



RECONFIGURING THE OUTCOMES OF *SIMBAHAYAN*: THE CASE STUDY OF BASIC ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES IN THE DIOCESE OF IMUS

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This article examines Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs), or Simbahayan, of the Catholic Church as a social organization. The term Simbahayan comes from two joined Tagalog words: simbahan (church) and pamayanan (community). Rooted in these two social institutions, the Simbahayan represents a convergence of ecclesial and communal life, linking the Church with other social units. This study explores how the Simbahayan organize to achieve outcomes within gated communities and how organizational contexts shape these outcomes. This qualitative case study, conducted in the Diocese of Imus, used key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and a review of parish documents to examine the organizational context. All data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2024) and triangulated (Denzin, 2009). Data collection was conducted with the parish priest's approval and informed consent from all participants. This study highlighted a geographical form of Simbahayan within gated communities, where the heterogeneity of lay leaders and members significantly contributes to fulfilling both the material and spiritual outcomes of the organization. The enabling organizational contexts identified in this study are strong interorganizational relationships, members' support system, and mutual resource dependence. The constraining organizational contexts identified are the absence of formalized BEC guidelines, challenges in ecclesial interministerial coordination, fragmentation, low participation, and structural problems within the Simbahayan. The study recommends ways forward to achieve recognized Simbahayan outcomes, including leadership succession planning, organizational effectiveness, and establishing a parish discernment team to support the continuity and re-engineering of the Simbahayan structure.

Keywords: : Simbahayan, Basic Ecclesial Communities, Gated Communities, Organizational Outcomes, Organizational Contexts

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How to cite this article:

Viray, T. (2026). Reconfiguring the Outcomes
of Simbahayan: The Case Study of Basic
Ecclesial Communities in the Diocese of Imus.
*Scientia - The International Journal on the Liberal
Arts*, 15(2), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.57106/scientia.v15i2.222>

Dates:

Submission: March 21, 2026
Revised: June 30, 2026
Accepted: September 10, 2026
Published(Online): Sept. 30, 2026

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The Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) of the Catholic Church in the Philippines has been studied extensively for many years (Dagmang, 2016; Delgado et al., 2004; Gaspar, 2016; Mendoza, 2005; Nadeau, 1999; Ocampo, 1994; Padilla, 2004; Picardal, 1999). The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines forwarded a conciliar document that defines BEC as a small community of Christians that consists of families who gather around the Word of God and the Eucharist. Members of the BECs are under the guidance of the church priest and parish lay leaders. Members know each other by name and share the Word of God, the Eucharist, and their material and spiritual concerns. They have a strong sense of belongingness and of responsibility for one another (Acts and Decrees of the PCP II, 1991, p. 52).

Filipino Catholic lay leaders have creatively developed various vernacular names for BECs to express the distinct socio-cultural identity of their local church communities. In the central and southern regions, BECs are widely recognized as Gagmayng Kristohanong Katilingban GKK (Davao Catholic Herald, 2015; Clata, 2022) and Kristohanong Katilingban sa Parokya (Picardal, 2016). Furthermore, within the northern region, BECs are locally identified as either Munting Kapitbahayang Kristiyano or Munting Sambayanang Kristiyano (Ocampo, 2018). Table 1 details the specific indigenous names for clerical and lay leadership developed for these communities throughout the archipelago (Gabriel, 2021; Fernandez et al., 2024).

Luzon
Bukluran, Buklod (Diocese of Malolos) Damayang Kristiyano, Sandakot, Sambayanihan, Bukluran, Kawan (Diocese of Kalookan) Katolikong Kapatiran; Munting Pamayanang Kristiyano – MPK (Diocese of Parañaque) Kilusang Ilaw, Kawan (Diocese of Lucena) Kristiyanong Kapitbahayan – KRISKA (Apostolic Vicariate of Puerto Prinsesa) Kristiyanong Ugnayan para sa Sambayanan, Simbarangay (Archdiocese of Manila) Mumunting Pamayanang Simbahan – MPS, Sambahagin (Diocesan District of Makati) Munting Sambayanang Kristiyano – MSK (Archdiocese of Lipa; Diocese of Lucena) Simbaan Sanga Karrubaan – SISA; Gimong – Ilokano (Archdiocese of Nueva Segovia) Simbaan Dagiti Agkaarruba – SIMBAG (Diocese of Bangued) Simbahayan, Tipanan, Bukluran, Damayan, Pag-asa (Diocese of Imus)
Visayas
Basic Envelope Community – (Archdiocese of Palo) Gagmayng Kristohanong Katilingban – GKK (Diocese of Bacolod, Dumaguete and Talibon) Kaban Agod Bangonin Gikan Sa Lapnagon – KABALAKA (Archdiocese of Jaro) Kristohanon nga Katilingban – KK (Diocese of Antique) Sambulig – (Diocese of Romblon)
Mindanao
Gagmayng Kristohanong Katilingban – GKK (Archdiocese of Davao) Kristohanong Kasilingan – KRISKA – (Archdiocese of Zamboanga) SILINGAN KA – Sibugaynon Lihok Ngadto sa Nagpakabanang Katawhan (Prelature of Ipil)

Table 1. List of BEC Vernacular Names

In this study, I used the local name *Simbahayan* throughout the article. By adopting this term, the study examines its etymological significance in relation to the BEC's pluralistic, interconnected, and communal character. The Ministry of Cluster Community of the Diocese of Imus coined Simbahayan, an indigenous term for the Basic Ecclesial Community. Simbahayan is derived from Tagalog words, *simbahan* (church) and *pamayanan* (community). Rooted in two social agencies, the Simbahayan marries ecclesial and communal life, linking the Church with other social units, such as family households and the barangay. Through this fusion, the Simbahayan continuously defines and redefines its role as a religious-based ministry.



The nature and composition of Simbahayan aligns with Picardal's definition of BECs as local communities constituted by interconnected family groupings (Picardal, 2014, p. 128). Simbahayan is a localized unit of the Catholic Church at the grassroots level situated within villages and neighborhoods where faith is lived and organized through relational networks among households. In addition, interconnected members of the Simbahayan gather to share the Word of God, address the community's needs, and faithfully participate in other parish activities. Picardal (2014) believed that BEC should be understood as a local community (e.g., grassroots village) composed of interconnected family cells.

