

**Educational aspirations of out-of-school youth:
Basis for a proposed re-integration program**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the educational goals of out-of-school youth (OSY) in Bekigan, Sadanga, Mountain Province, and sought to develop a re-integration program to facilitate their return to teaching. A mixed-methods research design was utilized, 2 participant groups: 15 out-of-school youth (OSY) aged 15–24 years who contributed both quantitative and qualitative data via a researcher-developed checklist and survey questionnaire, and key informants, including teachers, parents, and leaders, who offered qualitative visions through interviews and open-ended questions. To find out who the respondents were and what their educational goals were, we looked at the quantitative data using frequency, percentage, and weighted mean. We looked at the qualitative data using thematic analysis to find patterns, problems, and barriers that kept people from participating in school. The results showed that most of the OSY were male, single, between the ages of 20 and 22, and had not finished junior high school. Most of them didn't have jobs, and their families usually had modest to middle-class monthly incomes. The study also found that there are many obstacles to education, such as personal issues like losing interest and low self-esteem, family issues like not having enough money or support, socio-economic issues like not being able to find a job or being poor, and school and community issues like not being able to get to school or not knowing about other ways to learn. These obstacles had a big effect on how motivated they were to keep learning and how they thought about it. The study presented the BALIK-ARAL Program, a community-based re-integration project meant to provide educational support, mentoring, and flexible learning options customized to the needs of OSY. The program stresses that teachers, parents, and community leaders should work together to remove both personal and structural impediments to education. The study emphasizes the necessity of comprehending OSY profiles, educational aspirations, and perceived barriers in formulating targeted interventions that elevate participation, motivation, and educational achievement, consequently fostering enhanced social and economic outcomes for individuals and the community.

Keywords: Out-of-school youth, educational aspirations, re-integration program, Alternative Learning System, socio-economic factors, motivation, Philippines.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is largely regarded as a vital human right and a primary catalyst for social and economic advancement (UNESCO, 2024). It helps people learn important skills, get involved in their communities, and make their lives better in general (World Bank, 2023). Researchers say that good education is a big part of fighting poverty, giving people power, and making long-term growth in a country (UNICEF, 2022; Altinok & Aydemir, 2021). Even though the globe has promised to make learning fair and open to everyone, many young people around the world still don't go to school (UNESCO, 2024; Global Education Monitoring Report, 2023). More than 250 million children and teens around the world are still not in school because of poverty, war, being forced to move, and not having enough chances to learn (UNICEF, 2022; Save the Children, 2023). Education is still a top priority in the Philippines. This is shown by the Department of Education's responsibility to make learning accessible, relevant, and of high quality for all Filipinos (DepEd, 2023). Even though these promises were made, there are still big disparities in access to and participation in education, especially for at-risk youth (Asian Development Bank, 2022). According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, 16.9% of Filipino youth aged 15 to 24 are not in school. The main reasons for this are financial problems, family duties, and a lack of enthusiasm (PSA, 2024). Multiple research indicate that economic adversity frequently necessitates young individuals to prematurely exit educational institutions to pursue job or contribute to home income-generating activities (Sarmiento & Orbeta, 2022; Liu & Alampay, 2021). Studies show that losing interest, changing priorities, and digital distractions like too much time spent on mobile phones are all making students less interested in school (Estrella, 2023; Daguió & Castro, 2022). Even while programs like the Alternative Learning System (ALS) are meant to give out-of-school teens more options for learning, many teens in remote and poor areas still don't take part or finish them (DepEd-BALS, 2022).

The steep topography and scattered settlements in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) make it hard for students to get to school and learn (Alangui & Ponce, 2023; Reyes & Dayagbil, 2022). Indigenous people regard education as a means of individual and collective empowerment, attributing significant cultural importance to it (Enriquez & Villanueva, 2023; Fabula, 2022). Nonetheless, the geographic isolation of numerous barangays sometimes restricts access to educational institutions, teaching materials, and technology, thereby establishing structural impediments to regular school attendance (Diez et al., 2024; Manalo & Pascual, 2023). Research has indicated that adapting to formal educational settings beyond one's community can be challenging for adolescents, especially throughout secondary and senior high school, sometimes leading to homesickness and subsequent dropout (Alangui & Ponce, 2023; Dela Cruz et al., 2022).

In Sadanga, Mountain Province, most barangays have gained greater access to roads and more help with their schooling. Barangay Bekigan, on the other hand, can only be reached by foot and is seen as a remote region with little educational resources. It only has an elementary school, so students who want to continue their studies must go to surrounding barangays. Even while people in the community enthusiastically support education, many teens still drop out of school, especially in high school. In contrast to previous decades, where economic hardship was the predominant factor for school dropout, recent studies indicate that diminished motivation and diminishing educational aspirations are becoming increasingly relevant (Estrella, 2023; Daguió & Castro, 2022; Liu & Alampay, 2021).

