where I can learn about nutrition, hygiene, and mental health.	3.39	Moderate
5. I participate in public meetings or clean-up drives.	3.25	Moderate
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.48	Moderate
Indicators (Types of Community Activities)		
1. I participate in barangay or community service activities (e.g., clean-ups, tree planting).	2.86	Moderate
2. I join in volunteering or outreach programs (e.g., feeding programs, charity drives)	3.24	Moderate
3. I attend local civic or community events (e.g., barangay assemblies, community fairs).	2.82	Moderate
4. I attend local civic or community events (e.g., barangay assemblies, community fairs).	2.95	Moderate
5. I participate in youth leadership or development activities within the community.	3.16	Moderate
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.01	Moderate
Indicators (Involvement)		
1. I involve myself in structured volunteer positions in the community.	3.18	Moderate
2. I involve myself in collaborating with local authorities or organizations in organizing community clean-up drives.	3.09	Moderate
3. I stay informed of events in my community.	3.39	Moderate
4. I help members of my community	3.39	Moderate
5. I contribute to charitable organizations within the community.	3.28	Moderate
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.27	Moderate
OVERALL MEAN	3.25	Moderate

Legend: 4.51-5.00 Very high, 3.51-4.50 High, 2.51 - 3.50 Moderate, 1.51-2.50 Low, 1.00- 1.50 Very low

Table 1 presents the mean levels of participation in terms of frequency, types of community activities, and involvement, with an overall mean of 3.48, interpreted as moderate. Frequency of participation, particularly in community activities such as sports and school clubs, reached a high mean of 3.73; activities like public meetings and clean-up drives remained at 3.25. These results align with Apalla et al. (2025) and Valenzuela (2025), who suggest that youth favor organized structures with clearly defined roles, whereas Tabanao et al. (2025) note that formal civic processes led by local government units often see lower engagement. Moreover, participation in different types of community development activities yielded a composite mean of 3.01. Interpreted as a moderate mean level, outreach and volunteering activities, such as feeding programs, showed the highest mean level involvement at 3.24, suggesting a willingness to help that Guo et al. (2025) connect to a developing sense of purpose and social belonging. In contrast, attendance at local civic events or barangay assemblies had the lowest mean, 2.82, indicating that students may face barriers to accessing these events or have limited interest in formal community governance.

Lastly, the overall involvement across all indicators for senior high school students resulted in a composite mean of 3.27. Staying informed about community events and helping neighbors directly recorded the highest mean of 3.39, which Stukas et al. (2016) attribute to these being simpler, direct forms of interaction. However, a lower mean level of 3.09, interpreted as moderate, was observed for collaborating with authorities on organized clean-

up drives. As noted by Greenfield and Moorman (2016) and Retallick and Foreman (2016), this level of engagement often reflects earlier experiences and limitations related to time, roles, and the complexity of the crucial commitment.

**Table 2**  
*Mean Level of Sense of Belonging in terms of Sense of Acceptance, Social Connections, and Emotional Security*

Indicators (Sense of Acceptance)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I feel part of a group of people who share my attitudes and beliefs.	3.95	High
2. I feel included when community events are held.	3.54	High
3. I believe my contributions to the community are appreciated	3.73	High
4. I feel encouraged to express myself in community activities.	3.57	High
5. I feel accepted and respected by people in my community.	3.86	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.73	High
Indicators (Social Connections)		
1. I think people enjoy the same social activities I do.	3.75	High
2. I have relationships where my competence and skill are recognized.	3.68	High
3. I think people admire my talents and abilities.	3.47	Moderate
4. I think people like the things I do.	3.49	Moderate
5. I think people respect my skills and abilities.	3.70	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.62	High
Indicators (Emotional Security)		
1. I feel like I have close personal relationships with other people.	3.81	High
2. I have someone I can turn to for guidance in times of stress.	3.87	High
3. I have close relationships with my community members that provide me with a sense of emotional security and well-being.	3.61	High
4. I have a feeling of intimacy with another person.	3.42	Moderate
5. I believe that my opinions are valued by others in the community.	3.67	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.67	High
OVERALL MEAN	3.67	High

Legend: 4.51-5.00 Very high, 3.51-4.50 High, 2.51 - 3.50 Moderate, 1.51-2.50 Low; 1.00 - 1.50 Very low

Table 2 presents the mean levels of sense of belonging across the domains of sense of acceptance, social connections, and emotional security. A composite mean of 3.73, interpreted as high, was achieved, indicating acceptance among respondents. This demonstrates that students feel a strong sense of belonging, which Meier et al. (2025) and Taylor (2025) attribute to greater acknowledgement and reduced stress. High mean levels of this indicator indicate an accepting environment, as noted by Leon-Himmelstine et al. (2025), which promotes social bonds, reduces feelings of isolation, and encourages better coordination within the community.

Moreover, the results of the level of social connections show a high composite mean of 3.62. The highest indicator has a mean level of 3.75, which states, "I think people enjoy the same social activities I do," reflecting deep social integration through interests that are shared. At the same time, Fabris et al. (2023) and Montecillo et al. (2024) imply that such environments enhance motivation. The admiration of personal talents, interpreted as moderate, had a lower mean (3.47). This suggests that students feel like they belong socially but are not fully validated for their participation. This is connected with Hurem et al. (2021), who suggest that true belonging needs mutual understanding of unique abilities. Finally, the level of sense of belonging in terms of emotional security yielded a high composite mean of 3.67. Students reported a strong reliance on others for guidance during stress, with a high mean of 3.87, though intimacy with others was lower, with a moderate mean of 3.42. These results align with the work of Dias et al. (2024), which emphasizes that emotional security is a pillar of personal development. While students possess robust support systems, the data indicate a need to further bridge the gap between general social support and deeper emotional intimacy.