These interconnected family cells are diverse and linked to a geographical area (Ocampo, 1994, p. 31). The plurality of BECs is evident across diverse social and geographic contexts in the Philippines. They are present in farming communities in upland regions, among farmers and fisherfolk in lowland areas, and even among Catholic family households in predominantly Muslim areas of the southern Philippines. BECs in urban areas such as villages, subdivisions, and barangays are typically composed of active members who know one another personally. They foster a sense of belonging and shared responsibility in attaining pastoral services.

In contrast, BECs in rural grassroots communities with strong kinship ties face fewer geographical constraints. Long distances, adverse weather conditions, and limited access to transportation frequently hinder members from actively participating in both material and spiritual activities in the rural BECs. For instance, participation tends to decline in upland communities when residents live far from the chapel or designated activity areas. In addition, BECs in urban areas form active groups with

common interests (Ocampo, 1994, p. 32). For example, BEC family households actively pray the rosary in the village Marian Block Weekly Rosary. Given the plurality of BECs, this study focuses on BECs in suburban areas of the Diocese of Cavite, particularly in gated communities.

Scholars Atkinson & Blandy (2005) and Blakely & Snyder (1997) define gated communities as desirable residential spaces because of their sense of community, enhanced security, available recreational amenities, and increased privacy. A gated community is a residential area enclosed by walls, fences, or landscaping that provides a physical barrier to entry and restricted access; hence, an exclusive community (Ignacio & Fuego, 2017, p. 13). This study examines how the BEC functions to achieve its outcomes within an exclusive gated community. BEC is not merely a human association as in a gated community but a congregation grounded in the Catholic faith (Basas, 2019, p. 12).

Simbahayan is recognized as a mini-pastoral subunit of the parish church. Few empirical studies have examined Simbahayan specifically in gated residential areas. This article examines how Simbahayan in suburban gated communities works as a social organization. Specifically, this study seeks to identify the recognized organizational outcomes of Simbahayan and to analyze how enabling and constraining organizational contexts reconfigure these outcomes. By addressing these questions, the study aims to provide a sociological understanding of the organizational contexts that contribute to achieving organizational outcomes.



ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES

Organizational outcomes are specific, observable results, consequences, and effects produced by an organization. Jiang et al. (2012) conceptualized organizational outcomes as multi-dimensional. Researchers may examine these outcomes from the perspective of organizational operations (i.e., operational outcomes) or economic goals (i.e., financial outcomes). Furthermore, organizational outcomes can also be understood as the realization of organizational goals or the fulfillment of intended objectives. Beyond operational outputs, outcomes may also be interpreted through the lens of social capital. From this perspective, outcomes can be translated into relational and cultural results generated by the organization, such as the development of trust, solidarity, and social cohesion among Simbahayan members. In this study, we primarily examine the Simbahayan's organizational outcomes through the lens of operational outcomes (e.g., productivity, quality of service, and innovation). These include the material and spiritual productivity of lay leaders and members, as well as the quality of services that they offer. The following sections will explicitly identify these pastoral activities.

This study explicitly identifies the organizational outcomes of the Simbahayan that the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PC II) intentionally recognizes. Guided and encouraged by the Religious Catechesis, members of the Simbahayan expect to exemplify solidarity with one another; promote action for justice, where members work together for social transformation for total human development, peace, justice, and the integrity of creation; and celebrate the vibrant life of the community in the liturgical ceremony, where members come together regularly to reflect on the Word of God and to celebrate their collective faith (Ocampo, 1994, p. 28).

Examples of these collective faith activities include weekly Bible reflection, liturgical mass, and assembly meetings. These regular activities should deepen unity and friendship among members and help develop Simbahayan culture.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

Researchers have studied organizational context extensively in government agencies (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992), industrial business sectors (Ashkanasy et al., 2000), and even health services (Glisson, 2002).

In children's mental health services, Glisson (2002) identified organizational context dimensions such as culture, structure, climate, and work attitudes. These organizational contexts shape service treatments, service strategies, and the development of a therapeutic alliance between the service provider and client. In public government agencies, Osborne and Gaebler (1992) offered a popular extension of Peters and Waterman's work by showing how organizational context shapes public agency performance. To empirically extend how internal and external organizational contexts reconfigure organizational outcomes, this study examines how Simbahayan's organizational contexts as a social organization shape its organizational outcomes. Organizational context refers to external or internal conditions that shape how organizations work and operate to produce outcomes. Examples include structural conditions (e.g., centralization, representation), cultural conditions (e.g., shared spirituality, normative duties of lay leaders), relational conditions (e.g., faith-based relationships, intrarelations), and environmental conditions (e.g., intra-organizational stakeholders).



No single, standalone perspective defines organizational context. It emerges from broader organizational and systems theories. In this study, organizational context is framed within Ludwig Von Bertalanffy's General Systems Theory. Bertalanffy (1950) views organization as an open system composed of interdependent subsystems that continuously interact with their environment. In the Simbahayan concept, the parish serves as the larger system, while the individual Simbahayan units within the parish community act as subsystems. For example, rural and urban community areas such as grassroots

Areas, gated communities, and barangays are the unit subsystems in the Church's organizational representation and structure. This means that the Simbahayan is not an isolated unit but a subsystem within the larger parish system that continuously interacts with others. Other examples of small units in the Church's open systems include parish ministries and religiously mandated groups (e.g., music ministries and extraordinary lay ministers). These units, or subsystems, are essential to Simbahayan achieving its outcomes, particularly in liturgical activities. Interorganizational relationships in Simbahayan's open systems can be observed and shaped by resource exchange, power relations, institutional norms, and trust. (Aldrich & Pfeffer, 1976, p. 79; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 148). The open-systems concept also frames organization theory. Scotts and Davis (2015) explained that we can understand an organization as three (3) systems. The first system is the rational system, which includes the organization's formal structure (e.g., Simbahayan structured programs and parish alignment). The second system is the natural system, which includes shared values and informal relationships among organization members (e.g., shared spirituality, faith-based relationships). The third system is the open systems system, which includes continuous

interaction with a broader environmental structure (e.g., Simbahayan engagement with the wider parish and other religious organizations). The study contributes to sociological discussion of organizational contexts, drawn from the experiences of Simbahayan lay leaders in constructing and reconstructing organizational outcomes within an interdependent subsystem. It also offers practical advice for Simbahayan lay leaders to pinpoint enabling organizational contexts and to examine how these contexts influence the attainment of pastoral and organizational outcomes.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Utilizing a qualitative case study design, this research examined how organizational contexts shape the outcomes of Simbahayan operations in gated communities. I used a case study to examine "a real-life, contemporary bounded system over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 96). This study adopted a partially autoethnographic approach, drawing on my dual role as both a researcher and a parishioner in a local church community.