This change shows how important personal and internal elements are becoming in shaping the educational choices of young people. These factors include self-efficacy, goal orientation, and personal interest. (Calo & Salvaña, 2024; Albert et al., 2024). Comprehending these variables is crucial for formulating context-sensitive treatments that successfully

re-engage out-of-school kids (Education Development Center, 2025). This study seeks to offer insights for policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders in the development of culturally relevant programs that motivate youth to return to school or engage in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) (Enriquez & Villanueva, 2023; Manalo & Pascual, 2023; Fabian & Reyes, 2024).

Statement of the problem

This study was conducted to determine the educational aspirations of out of school youth in Bekigan, Sadanga, Mountain Province, as the basis for the development of a proposed reintegration program. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the demographic, personal, familial, socioeconomic, gender related, and educational profile characteristics of out of school youth in terms of age, sex, marital status, number of siblings, birth order, last grade or year level completed, age when they stopped schooling, current employment status, family monthly income, and reasons for dropping out of school?
2. What is the level of educational aspirations of out of school youth in terms of orientation toward education, motivation for schooling, and perceived social support for education?
3. What are the perceived barriers to education among out of school youth, as viewed by out of school youth, teachers, parents, and community leaders, in terms of personal barriers, family related barriers, socioeconomic barriers, and school and community related barriers?
4. What reintegration program may be proposed to support the educational aspirations of out of school youth?

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed methods research methodology to investigate the educational aspirations of out of school youth and to formulate a targeted reintegration program. The methodology integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches through the simultaneous collection of numerical and narrative data, followed by independent analysis and subsequent integration of findings to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This methodological approach was selected because it enabled the researcher to examine both the measurable dimensions of educational aspirations and the lived experiences that shaped those aspirations. The methodology encompassed the research design, participants of the study, research instrumentation, data gathering procedures, analysis of data, and ethical considerations, all of which collectively contributed to the attainment of the study objectives.

The quantitative aspect of the study utilized a standardized survey questionnaire to gather data regarding the respondents' demographic characteristics, educational background, familial influences, and educational aspirations. This component enabled the researcher to employ statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, and weighted mean to identify patterns and trends among out of school youth. The quantitative data provided a structured description of the respondents' conditions and facilitated the identification of general tendencies concerning their educational motivation and academic direction. In contrast, the qualitative aspect involved interviews and open ended questions intended to explore the experiences, perspectives, and barriers encountered by out of school youth in relation to education. The researcher examined personal, familial, socioeconomic, and school and community related

factors influencing the respondents' educational decisions. The qualitative data yielded detailed insights into the circumstances that contributed to their disengagement from formal schooling and the factors that could support their reintegration into educational pathways through thematic analysis. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data enhanced the validity and depth of the study by enabling the cross verification of findings from multiple sources. Through the combination of statistical patterns and lived experiences, the mixed methods approach provided a more comprehensive understanding of the educational aspirations of out of school youth. Ultimately, the design facilitated the formulation of a reintegration program that addressed both the measurable needs and the unique circumstances of the respondents, with the support of teachers, parents, and community stakeholders.

The study involved two groups of participants to satisfy both the quantitative and qualitative components of the research. The first group consisted of fifteen (15) out of school youth aged 15 to 24 residing in the barangay. The participants were identified through purposive sampling with the assistance of barangay officials to ensure that only individuals who had discontinued formal schooling were included in the study. This group served as the primary respondents of the investigation and provided information regarding their demographic profile, educational aspirations, and personal educational experiences. Due to the relatively small population within the community, the sample size was considered appropriate for obtaining meaningful and contextually relevant data. The second participant group consisted of teachers, parents, and community leaders who served as supplementary sources of information for the qualitative component of the study. This group included seven (7) elementary school teachers who had previously taught the out of school youth respondents during their elementary education and who comprised the entire teaching staff of the local elementary school. The participants also included ten (10) parents of the out of school youth respondents who provided information regarding family conditions and support systems. Additionally, eight (8) community leaders participated in the study, including one (1) barangay captain and seven (7) barangay kagawads. These individuals were selected because of their direct involvement in the education, welfare, and development of the youth within the community. The inclusion of these two participant groups enabled the integration of quantitative and qualitative data from the out of school youth together with qualitative insights from relevant stakeholders, thereby ensuring a comprehensive understanding of educational aspirations, barriers, and possible interventions within the local context.