**Table 3**  
*Correlation Coefficients and p-values for Hypothesis Testing*

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Effect Size	Critical value	t-value	P-value	Interpretation
Students' participation (Frequency of participation) → Sense of belonging (Sense of Acceptance)	0.575	0.331	1.972	9.989	<0.001	Highly Significant

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Students' participation (Type of community activities) → Sense of belonging (Sense of Acceptance)	0.645	0.417	1.972	11.996	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation (Involvement) → Sense of belonging (Sense of Acceptance)	0.629	0.396	1.972	11.500	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' Participation: Sense of Belonging (Sense of Acceptance)	0.679	0.461	1.972	13.145	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation (Frequency of participation) → Sense of belonging (Social Connections)	0.484	0.234	1.972	7.861	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation (Type of community activities) → Sense of belonging (Social Connections)	0.514	0.264	1.972	8.516	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation (Involvement) - Sense of belonging (Social Connections)	0.546	0.298	1.972	9.263	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation → Sense of belonging (Social Connections)	0.566	0.320	1.972	9.758	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation (Frequency of participation) → Sense of belonging (Emotional Security)	0.453	0.205	1.972	7.222	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation (Type of community activities) → Sense of belonging (Emotional Security)	0.505	0.255	1.972	8.316	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation (Involvement) Sense of belonging (Emotional Security)	0.527	0.277	1.972	8.813	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation → Sense of belonging (Emotional Security)	0.545	0.297	1.972	9.239	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation → Sense of belonging	0.677	0.458	1.972	13.074	<0.001	Highly Significant

Legend: p-value<0.001 Highly Significant

p-value <0.05 Significant

Table 3 presents the correlation coefficients, t-values, and p-values assessing the association between student participation and their sense of belonging across three dimensions: sense of acceptance, social connections, and emotional security. The computed p-values, all below 0.001, signify highly significant relationships among all examined variables. The strong positive correlation between student participation and the overall sense of belonging ( $r = 0.677$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates a notable relationship. The effect size of 0.458 suggests that participation significantly explains the differences in feelings of belonging. Regarding the individual dimensions, the most substantial relationship was observed between overall participation and sense of acceptance ( $r = 0.679$ , effect size = 0.461), followed by social connections ( $r = 0.566$ , effect size = 0.320) and emotional security ( $r = 0.545$ , effect size = 0.297). Research indicates that increased student engagement, measured by how often they participate, the variety of activities they engage in, and the depth of their involvement, is linked to a stronger sense of belonging, encompassing both emotional and social aspects.

These notable connections between participation and a sense of belonging align with previous research

highlighting the importance of active involvement in promoting both inclusion and acknowledgment. Meier et al.'s (2025) research showed that regular interaction and teamwork reduce stress and increase feelings of value and belonging, especially during difficult times. Similarly, Taylor (2025) found that adolescents' involvement in collaborative or team-based activities strengthens their feelings of connection and acceptance. Moreover, Mikula et al.'s (2025) research suggested that sustained engagement in communal events cultivates both interpersonal trust and a shared sense of identity over time. This study's findings, particularly the strong correlation ( $r = 0.679$ ) between overall participation and acceptance, support previous research by demonstrating that consistent, organized engagement significantly improves students' sense of belonging within their community.

Likewise, the positive relationships between participation and both social connections and emotional security align with existing theoretical and empirical literature. Hurem et al. (2021) and Fabris et al. (2023) underscored the importance of strong peer relationships and regular interaction in group settings, asserting that these factors bolster students' sense of connectedness and psychological well-being. Dias et al. (2024) additionally found that secure peer relationships are associated with greater engagement and academic motivation. In summary, the statistically significant, moderately to strongly positive correlations suggest that greater involvement in community activities is associated with higher levels of belonging, particularly regarding acceptance, interpersonal connection, and emotional equilibrium.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The following conclusions were drawn from the study's findings. The findings showed that the respondents are socially active and willing to participate in organized activities in their community. This means that students are open to interacting with others and taking part in activities that bring people together. The study also found that many respondents participate in outreach programs and other activities that help people in need. This shows that students are willing to support their community and contribute to activities that benefit others. The results further revealed that respondents are aware of community activities and willing to support other community members. This reflects their interest in being involved and cooperating with others in the community. It was also found that students feel a stronger sense of belonging when they are part of groups that share similar interests, beliefs, and activities. Having common values and experiences helps strengthen their connection with other members of the community. In addition, the respondents reported having someone they can turn to for guidance or support during stressful situations. This suggests that students experience social support within their community. Overall, the study concluded that there is a significant relationship between students' participation in community activities and their sense of belonging. This means that students who are more involved in community activities tend to feel more accepted and connected within their community.

**Recommendations** - The following recommendations are made based on the findings and conclusions of the study. First, the school administrators and teachers may encourage senior high school students to participate more in community activities by providing clear information about upcoming events and inviting students to join barangay programs and school-supported activities. Recognizing students who actively participate may also help motivate others to become more involved in community initiatives. Furthermore, schools and community organizations may help students feel more accepted and valued by fostering a welcoming, supportive environment during activities. Encouraging cooperation, teamwork, and open interaction among students may help strengthen their sense of belonging both in school and in the community. In addition, school officials and community leaders may continue working together to organize programs that enable students to participate in meaningful community activities. Through active participation, students may develop stronger connections with others and build a deeper sense of belonging within their community. Lastly, future researchers may conduct similar studies in other schools or communities and include a larger number of respondents to obtain more generalizable results. They may also consider examining other factors that may influence students' participation in community activities and their sense of belonging.

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