I used my experience as a researcher and my observations as a parishioner to explore how the Simbahayan organizes to achieve its organizational outcomes. This role allows me to write as both an insider and reflective observer, critically engaging with the local church communities I study while remaining grounded in the lived realities of Catholic lay leaders in reconfiguring the Simbahayan outcomes.



COMMUNITIES AND PARTICIPANTS

For this study, I selected one parish church in the Diocese of Imus that provides a structured directory of its cluster communities. The organizational structure of the parish church is composed of three major clusters: (1) the cluster of religious organizations, (2) the cluster of church ministries, and (3) the cluster of communities. Within this ecclesiastical structure, I placed the primary emphasis on the third cluster, specifically the cluster of communities. These clusters of communities, referred to as Simbahayan, function as mini-pastoral entities within the Catholic Church's organizational structure. Out of the eighteen recognized Simbahayan in the parish, twelve clusters of communities took part in the study. A purposive sample of twelve participants and two key informants was selected to represent the parish's clergy and ministerial lay leaders. The focus group sample included three laymen and nine laywomen Simbahayan leaders, aged 30 to 54, each with at least five years of lay experience in Simbahayan; five lay leaders were working, and seven were not.

DATA COLLECTION

This qualitative case study included two key informant interviews, two focus group discussions, and a document review. I interviewed the parish priest and the overall coordinator of the Simbahayan as the key informants for the research. Face-to-face key informant interviews lasting more than an hour took place at locations chosen by the key informants where they felt most comfortable. To gather insights, I facilitated two distinct focus group discussions involving six lay leaders serving in administrative roles within the Simbahayan. The interview guide consisted of closed- and open-ended questions.

These questions covered socio-demographic information and leadership tenure, the faces of the Simbahayan in gated communities, the organizational outcomes of the Simbahayan, and the influences of the organizational context on those outcomes. Interviews and discussions were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and stored in passcode-protected files. Reflexive journal entries were maintained throughout the data collection process and analysis to monitor personal assumptions and depth of engagement.

DATA ANALYSIS

The study used data triangulation to enhance the credibility and analytic rigor of the multiple data sources. The study first analyzed findings from key informant interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, and document review independently using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2024). I then compared emerging themes across data sources using a triangulation matrix to identify convergence, complementarity, and divergence (Denzin, 2009, p. 27). As a participant-observer, I gained an insider perspective on the parish and had access to the parish's Facebook page and documents, such as meeting minutes and the discernment primer. I reviewed these documents and integrated them into the analysis.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study did not undergo review by a formal research ethics committee; however, it adopted an ethics-by-design approach based on the framework by Mulvenna, Boger, and Bond (2017). This strategy embedded ethical standards throughout the research stages, tailored to the specific realities and sensitivities of the research



context. Before the study, I held a courtesy meeting with the parish priest and obtained informed consent from the parish priest and the Simbahayan coordinators who participated in the interview. Participants were informed about the purpose, terms, duration, anonymity, and confidentiality of the study, including the right to decline to answer any question, leave the conversation, or ask to end the interview at any point. To protect the parish church's identity and participants' privacy, I changed real names in this paper. To reduce the risk of psychological distress, researchers established specific interview protocols and integrated a mitigation strategy that offered mental health support referrals to participants when necessary. Adopting a relational and ethical framework, the interview process prioritized a humanist ethos and reflexive learning. For example, a verbatim excerpt from a participant's account noted that one HOA officer "brought a firearm." This revelation surfaced during a discussion between a Simbahayan lay leader and an HOA officer who were disputing financial cash flows and collections from pastoral activities. Although the officer did not use the gun, it was presumably brought to project authority and threat. To handle this sensitive disclosure ethically, I followed three main steps: first, I verified the incident's resolution and the parish leadership's response through a follow-up inquiry; second, I protected participant anonymity by removing all contextual markers that could identify the location or individuals involved; and third, I documented the experience through reflexive case notes to manage my personal engagement with the data. This approach ensured that all participants were treated with care and respect, which is vital when addressing sensitive research topics (Fujii, 2017; Mangada & Cuaton, 2022). These ethical considerations helped the study maintain strong ethical standards despite the absence of formal institutional approval.

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

My interest in religious organizations grew after attending a dinner fellowship with our newly assigned parish priest, who wanted to meet his parishioners in our village. After observing how our Simbahayan lay leaders operate as a renewed local church and collaborate with the parish, he expressed his support. He blessed us to continue carrying out the community's ecclesiastical and liturgical responsibilities. This brief encounter with the lay leaders in our village sparked my research curiosity about how structures, contexts, and agencies influence the operations of our local church community. I recognize that my positionality in sociology, particularly in religious organizations, has shaped this study as I sociologically examine the reconfiguration of Simbahayan outcomes through organizational perspectives. During this research process, I realized I couldn't completely set aside my religious upbringing or my academic background. I needed to acknowledge these influences to understand how the organizational contexts affect the results of Simbahayan operations. In this study, I aimed to maintain transparency about how personal experience shaped the analytical process. I kept reflexivity notes and audio journals to document assumptions, emotional responses, and interpretive shifts. In line with Braun and Clarke's (2024) reflexive thematic analysis, I regard my subjectivities not as biases to be minimized but as resources that enrich the analytic process. My personal and religious faith journeys shaped how I framed the research questions, interpreted substantive data, and foregrounded research themes.

This study presents its results in three main sections. The first section details the forms of the Simbahayan observed in gated communities. The second section analyzes the organizational contexts that impact the Simbahayan's operational



outcomes. Finally, the third section recommends initiatives to improve Simbahayan effectiveness. The organizational contexts identified in the findings are segmented into four sub-sections: 1) internal enabling organizational contexts; 2) external enabling organizational contexts; 3) internal constraining organizational contexts; and 4) external constraining organizational contexts.

FACES OF THE SIMBAHAYAN IN THE GATED COMMUNITIES

Drawing on accounts from key informants and participants, the findings highlight the characteristics of Simbahayan in gated communities. These three faces of Simbahayan include: 1) Simbahayan as an enclosed and exclusive community, 2) Simbahayan as a diverse community, and 3) Simbahayan as a centralized local church community.

Simbahayan Geographical and Infrastructural Limits in the Gated Communities

The enclosed, exclusive area of Simbahayan in gated communities helps members plan and organize pastoral activities. Transportation and communal spaces are less of a concern than in traditional Simbahayan in rural communities. However, liturgical celebrations and other spiritual activities become more challenging for members without a designated chapel. The succeeding part of the findings will further discuss this geographic and infrastructural limitation. This limitation affects Simbahayan members' ability to regularly attend liturgical celebrations, meetings, and other community-based pastoral initiatives.