The study utilized three primary research instruments corresponding to the objectives and variables of the investigation to ensure the efficient collection of data and the reliability and validity of the findings. The first instrument was a researcher made checklist designed to gather the demographic, personal, familial, socioeconomic, gender related, and educational profiles of the out of school youth respondents. The checklist included variables such as age, sex, marital status, number of siblings, birth order, educational attainment, age when schooling was discontinued, current employment status, monthly family income, and primary reasons for dropping out of school. The instrument primarily consisted of closed ended questions to facilitate systematic and measurable data collection suitable for statistical analysis.

The second instrument was a standardized Likert type survey questionnaire used to assess the educational aspirations of out of school youth in terms of orientation toward education, motivation for schooling, and perceived social support for education. The questionnaire evaluated the extent to which respondents valued education, their willingness to continue or resume schooling, and the level of support they perceived from family members, peers, and the community. Responses were measured using a four point Likert scale consisting of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The gathered responses were analyzed through descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, and weighted mean to determine the respondents' level of educational aspirations.

The third instrument consisted of semi structured interview guides utilized to investigate the perceived barriers to education among out of school youth and to obtain additional perspectives from teachers, parents, and community leaders. Two versions of the interview guide were developed to ensure alignment with the experiences and roles of the participants. The first interview guide was intended for out of school youth respondents and focused on their lived experiences, particularly the personal, family related, socioeconomic, and school and community related barriers that contributed to their withdrawal from formal education. This instrument allowed the respondents to describe their individual situations and challenges in detail. The second interview guide was designed for teachers, parents, and community leaders and employed similar thematic areas while focusing on their observations and experiences to obtain a broader perspective regarding the factors affecting the educational participation of out of school youth within the community. Both interview guides generated qualitative data that complemented the quantitative findings and provided a deeper and more contextualized understanding of the barriers to education encountered by out of school adolescents, thereby serving as the basis for the development of the proposed reintegration program.

The data gathering process commenced with securing authorization and coordination from barangay officials and the Sadanga Municipal Education Office. Formal letters of request were submitted and meetings were conducted to explain the purpose of the study and to obtain the support and cooperation of the community. Upon approval, the researcher, who served as the assigned ALS instructor in Bekigan, identified the participants by obtaining a list of out of school youth from both personal records and barangay records. With the assistance of local authorities, the researcher verified the eligibility of the participants based on the inclusion criteria of the study. After finalizing the list of respondents, the researcher personally distributed the survey questionnaires with the assistance of local facilitators to ensure that the participants clearly understood the questions and were able to provide accurate responses. The researcher ensured that the data collection process was conducted respectfully and without intrusion.

Some participants completed the questionnaires independently, while others participated in one on one semi structured interviews to obtain more detailed qualitative information. These activities were conducted in familiar and comfortable settings with the prior informed consent of the participants. After the data collection process, all survey responses and transcribed qualitative data were organized, checked for completeness, and encoded for descriptive statistical analysis and thematic analysis. Throughout the entire process, confidentiality and privacy were strictly observed to protect the identity and welfare of the participants.

The gathered data were analyzed using both statistical methods and thematic analysis. Descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency, percentage, and weighted mean were employed to analyze the quantitative data. These statistical tools were utilized to describe the demographic profile of the respondents and to determine the level of educational aspirations among out of school youth. The responses from the four point Likert scale were interpreted using the following scale: 4 with a mean range of 3.24 – 4.00 interpreted as Much Inspired, 3 with a mean range of 2.50 – 3.23 interpreted as Moderately Inspired, 2 with a mean range of 1.75 – 2.49 interpreted as Inspired, and 1 with a mean range of 1.00 – 1.74 interpreted as Less Inspired. For the qualitative component, thematic analysis was employed to identify, evaluate, and interpret recurring patterns and themes from the participants' responses to open ended questions and interviews. This analytical approach enabled the researcher to systematically

categorize qualitative data into meaningful classifications that explained the perceived barriers to education among out of school youth.