Among the twelve (12) Simbahayan that participated in the study, seven (7) have dedicated

chapels while five (5) do not. Community chapels are not only sacred spaces for liturgical celebrations but also serve as organizational hubs. This helps the Simbahayan to sustain its pastoral and organizational activities. However, Simbahayan without chapels often rely on temporary or shared spaces, which may lead to scheduling conflicts, logistical constraints, and reduced participation. The proceedings of the 3rd Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, BEC National Assembly, highlight the national situation of BECs, indicating that 40% of the profile is chapel-centered, thereby limiting their initiatives primarily to liturgical and evangelical activities (Gabriel, 2021). The absence of a permanent liturgical venue poses recurring challenges in organizing community masses and religious events. These challenges are compounded when scheduled liturgical activities coincide with Homeowners Association (HOA) activities, particularly when shared facilities like the clubhouse or covered court are used. A Homeowners Association (HOA) is a formal community-based organization that addresses the collective concerns of resident homeowners under the leadership of elected HOA officers. The Simbahayan lay leaders collaborate with the HOA within the gated community to oversee and sustain the liturgical, developmental, and liberational dimensions of Catholic faith life.

In our cluster community, we organized a liturgical Mass in the covered court. HOA officials told us they have no control when the schedule of HOA activities (e.g., sports league) comes from the mayor's office. Schedule conflicts arise because we need to pack up immediately since the sports league is scheduled right after the community mass.
– Deborah

Conversely, in Simbahayan with chapels, the HOA's property arrangements shape access, as the HOA legally owns the chapel infrastructure. Participants in the focus group expressed concern that changes in HOA leadership could restrict chapel use, including suspending



liturgical activities if rental fees or dues are imposed. Given these infrastructural limitations, this study emphasizes the necessity of a written agreement and clear guidelines for using HOA amenities for the Simbahayan's pastoral activities. For the Simbahayan with chapels, formal agreements should specify conditions of use, financial responsibilities, and protections for continued access. For the Simbahayan without chapels, negotiated arrangements should clearly outline scheduling priorities and access to shared facilities during religious events.

Diversity of Simbahayan in the Gated Communities

The second face of the Simbahayan in the gated communities is the heterogeneous composition of its members. It includes Catholic family members from within Cavite and from neighboring cities. These members bring diverse pastoral narratives and demonstrate a shared sense of community. For example, some of its members previously served as lay leaders in parishes outside Cavite, others work in Greater Manila while residing in Cavite, and some are newly settled residents of the community. This diversity, characterized by varied family experiences, narratives, and social backgrounds, contributes to richer sharing and stronger communal engagement. During the key informant interview, the parish priest recommended 10-15 family household members as the ideal number of compositions in the Simbahayan.

Notably, the parish priest argued that Simbahayan in gated communities tend to report fewer family-related conflicts than those in traditional communities.

It is easier for BEC members who are not related or do not know each other well. That is the face of BEC in the gated communities: there are no existing family-related issues; they come from different places. They come together, bringing diverse experiences. – Parish Priest

This relative absence of longstanding interpersonal tensions in gated communities may stem from members' diverse backgrounds and recent residential mobility. Nevertheless, Simbahayan in traditional rural communities has strong family kinship ties that support its vibrancy (Gaspar, 2016, p. 59).

Centralization of Simbahayan in the Gated Communities

Following a centralized structure is another form of Simbahayan organizational operation. It begins with the Parish Pastoral Council transmitting directives and program guidelines, which serve as the primary reference point for Simbahayan operations. According to the parish priest, the Parish Pastoral Council directly cascades approved pastoral activities to communities for implementation. Such centralized structure ensures uniformity and coherence in pastoral direction across all 18 Simbahayan communities. This reflects a centralized governance structure where decision-making and program initiation remain at the parish level, while Simbahayan function as local implementing units that operationalize parish-wide pastoral initiatives within their respective communities. This centralized approach is evident in parish-wide initiatives led by the Ministry of Pagkalinga (Ministry of Caring) and the Ministry of the Environment. These ministries assist the people experiencing poverty and promote environmental stewardship. The parish coordinates these initiatives and then carries them out through the Simbahayan, reflecting a top-down flow of decision-making and program implementation. Despite this centralized pastoral approach, the parish priest advocated including Simbahayan lay leaders in the parish council's strategic planning. The goal was to encourage their participation and empower them to implement pastoral programs



independently within their respective cluster communities.

Given the prominent presence of the Simbahayan in suburban gated communities, the following section examines the organizational contexts that enable and constrain these areas and shape the Simbahayan's capacity to achieve its intended outcomes.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT AND OUTCOMES OF THE SIMBAHAYAN

Enabling organizational contexts contribute positively to the Simbahayan's outcomes. Committed Simbahayan lay leaders, active members, and strong interorganizational relationships between the Simbahayan and Homeowners Association (HOA) leaders are key enabling organizational contexts identified in this study.

A. ENABLING INTERNAL CONTEXT

Lay Servant Leadership

A strong support system among Simbahayan leaders is an enabling internal context that positively influences outcomes. The findings indicate that this supportive dynamic closely links to the fact that many Simbahayan leaders are active stewards in broader parish activities. Their leadership involvement in parish meetings and events enables them to readily translate parish-level decisions and initiatives into actionable plans at the cluster community level.

Catholic Resident Homeowners' Support

Findings indicate that Catholic resident homeowners with financial capacity play a

significant role in sustaining Simbahayan programs and initiatives. This financial support contributes materially to implementing religious and community activities. Participants in the focus group discussions shared examples of this family household-level support. In one Simbahayan cluster, a financially capable family donated a parcel of land, which they later developed into a community chapel. Some family households generously pledge financial support to cover the stipend of the parish priest who presides over the Sunday liturgical Mass.

For instance, the family who donated the parcel of land for our community chapel still provides the stipend for two regular Sunday Masses. We are so thankful for their continued support. – Elizabeth

These forms of family household support strengthen Simbahayan's resource base and enable the continuity of pastoral activities, thereby positively affecting the achievement of organizational outcomes. From a social and financial support perspective, family households function as essential enabling actors that supplement institutional and parish-level resources, particularly in contexts where formal funding mechanisms are limited.

B. ENABLING EXTERNAL CONTEXT

Strong Inter-organizational Ties

Findings show that strengthening interorganizational relationships is crucial in achieving organizational outcomes. Drawing on the social embeddedness proposition (Granovetter, 1985, p. 492), networks of social relationships shape organizational actions. This suggests that trust, open communication, and cooperative relationships among lay leaders, members, and external stakeholders such as parish structures and homeowners' associations play a crucial role in pastoral outcomes.



The focus group discussion strongly supports these findings. One participant noted that Simbahayan leaders cultivate positive relationships with HOA officers through formal acknowledgment in religious and community activities. Examples include inviting HOA officials to community feast celebrations, dawn masses, and Christmas-related events. Deliberate relationship-building and mutual recognition between Simbahayan and their stakeholders strengthen interorganizational collaboration (Provan & Kenis, 2008, p. 239) and positively influence the attainment of Simbahayan outcomes within gated communities.

As the coordinator of our cluster community, I'm trying to maintain positive relations with the HOA officers. During the Fiesta, we invited them to make the offertory during the liturgical mass, and it went well. – Anna

In the key informant interview, the president of the 18 Simbahayan saw the importance of interorganizational ties (Aldrich & Pfeffer, 1976, p. 79; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 148) between Simbahayan leadership and HOA officers in enhancing organizational outcomes. He said maintaining positive relations among members and sustaining parish inter-ministeriality contribute to Simbahayan outcomes.

HOA officers' active participation in the Simbahayan activities strengthens social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000; Lin, 2001), fostering trust, visibility, and mutual recognition between religious and residential administrative structures. This collaborative relationship supports Simbahayan initiatives while simultaneously enabling HOAs to maintain relational and political ties with the residents.

Mutual Resource Dependence

The findings indicate that Simbahayan lay leaders and HOA officers in gated communities mutually depend on each other for resources. Simbahayan depends on HOAs for access-related resources. These resources include common spaces and institutional support necessary to conduct pastoral activities. Conversely, HOAs derive strategic benefits from their engagement with Simbahayan by leveraging influence and embeddedness within the community. Simbahayan lay leaders remind community residents to comply with HOA monthly dues, thereby supporting HOA administrative functions. Participants emphasized that such reciprocal engagement contributes to cooperation among Simbahayan leaders and HOA officials. This reciprocal exchange reflects a negotiated inter-organizational collaboration (Provan & Kenis, 2008) in which Simbahayan and HOA leaders seek to manage resource dependencies to achieve their respective organizational outcomes. In this context, cooperation becomes a pragmatic strategy that enables the Simbahayan to operate effectively within gated communities while allowing HOAs to maintain community compliance and cohesion. Therefore, a positive inter-organizational relationship between the HOA and Simbahayan will help achieve their respective outcomes. Participants noted that the HOA's administrative and financial channels often accommodate Simbahayan requests and operational needs efficiently. Related to the foregoing discussion, the findings show that HOA officers cooperate regardless of their religious affiliation. Some HOA officials are non-Catholic; nevertheless, they remain supportive and cooperative in facilitating Simbahayan activities. This suggests that interorganizational collaboration between Simbahayan and HOA leaders primarily rests on shared community interests and mutual organizational goals rather than on religious alignment.



The organizational contexts identified below are the social conditions that collectively enable the Simbahayan to achieve its pastoral outcomes. Viewed through a general systems perspective, strong interorganizational relationships and collaboration between the Homeowners' Association (HOA) and the Simbahayan play a more significant role than religious affiliation in sustaining community initiatives. Moreover, Simbahayan's social and financial support system supplements its pastoral program with institutional and parish-level resources.

C. CONSTRAINING INTERNAL CONTEXT

Constraining organizational contexts negatively affects Simbahayan's operational and financial outcomes. These include conflict and fragmentation, reduced participation, lack of written organizational guidelines, weak ecclesial inter-ministerial coordination, and problems with financial accountability. Together, these conditions constitute constraining contexts that undermine the attainment of Simbahayan outcomes, generate resistance among members, and hinder the effective realization of both pastoral and organizational outcomes.

Conflict and Fragmentation

Findings highlight that unresolved organizational conflicts led some members to disengage from the Simbahayan core group. This results in internal divisions and the formation of smaller, informal subgroups within the Simbahayan, influencing the attainment of its outcomes. Participants in the focus group discussions reported efforts to de-escalate tensions and restore unity; however, these attempts were sometimes unsuccessful. Certain subgroups organize religious activities independently, without the consent of recognized

Simbahayan leaders or the approval of parish authorities.

Some of our members wanted to separate from our community. To settle this issue, I formed a new group chat (Facebook Messenger) exclusively for our pastoral community and left the old group chat. The separated group always receives notifications about our plans and sometimes acts ahead of us. As a coordinator, I still invite them to attend meetings and inform them through their group chat about parish decisions. – Anna

Such fragmentation weakens coordination, undermines leadership, and limits the Simbahayan's ability to achieve pastoral outcomes. From an organizational perspective, conflicts and fragmentation in the Simbahayan reflect challenges in conflict management and highlight the need for clearer conflict resolution protocols. The lack of institutionalized conflict-management procedures increases the likelihood that disagreements escalate into structural divisions rather than being resolved through formal organizational channels. The absence of institutionalized written guidelines for Simbahayan members and leaders will also be examined as another constraining organizational context.

Disproportionate Pastoral Workload

In the key informant interview, the parish priest shared the success of the pastoral council's initiative in communicating the Simbahayan structure to all parishioners. Constraints in the Simbahayan's organizational structure became evident during a parish-initiated consultative meeting involving all Simbahayan lay members and leaders. Issues in Simbahayan's structure identified during the interview include incomplete leadership representation, largely due to low volunteer participation and the prolonged tenure of some coordinators, many of whom had served for up to a decade. Conversely,



in communities with incomplete leadership representation, Simbahayan lay leaders bear a disproportionate workload. Some of the Simbahayan lay leaders faithfully shared this challenging organizational problem.

When our parish priest visited the 18 cluster communities, he observed that some communities had incomplete officer teams. Some were just starting; others had been serving in their community for a long time. But some community leaders seemed no longer active and would send a representative to the church, especially those who are elderly and have health problems.

—Thomas

Low Lay Participation and Leadership

Limited time among coordinators and their respective teams is one of the major challenges Simbahayan faces in gated communities. Some members are employed individuals working outside the province of Cavite. Likewise, Gaspar (2016) argued that Simbahayan in urban settings, coupled with work schedules, hinders active participation. This work arrangement significantly affects availability and contributes to low participation and attendance rates among Simbahayan members.