The study strictly adhered to ethical research standards to ensure the protection of the participants and the integrity of the research process. Prior to data gathering, official approval was secured from barangay authorities and the Sadanga Municipal Education Office. All participants were fully informed regarding the objectives of the study, the procedures involved, and their rights as respondents, including their right to refuse participation or withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection commenced. The respondents were assured that their participation was entirely voluntary and that all information they provided would remain strictly confidential. To safeguard their privacy, all responses were coded and utilized solely for academic and research purposes. Furthermore, the researcher sought community consent to ensure that the conduct of the study respected local traditions, customs, and cultural sensitivities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings gathered from 15 out-of-school youth respondents. The quantitative component described the respondents' profile and educational aspirations using frequency, percentage, mean, and descriptive interpretation, while the qualitative component examined perceived barriers to education through thematic analysis of responses from out-of-school youth, teachers, parents, and community leaders. The source material identifies the total number of respondents as $n = 15$, although the specific sampling approach was not stated in the provided data. The discussion is therefore grounded strictly in the data gathered through the reported profile variables, aspiration indicators, interview responses, and thematic categories, and the results are interpreted in direct relation to the study's objective of understanding the educational situation, aspirations, and barriers affecting out-of-school youth.

The profile of the out-of-school youth respondents provides important contextual information for understanding their educational situation and the circumstances that contributed to their discontinuance from school. In terms of age, 4 respondents or 26.67% were 15–16 years old, 1 respondent or 6.67% was 17–18 years old, 2 respondents or 13.33% were 19–20 years old, 5 respondents or 33.33% were 21–22 years old, and 4 respondents or 26.67% were 23–24 years old. The largest proportion belonged to the 21–22 age group, which indicates that many respondents had already spent a considerable period outside the formal school system. At the same time, the presence of younger respondents aged 15–16 years old shows that school discontinuance also occurs during early adolescence. This age distribution suggests that out-of-school youth in the community are not developmentally uniform, as some may still be at a stage where immediate reintegration into formal schooling is feasible, while others may require more flexible alternative learning pathways that consider age, work readiness, and prolonged disengagement from school.

The gender distribution showed a marked imbalance, with 14 respondents or 93.33% identified as male and only 1 respondent or 6.67% identified as female. No respondent identified as transgender male, transgender female, non-binary, or prefer not to say, with each of these categories having 0 respondents or 0.00%. This finding indicates that the out-of-school youth respondents were predominantly male, which may reflect gendered patterns in school discontinuance, work expectations, peer influence, or community norms affecting educational participation. In terms of civil status, all 15 respondents or 100.00% were single, while married, widow, and separated respondents each registered 0 respondents or 0.00%. The fact that all respondents were single suggests that marital responsibilities were not a direct factor in their educational discontinuance, and this may also indicate that educational re-engagement remains

a viable possibility if appropriate family, community, and institutional support mechanisms are made accessible.

The respondents generally came from large families. None of the respondents had 1–2 siblings, representing 0 respondents or 0.00%, while 2 respondents or 13.33% had 3–4 siblings, 7 respondents or 46.67% had 5–6 siblings, and 6 respondents or 40.00% had 7 and above siblings. This distribution shows that 13 respondents, comprising those with 5–6 siblings and those with 7 and above siblings, belonged to relatively large households where financial, emotional, and educational resources may be divided among many children. Birth order further supports this interpretation, as 4 respondents or 26.67% were 1st–3rd in birth order, 8 respondents or 53.33% were 4th–6th, 3 respondents or 20.00% were 7th–9th, and 0 respondents or 0.00% were 10th. The dominance of respondents in the 4th–6th birth order category suggests that many of them may have experienced reduced parental attention or resource allocation compared with earlier-born siblings, which may influence educational persistence, family responsibilities, and household expectations.

The educational attainment of the respondents shows that none had only elementary level education, with 0 respondents or 0.00%, while 2 respondents or 13.33% were elementary graduates, 8 respondents or 53.33% reached JHS level, 2 respondents or 13.33% were JHS graduates, 4 respondents or 26.67% reached SHS level, and 0 respondents or 0.00% were SHS graduates. The largest group reached only JHS level, indicating that school discontinuance was most common before completion of basic education. In relation to the age at which schooling was discontinued, 3 respondents or 20.00% stopped schooling at ages 13–15, 10 respondents or 66.67% stopped at ages 16–18, 2 respondents or 13.33% stopped at ages 19–21, and 0 respondents or 0.00% stopped at ages 22–24. The concentration of discontinuance at ages 16–18 suggests that late adolescence is a critical period when academic requirements, personal decisions, family obligations, and financial pressures may converge, resulting in withdrawal from school before completion of secondary education.

The respondents' occupation or current employment status further reveals the vulnerability of the group. Only 1 respondent or 6.67% was employed, while 14 respondents or 93.33% were unemployed, and 0 respondents or 0.00% were self-employed. This indicates that most respondents were neither participating in formal education nor engaged in formal income-generating work, which may increase their risk of long-term economic marginalization. In terms of monthly family income, 0 respondents or 0.00% belonged to families earning below ₱5,000, 1 respondent or 6.67% belonged to families earning ₱5,001–₱10,000, 12 respondents or 80.00% belonged to families earning ₱10,001–₱15,000, and 2 respondents or 13.33% belonged to families earning ₱15,001+. Although most families were within the ₱10,001–₱15,000 bracket, this income level may still be insufficient for large households, especially considering that most respondents had 5 or more siblings. This economic condition helps explain why financial strain remains a central issue in the educational experiences of the respondents.

The stated reasons for dropping out of school show that financial problems were the most common reason, reported by 7 respondents or 46.67%. Family responsibilities followed with 3 respondents or 20.00%, while lack of interest and peer influence were each reported by 2 respondents or 13.33%. Health issues were reported by 1 respondent or 6.67%, while distance to school and early marriage each had 0 respondents or 0.00%. These findings indicate that school discontinuance among the respondents was shaped primarily by economic hardship and family-related demands rather than by distance or early marriage. The presence of lack of interest and peer influence also shows that personal and social factors contributed to dropping

out, but the strongest pattern points to structural and household-level pressures that made school participation difficult to sustain.

The respondents' orientation toward education shows that they generally maintained a positive view of schooling despite being out of school. The statement "Education is important in improving my life" obtained a mean of 3.60 and was described as Much Inspired, while "Education is necessary for my future success" obtained a mean of 3.47 and was also described as Much Inspired. The statement "Education helps improve my personal development" obtained a mean of 3.40, also interpreted as Much Inspired, while "Education helps me get better job opportunities" obtained a mean of 3.33 and was likewise described as Much Inspired. "Education is important for achieving my life goals" received a mean of 3.60 and was described as Much Inspired, showing that the respondents strongly associated education with life improvement and goal attainment. However, "Education improves my future quality of life" obtained a lower mean of 3.20 and was described as Moderately Inspired, while "Finishing school is valuable for my future" obtained a mean of 3.00 and was also described as Moderately Inspired. The statement "Education provides long-term benefits that make the time and effort invested worthwhile" received a mean of 3.47 and was described as Much Inspired. These results show that the respondents recognized the long-term value of education, but some uncertainty remained regarding the immediate and practical benefits of finishing school, particularly in the context of financial hardship, unemployment, and limited opportunities.

In terms of motivation for schooling, the respondents showed moderate to strong willingness to continue their education. The statement "I want to continue my education" obtained a mean of 3.20 and was described as Moderately Inspired, while "I am motivated to return to school or ALS" also obtained a mean of 3.20 and was described as Moderately Inspired. "I am willing to finish at least high school" obtained a mean of 3.07 and was similarly described as Moderately Inspired. These results suggest that although respondents expressed interest in continuing their education, their readiness to return immediately or complete high school was not yet fully strong. On the other hand, "I am willing to pursue higher education or training" obtained a mean of 3.47 and was described as Much Inspired, while "I am determined to complete my education" obtained a mean of 3.33 and was described as Much Inspired. "I am willing to sacrifice time and effort to study" obtained a mean of 3.20 and was described as Moderately Inspired, while "I set goals for my education" and "I am ready to face challenges in returning to school" both obtained means of 3.33 and were described as Much Inspired. These findings indicate that the respondents still possessed educational goals and determination, although their willingness to commit time, effort, and immediate action appeared less stable. The pattern suggests that motivation exists but remains vulnerable to external constraints such as household duties, financial difficulty, emotional hesitation, and uncertainty about reintegration.

The results on perceived social support for education reveal that the respondents generally felt encouraged by family, peers, teachers, mentors, and the community. "My parents encourage me to continue studying" obtained a mean of 3.60 and was described as Much Inspired, while "My family supports my education" received the highest mean in this set at 3.67 and was also described as Much Inspired. "My friends support my decision to continue education" obtained a mean of 3.40 and was described as Much Inspired, while "Teachers or mentors encourage me to study" obtained a mean of 3.47 and was likewise described as Much Inspired. "The community supports youth education" obtained a mean of 3.60 and was described as Much Inspired, and "I receive encouragement to continue studying" obtained a mean of 3.27, also described as Much Inspired. However, "People around me believe I can succeed in school" obtained a lower mean of 2.47 and was described as Inspired, while "I feel supported if I return to school" obtained a mean of 3.13 and was described as Moderately Inspired. These results show that while respondents generally perceived social encouragement,

there may be weaker confidence-building support related to their actual ability to succeed academically. This distinction is important because encouragement alone may not be sufficient if out-of-school youth continue to feel doubtful, embarrassed, or uncertain about whether others believe in their academic capacity.