The parish priest acknowledged this challenge and expressed understanding, recognizing that reduced participation (Dagmang, 2016; Gaspar, 2016) largely stems from members' personal work-related commitments. This finding underscores the conflict between pastoral responsibilities and economic demands. This conflict shapes Simbahayan's operational outcomes in gated communities.

Reduced participation also stems from human resource constraints within Simbahayan, particularly low youth engagement and declining functional capacity among long-serving coordinators. Academic obligations

constrain youth participation by limiting their availability for community liturgical activities. Meanwhile, aging coordinators face challenges in information transmission and coordination, resulting in delays and inconsistencies in communicating parish pastoral decisions to the Simbahayan level.

Absence of Institutionalized Guidelines

During the interview, Simbahayan lay leaders highlighted the importance of institutionalized guidelines in organizational operations. The findings revealed that Simbahayan lacks written guidelines stating 1) the roles and responsibilities of Simbahayan representatives, 2) the tenure of service of Simbahayan leaders, and 3) a succession leadership plan. The absence of these formal organizational structures limits role clarity, weakens accountability structures, and contributes to variability in leadership practices across communities. For example, the lack of clear guidelines has resulted in predominantly normative and informal processes for selecting leadership roles across cluster communities. Findings indicate variation in representative selection practices, with Simbahayan lay leaders adopting voting mechanisms, voluntary self-nomination or peer nomination, or appointment by the parish priest. Younger Simbahayan lay leaders relied heavily on informal consultations and advice from seasoned Simbahayan coordinators when written guidelines were absent. Institutionalizing written guidelines helps ensure that we meet our organizational goals and strengthens Simbahayan's organizational capacity. Formal guidelines must include procedures for leadership selection, clearly defined member responsibilities, decision-making processes, and coordination mechanisms.



Newly appointed or elected coordinators like me need something to follow. As a new coordinator, I didn't receive any guidelines. I just asked for advice from the other BEC coordinators ahead of me. – Deborah

The findings suggest that while these normative practices facilitate continuity through shared experience, they also generate inconsistencies in organizational processes and outcomes. Data from the key informant interview revealed that the parish and diocesan levels issued no Simbahayan guidelines. This observation was reinforced during the focus group discussion. Simbahayan lay leaders consistently stated that no formal guidelines document governs its operations. However, this discussion also raised a key reservation about institutionalizing Simbahayan guidelines. Some Simbahayan lay leaders expressed concerns about codifying their practices into formal written rules, emphasizing that Simbahayan leadership is fundamentally grounded in voluntary service and personal commitment rather than bureaucratic obligation. Notably, the excessive formalization could potentially diminish the spirit of voluntarism that underpins Simbahayan participation. These formal written guidelines must be reviewed periodically, particularly at the end of leadership terms or during transitions in parish leadership.

For me, not everything should be written in the guidelines because our service is voluntary. The tasks of community lay leaders shouldn't all be black and white, since they are voluntary actions, we offer of our own free will. – Eve

In the absence of formal guidelines, Simbahayan lay leaders have performed a set of unwritten yet socially recognized roles and duties that sustain church community. These leadership expectations are not formally codified but are intentionally shared and reinforced through normative practice. From an institutional perspective, these findings suggest that Simbahayan leadership operates largely through normative expectations rather than formal authority structures.

For example, some Simbahayan leaders use normative conflict-management practices to address inter-organizational tensions. No clear written procedures guide leaders in resolving conflict, such as forming a grievance committee.

If there are minor disagreements among members and leaders, we go to them and help resolve them. If the discussion goes well, thank God. But if not, we report it to the parish priest, and he takes care of it. – Thomas

D. CONSTRAINING EXTERNAL CONTEXT

Weak Ecclesial Inter-ministeriality

Weak functional linkages among the three major parish clusters—Simbahayan, ministries, and religious organizations—significantly influence the organizational outcomes of each cluster. Poor coordination and recurring misunderstandings among church lay leaders are significant constraints. This finding also aligns with Dagmang (2016), who identified a notable problem of weak relationships between Simbahayan and other lay organizations. This challenge contrasts with the principle of ecclesial inter-ministerial collaboration, or synodality. Luciani (2022) explained how synodality in religious communities works: all components of the parish organizational structure interconnect and mutually support each other to achieve outcomes. Evidence from focus group discussions and key informant interviews shows limited cooperation, coordination, and communication between the Simbahayan and certain ministries, particularly the music ministry. Participants noted that the lack of regular coordination and updates adversely affected outcomes, especially in conducting liturgical activities during community masses. In some cases, these coordination gaps escalated into conflict and mutual misunderstanding.



Some church lay leaders really insist on doing things in their own way. For example, in the music ministry: This is our thing (e.g., musical instruments); only our members will use them. Whatever we want to do during Mass, we will do, even if it is not the parish priest's directive. This happens because some choir representatives do not attend important regular pastoral steering committee meetings.
– Thomas

Inter-organizational Misunderstanding

This finding shows tensions emerged between the Simbahayan and HOA officers, particularly concerning the collection and use of monetary contributions from Simbahayan members. HOA officers reportedly questioned and scrutinized these financial practices, leading to inter-organizational conflict that negatively affected Simbahayan's ability to achieve its outcomes.

Narratives from the key informant interview reveal that the situation escalated when HOA officers attempted to suspend Simbahayan activities, citing financial matters. This intervention disrupted Simbahayan programs and constrained their organizational functioning. No clear, written procedural guidelines exist for resolving the financial dispute.

The HOA questioned the financial contributions to the mini-pastoral group and expressed a desire to lead the chapel themselves. At one point, someone even brought a firearm. The priest instructed that the parish should handle all matters involving the mini-pastoral group. If there is any misunderstanding between the HOA and the pastoral group, the priest will be the one to talk to them.
– Thomas

Discouraging members of the Simbahayan from conducting death-wake rites in the chapels is an administrative concern the coordinators have encountered. Informal gambling, improper waste disposal, and alcohol consumption inside the chapel are several reasons for the prohibition on using the Simbahayan chapels during the death-wake rites. Simbahayan coordinators find it challenging to follow the directive from the

Parish Pastoral Council prohibiting the use of the community chapel during death-wake rites. This prohibition has created misunderstandings and tensions among community members and organizational actors. This case highlights the vulnerability of Simbahayan operations in gated communities when parallel governance structures challenge informal practices and when institutionalized rules and accountability mechanisms are absent.