The overall educational aspirations of the out-of-school youth were rated as Much Inspired, with an overall mean of 3.32. Among the three indicators, orientation toward education obtained the highest mean of 3.38 and was described as Much Inspired, followed by perceived social support for education with a mean of 3.33 and the same description. Motivation for schooling obtained the lowest mean of 3.24, although it was still described as Much Inspired. This pattern indicates that the respondents valued education and perceived meaningful support from others, but their motivation to translate these beliefs into sustained educational action was relatively weaker. The findings suggest that educational aspiration among the respondents remained intact, yet aspiration alone may not be enough to ensure school re-entry or completion. The gap between valuing education and acting on that value points to the need for interventions that strengthen commitment, address practical barriers, and create realistic pathways for returning to formal schooling or alternative learning systems.

The qualitative findings on perceived barriers to education provide deeper insight into the conditions that affect the respondents' willingness and ability to continue schooling. Thematic analysis was used to examine interview responses from out-of-school youth, teachers, parents, and community leaders. The responses were recorded, classified, and organized into recurring themes that reflected personal, family-related, socio-economic, and school or community-based barriers. The integration of perspectives from out-of-school youth and stakeholders allows a more comprehensive understanding of how individual experiences, family circumstances, economic pressures, and social expectations interact in shaping educational disengagement.

Personal barriers emerged strongly in the form of loss of interest, lack of motivation, and the perceived low value of education. Several out-of-school youth directly attributed their discontinuance to declining interest in schooling. S 3 stated, "Kawalan ng interest," while S 5 shared, "Nawala ang sipag ko sa pag-aaral." Similarly, S 12 explained, "Medyo tinamad lang akong ipagpatuloy ang aking pag-aaral noon," and S 14 stated, "I just lost the interest to continue with my studies. I only wanted to be with friends." S 15 specifically connected school disengagement to mobile gaming, stating, "Dahil sa paglalaro ng PUBG (mobile online games)." These responses show that some respondents experienced diminished motivation, reduced academic drive, and competing interests that contributed to their withdrawal from schooling. Stakeholder responses confirmed this pattern. T 3 observed, "Some learners are not motivated anymore and tend to lose interest in continuing their studies." P 1 added, "Some children feel school is not worth it because they see graduates who are still unemployed," while CL 4 noted, "They would rather work than study because education does not always guarantee employment." These statements suggest that the perceived value of education is weakened when young people observe limited employment outcomes among graduates, making education appear less immediately useful or economically rewarding.

Personal struggles and emotional or health-related challenges also emerged as barriers to educational continuation. S 2 stated, "I have problems with my brain (cognitive)," indicating that cognitive or health-related difficulties may have affected school participation. S 6 shared, "Nasaktan ko ang anak ng isang teacher, kaya natakot na akong pumasok at nawalan na ng interes," showing how fear, conflict, and negative school-related experiences can contribute to avoidance and disengagement. S 12 also stated, "My parent passed away and I lost interest in continuing my education," which indicates that grief and family loss may directly affect

motivation and emotional readiness for schooling. These responses show that educational discontinuance is not only a matter of finances or access but also of psychological readiness, emotional stability, and personal experiences that affect the learner's willingness to return to school.

Low self-confidence and emotional disengagement were also identified by stakeholders as major barriers to reintegration. CL 6 stated, "Some students lose faith in themselves when they think they can't catch up." T 6 observed, "They're nervous and shy about going back to school." P 10 similarly explained, "When they stop going to school for a long time, they think they're already too far behind." These responses reveal that out-of-school youth may internalize their absence from school as academic failure or personal inadequacy. Even when opportunities for return exist, fear of being behind, embarrassment, and uncertainty about academic ability may prevent them from re-entering formal education or alternative learning pathways. This finding aligns with the quantitative result showing that the statement "People around me believe I can succeed in school" obtained only a mean of 2.47 and was described as Inspired, which was lower than most other social support indicators. Together, the quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that confidence-building support is a critical need among out-of-school youth.

Family-related barriers also played a major role in the respondents' educational disengagement. One important barrier was family responsibility, economic dependence, and early involvement in household roles. Several out-of-school youth described the need to help their families or earn money as a reason for leaving school. S 9 stated, "Dahil sa pagtulong sa aking mga magulang." S 3 said, "Nais kong kumita nang sariling pera," while S 4 explained, "Ang hangarin kong kumita ng pera para makatulong sa aking mga magulang." S 7 also stated, "Nahikayat akong magtrabaho na lang kaysa mag-aral." These responses show that some respondents viewed work and household contribution as more immediate priorities than schooling. Stakeholders confirmed this condition, as P 8 stated, "Some students stop going to school because they need to help their families at home." T 2 also noted, "Sometimes kids have to work to help the family," while CL 8 explained, "Instead of going to school, young people are encouraged to help with farming and other ways to make a living." These findings reinforce the quantitative result that financial problems were the leading reason for dropping out, reported by 7 respondents or 46.67%, followed by family responsibilities, reported by 3 respondents or 20.00%. The convergence of quantitative and qualitative data shows that household survival needs often compete directly with educational participation.

Weak family support, lack of guidance, and family disruption were also identified as barriers. Among the out-of-school youth, S1 stated, "My parent died, and I didn't want to go to school anymore," which shows how parental loss can lead to emotional disengagement and reduced educational motivation. Stakeholders also emphasized the importance of parental awareness and guidance. P 2 stated, "Some parents don't know how to help their kids after they stop going to school." P 9 added, "Some families don't know all the different ways their kids can get an education." CL 1 emphasized, "Parental guidance is very important in getting young people to keep studying." These responses suggest that family support is not limited to encouragement but also includes guidance, knowledge of educational pathways, emotional stability, and practical assistance in navigating return-to-school options. Although the quantitative findings showed strong perceived family support, with "My family supports my education" obtaining a mean of 3.67 and "My parents encourage me to continue studying" obtaining a mean of 3.60, the qualitative findings reveal that some families may still lack the knowledge, capacity, or stability needed to convert encouragement into concrete educational support.

Socio-economic barriers emerged as one of the strongest and most recurring influences on school discontinuance among the out-of-school youth. The qualitative findings consistently

revealed that poverty, limited financial capacity, and the need to earn income significantly shaped educational decisions and reduced the ability of respondents to remain in school. These barriers demonstrate how economic survival often becomes more urgent than educational attainment, especially among households with limited resources and multiple dependents. The findings strongly support the earlier quantitative results in which financial problems were identified as the leading reason for dropping out of school, reported by 7 respondents or 46.67%, while most respondents also belonged to families earning only ₱10,001–₱15,000 monthly, representing 12 respondents or 80.00%.

Financial hardship, poverty constraints, and limited educational resources were repeatedly identified by both out-of-school youth and stakeholders as central barriers to educational continuation. Several respondents directly associated their school discontinuance with economic difficulty. S 4 stated, “Dahil sa hirap ng buhay,” while S 5 explained, “Nahirapan ang aking pamilya sa pinansyal na bagay.” S 14 expressed the need for assistance by stating, “Kailangan ko ng pinansyal na assistance para maipagpatuloy ang aking pag-aaral,” and S 15 simply identified “Financial support” as a necessity for continuing education. These statements reveal that educational discontinuance among the respondents was not primarily due to rejection of schooling itself but rather to the inability to sustain the financial requirements associated with education. The responses also indicate that out-of-school youth remain aware of education’s importance but experience barriers related to tuition, transportation, school supplies, daily expenses, and household economic instability.

Stakeholders reinforced the same pattern of economic vulnerability. T 1 stated, “Money problems keep students from finishing their education,” while CL 4 explained, “We can’t always afford school, so kids work to help pay for it.” CL 8 similarly noted, “Many young people drop out of school because they can’t afford it.” These statements demonstrate that poverty is not viewed as an isolated individual problem but as a widespread community condition affecting educational participation. Families with constrained financial resources often prioritize food, household expenses, and immediate survival needs over long-term educational investment. The findings therefore suggest that financial hardship operates not only as a direct barrier to school attendance but also as a structural condition that reshapes family priorities and educational expectations.

Employment pressure and income-seeking behavior also emerged as significant socio-economic barriers. The findings reveal that many out-of-school youth perceived employment as a more immediate and practical response to economic hardship than continued schooling. Several respondents expressed a desire to earn their own income rather than remain in school. S 1 stated, “Nais kong kumita nang sariling pera,” while S 2 explained, “Naghahanapbuhay na lang ako kaysa mag-aral.” S 3 similarly stated, “Mas nanaig sa akin ang kumita na lang ng sariling pera,” and S 6 explained, “Hindi ko naipagpatuloy ang pag-aaral dahil mas pinili kong magtrabaho.” These responses indicate that financial pressure influences not only family decisions but also the personal choices of young people who feel responsible for contributing economically to their households. The attraction of work, even informal or low-paying work, lies in its immediate financial return, whereas education is often perceived as a delayed benefit that does not guarantee employment.