Simbahayan Organizational Contexts Enabling Internal Organizational Context	Ten (10) Themes Emerged in Examining Organizational Context	Attributes of the Organizational Context
	Lay Servant Leadership	active stewardship and commitment; translate parish-level decisions and initiatives into actionable plans at the Simbahayan level
	Catholic Resident Homeowners' Support	pledge financial support to cover the stipend of the parish priest; donate a parcel of land that was subsequently developed into a community chapel
	Strong Inter-organizational Ties	cultivate positive relationships with HOA officers

Enabling External

Mutual Resource Dependence

Simbahayan depends on HOA's institutional support necessary to conduct pastoral activities; Simbahayan

Organizational Context

supports HOA administrative functions;

HOA officers depend on the engagement with Simbahayan to maintain relational and political ties with the residents



Constraining Internal Organizational Context	Conflict and Fragmentation	organize pastoral activities of the “other” independent group, without the consent of recognized Simbahayan leaders of the parish
	Disproportionate Pastoral Workload	incomplete leadership representation, largely due to low volunteer participation and the prolonged leadership tenure of Simbahayan lay leaders
	Low Lay Participation and Leadership	largely due to Simbahayan members’ personal work-related commitments
	Absence of Institutionalized Guidelines	lacks written guidelines related to roles and responsibilities, tenure of service, and succession leadership plan for the Simbahayan lay leaders
Constraining External Organizational Context	Weak Ecclesial Interministeriality	weak functional linkages among the three major parish clusters; absence of regular coordination and updates
	Inter-organizational Misunderstanding	question and scrutinize the financial practices of the Simbahayan pastoral activities

Table 2. Enabling and Constraining Organizational Contexts that influence the operation of the Simbahayan pastoral activities in the Gated Communities.

Overall, the insights gathered from key informants and participants revealed ten (10) distinct themes. Table 2 summarizes these organizational contexts that shape Simbahayan outcomes. By examining how enabling and constraining organizational contexts reconfigure Simbahayan outcomes, these findings fill a key empirical gap.

The subsequent part of this section offers a sociological analysis of Simbahayan from an organizational systems perspective. By examining Simbahayan through the lenses of open, rational, and natural systems, this study explores how these systems’ frameworks enhance Simbahayan’s productivity in achieving its outcomes.

SOCIOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF SIMBAHAYAN IN ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS

This study provided a sociological discourse on how organizational contexts shape the outcomes of the Simbahayan framing from the perspective of organizational systems (Bertalanffy, 1950; Scott and Davis, 2015). Positioned within an open system of faith communities, this study advanced the idea that Simbahayan functions not as an isolated entity but as an interdependent subsystem in the broader parish network. To fulfill organizational outcomes, Simbahayan relies on continuous interaction with surrounding social structures and contexts. By integrating simbahan (church) and pamayanan (community), this study examines Simbahayan as an open-system organization. Simbahayan works with other interdependent subsystems closely tied to Catholic parish networks.

Within the Parish Pastoral Council’s organizational structure, Simbahayan lay leaders foster strong synergy, active negotiation, and close coordination across all interdependent subsystems. These interdependent subsystems include the clusters of parish ministries and religious lay associations. For example, organizing a community liturgical celebration requires Simbahayan lay leaders to establish robust functional linkages with multiple ministerial units: coordinate with the Ministry of Altar Servers to secure altar servers for the liturgy, request mass lectors and commentators from the Ministry of Commissioned Readers, and contact Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to support the clergy in administering the Sacrament. The linkages and synergies established among parish cluster leaders, through their joint efforts in organizing community liturgical masses, reflect the vision of interministeriality advocated by the diocesan church across its organizational



structure. Furthermore, sustaining the enabling organizational context enhances effectiveness in achieving each structure's pastoral outcomes.

Simbahayan lay leaders actively engage and collaborate with resident homeowners and Homeowners Association officers in gated communities. Consequently, the HOA has a vital role in facilitating and supporting the Simbahayan mini-pastoral activities. Furthermore, interactions between Simbahayan and HOA leaders involve inter-organizational negotiations on the reciprocal exchange of resources, as both systems work to achieve their respective organizational outcomes. For example, Simbahayan relies on the HOA for institutional support to carry out its pastoral activities while also assisting the HOA with administrative functions (e.g., collecting HOA monthly dues). This collaborative relationship supports Simbahayan initiatives while simultaneously enabling HOAs to maintain relational and political ties with the residents.

Analyzed through the lens of a rational system, this study highlighted the importance of institutionalizing formal BEC structures. This formal structure supports effective Simbahayan outcomes within a communal context. This perspective applies directly to the Simbahayan's organizational structure rather than to its individual lay members, emphasizing relational and behavioral structures. The study indicated that Simbahayan leaders and members primarily sustain their responsibilities and roles through normative practices rather than through formal, codified regulations. Since its inception, the parish has lacked codified implementing guidelines to steer lay leaders in their mini-pastoral endeavors, leaving no official or standardized documentation to serve as a guide. Accounts from the Simbahayan lay participants and key informants underscore that formal structures

ensure effective organizational functioning and disrupt constraining organizational contexts. For example, establishing these formal standards will help regulate and resolve key operational constraints, such as disproportionate lay pastoral workloads, tenure management, and succession planning. In addition, institutionalizing guidelines for leadership representation and clearer conflict-resolution protocols is essential to strengthen the Simbahayan's organizational capacity. Moreover, these church-level guidelines should be harmonized with separate agreements or administrative protocols with HOA officials to support smooth inter-organizational collaboration and relations. At the time of data collection for this study, the diocesan church has commissioned lay leaders and clergy to create institutional Simbahayan guidelines. These implementing guidelines will regulate and govern their operation. The finalized BEC formal and informal structures will be distributed to all vicariate churches and are expected to address constraining organizational issues.

Adopting a natural system perspective, this study also accounts for the non-rational dimensions of the Simbahayan. Non-rational or informal structures include the relational, behavioral, and social dynamics of Simbahayan members. These informal structures are necessary to humanize the Simbahayan as a social group. For example, when Simbahayan lay members demonstrate commitment and loyalty toward one another, organizational outcomes increase. When interdependent units such as HOA and church cluster ministers maintain strong inter-organizational ties that foster trust and social capital, organizational productivity increases. Thus, Simbahayan shares a common set of informal structures, such as shared commitments and a unified purpose that sustain outcome achievement. This fosters an organic culture within a renewed local church, maintaining



social cohesiveness while defining and redefining moral codes for others.

The next section details policy recommendations for the Diocesan church institution. Such an approach helps optimize the attainment of the Simbahayan outcomes and mitigate disruptive organizational contexts.

WAYS FORWARD IN ATTAINING THE SIMBAHAYAN OUTCOMES

Drawing from the experiences of Simbahayan lay leaders in pastoral activities, this section proposes actionable initiatives to address constraining organizational contexts. By implementing these recommendations, the Simbahayan can enhance the effectiveness of its pastoral outcomes while addressing and mitigating potential operational challenges.

Simbahayan Organizational Effectiveness

The findings suggest formation and technical skills among Simbahayan leaders to strengthen leadership capacity and organizational effectiveness. As noted by the parish priest, capacity-building skills training for clusters of community leaders, such as facilitation and organizational technical training, must be reinstitutionalized. This initiative addresses lay leaders' inadequate organizing skills, a key challenge in forming Simbahayan (Dagmang, 2022, p. 3). Thus, the organization must prioritize a strong, comprehensive Simbahayan orientation at the beginning, followed by ongoing formation (Gaspar, 2016, p. 63).

We need to equip servant community leaders with skills. I do not belittle our lay leaders, but we give them skills because being just a servant is not enough. From there, we provide skills training. For instance, we provide training in organizing, training on how to facilitate pastoral

programs, and mentoring in spiritual conversation. – Parish Priest

Simbahayan Succession Plan

The key informant emphasized the importance of intentionally identifying and preparing potential successors among Simbahayan members to ensure continuity in leadership roles, responsibilities, and organizational functions. However, the study also reveals structural constraints to effective succession planning. A significant challenge is community members' limited willingness to assume leadership positions, which reinforces dependence on long-serving coordinators. As one participant noted, a pragmatic strategy to address this challenge is to retrain Simbahayan officers who already have knowledge and organizational experience in pastoral services.

Re-engineering of the Simbahayan Structure

The parish pastoral council formed a Discernment team to address the constraints of incomplete leadership representation and the disproportionate organizational workload faced by Simbahayan lay leaders. This ad hoc team was assigned to review the existing Simbahayan structure and restore functionality and parishioners' participation as potential representatives within the Simbahayan system. In the key informant interview, the parish priest further highlighted that the Simbahayan lay leaders have a dual responsibility: to serve their respective mini-pastoral communities and actively engage in parish-level activities. This dual responsibility is particularly evident among Simbahayan leaders and members, who actively engage in parish-level activities and in their respective cluster communities (Ocampo, 1994, p. 32). Both forms of service were regarded as equally significant in sustaining ecclesial life and community participation. In addition,



the informant pointed out the necessity of sustainability and autonomy for Simbahayan lay leaders. He expressed the belief that each mini-pastoral community should sustain its programs and achieve its pastoral objectives independently.

Establishment of Discerning Team

The parish priest reported plans to adopt formal organizational mechanisms from the diocesan level to strengthen Simbahayan's structure as cluster communities. At the time of writing this research, the parish priest formed the Discernment Team to help parish leadership prayerfully and objectively select the next parish lay leaders. According to the parish priest, the process outlined in the Diocesan Discernment Primer emphasizes evaluative and spiritual dimensions, guidance of the Holy Spirit, and sensitivity to the parish's pastoral needs. However, analysis of the discernment primer reveals that while it provides guidance on leadership representation, role assignment, and leadership tenure, it does not explicitly address key organizational change concerns identified in this study. Specifically, issues such as leadership turnover, succession planning, reduced lay participation, and the inconsistent implementation of organizational guidelines remain underdeveloped. These findings suggest that while diocesan-level formalization initiatives represent a significant step toward institutional strengthening, further refinement is needed to ensure administrative frameworks respond to the dynamic organizational challenges Simbahayan faces in gated communities.

This study's empirical results extended a sociological analysis of Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Philippine Catholic Church as a social organization through the lenses of open, rational, and natural organizational systems. Grounded in participants' and key

informants' accounts, this study asserted that the rational (i.e., formal structures) and non-rational (i.e., informal structures) dimensions of Simbahayan reconfigure its productivity in achieving liturgical, developmental, or liberational pastoral outcomes. Furthermore, this study argued that Simbahayan functions not as an isolated entity but as an interdependent subsystem closely tied to Catholic parish networks. As an interdependent subsystem within broader Catholic parish networks, Simbahayan's productivity depends on ongoing interactions with surrounding organizational structures and contexts.

Consolidating and cross-referencing the enabling and constraining organizational contexts regarding Simbahayan's outcome attainment revealed two significant findings: First, many internal constraining organizational factors, such as excessive lay pastoral workload and the lack of a conflict resolution protocol, stem from the absence of a formal structure within Simbahayan. Consequently, the parish church must establish formal guidelines for all Simbahayan clusters to follow. Second, strong positive relationships exist internally among Simbahayan members and externally with interdependent units, HOAs, and parish clusters, both of which drive positive outcomes. However, to strengthen interorganizational ties across these interrelated systems, the parish prioritizes continuous formation for lay leaders. Both internal and external organizational contexts significantly shaped Simbahayan's operational and financial outcomes. Through this analysis, the research understands both internal dynamics and external influences in sustaining the vitality of Simbahayan communities.

By way of concluding, this study highlighted key findings: 1) It identified a geographically unique form of Simbahayan within suburban



gated communities, where the diversity and heterogeneity of members and leaders significantly contribute to fulfilling both the material and spiritual outcomes of the organization; 2) it demonstrated that Simbahayan outcomes are shaped not only by spiritual commitment but by the interaction of structures and systems contextualized in the gated communities; and 3) it underscored the need for the Simbahayan to institutionalize formal operational guidelines through bylaws or manuals for leadership roles, decision-making, and parish coordination, while harmonizing these protocols with HOA agreements to ensure effective collaboration and relations.

The absence of written guidelines has reinforced informal leadership selection and role ambiguity across communities. From an institutional perspective, the absence of formal rules and standardized procedures constrained Simbahayan from functioning as cohesive social organizations. Parish efforts such as forming a Discernment Team suggested a move toward structural reform, but formal mechanisms for leadership development and standardized governance remain limited. Overall, Simbahayan sustainability requires balancing relational flexibility with structured governance. To better sustain Simbahayan's participatory ethos and vitality, we can enhance resilience by formalizing inter-organizational arrangements, clarifying relevant guidelines, and strengthening leadership training.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I thank the parish priest for granting permission to conduct this study and his 12 parish Simbahayan lay leader disciples for generously sharing their time and insights.



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