The perspectives of parents, teachers, and community leaders further confirmed this trend. P 4 stated, “Some students decide to drop out of school to make money,” while CL 5 explained, “Kids like to work because it helps the family right away.” T 4 also observed, “Youth choose work over school because they need money every day.” These statements demonstrate how daily financial demands influence educational disengagement. The findings suggest that economic hardship creates a cycle in which young people leave school to earn

income, yet the absence of educational qualifications may later limit their long-term employment opportunities and economic mobility. This reinforces the idea that poverty and educational discontinuance are interconnected social issues that require both educational and economic interventions.

School and community-related barriers also contributed to the educational disengagement of the respondents. Although institutions and stakeholders generally showed support for educational reintegration, several social and environmental factors continued to discourage sustained participation in schooling. These barriers included peer influence, leisure activities, negative school experiences, and limited awareness of alternative educational pathways such as the Alternative Learning System (ALS). The findings indicate that school discontinuance is not only shaped by family and economic conditions but also by social relationships, adolescent behavior, and gaps in community awareness regarding educational opportunities.

Peer influence, leisure activities, and negative school experiences emerged as important themes affecting educational participation. Some respondents identified friendships, gaming, and social activities as factors that distracted them from school. S 4 stated, “Dahil sa paglalaro ng PUBG,” while S 7 explained, “Nais kong makasama ang mga kaibigan kaya hindi na ako pumasok.” S 8 similarly stated, “I only wanted to be with friends.” These responses indicate that peer relationships and leisure activities influenced decision-making during adolescence, often reducing academic focus and increasing disengagement from school responsibilities. The findings suggest that social belonging and peer acceptance may sometimes become more influential than educational commitment, particularly among adolescents already experiencing low motivation or weak academic attachment.

Negative school experiences also contributed to withdrawal from education. S 11 stated, “Nasaktan ko ang anak ng isang teacher, kaya natakot na akong pumasok.” This response demonstrates how fear, embarrassment, and conflict within the school environment can produce emotional withdrawal and avoidance of formal schooling. Such experiences may intensify existing insecurity and reduce the likelihood of reintegration. These findings align with earlier themes related to low self-confidence, emotional disengagement, and fear of returning to school. Together, the responses show that educational discontinuance may also be influenced by school climate, interpersonal conflict, and emotional reactions to negative experiences within the educational setting.

Limited awareness of educational pathways and reintegration support was another barrier identified by stakeholders. Several participants emphasized that many out-of-school youth and their families lacked knowledge about alternative educational opportunities such as ALS. P 2 stated, “Some students don't know that ALS or other programs can help them get back to school.” P 4 similarly explained, “If young people knew more about ALS, more of them might go back to school.” Despite these limitations, some stakeholders demonstrated active encouragement toward reintegration. CL 6 stated, “We always tell OSY to go back to school and give them moral support.” These responses indicate that although supportive attitudes exist within the community, the effectiveness of reintegration efforts may be limited by insufficient dissemination of information regarding educational alternatives and support services. The findings therefore highlight the importance of strengthening awareness campaigns, community outreach, and guidance programs to ensure that out-of-school youth and their families understand the educational opportunities available to them.

Overall, the thematic analysis demonstrates that the educational disengagement of out-of-school youth in Barangay Bekigan is shaped by interconnected personal, family-related, socio-economic, school, and community barriers. Personal factors such as loss of interest, declining motivation, emotional struggles, low self-confidence, and perceived low value of education interact with external pressures related to family obligations, poverty, and

employment demands. Family responsibilities, weak parental guidance, and family disruption further intensify the challenges experienced by young people, while socio-economic hardship consistently forces many respondents to prioritize work and immediate survival needs over schooling. School and community-related influences, including peer pressure, leisure activities, negative school experiences, and limited awareness of alternative educational pathways, further complicate educational reintegration. Despite these barriers, the findings also reveal that many respondents continue to value education and receive encouragement from families, teachers, and community leaders. This suggests that the desire for educational attainment remains present among the respondents, but their ability to pursue and sustain education is constrained by multiple structural, emotional, and social barriers that require coordinated intervention from families, schools, communities, and educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study synthesizes the major findings regarding the educational aspirations, challenges, and reintegration needs of out-of-school youth (OSY) in Barangay Bekigan. Grounded in both quantitative and qualitative findings, the study established that although out-of-school youth generally possess positive educational aspirations and express a strong desire to continue or return to school, they remain constrained by interconnected personal, family, social, economic, and educational barriers. The findings revealed that low motivation, financial difficulties, conflicting responsibilities, and limited institutional support significantly hinder their ability to pursue educational opportunities. The study further demonstrated that many OSY continue to value education and recognize its importance for personal growth and future stability. However, difficult life circumstances, including poverty, family obligations, work-related pressures, and limited access to educational resources, prevent them from translating these aspirations into actual educational participation. The findings emphasized that educational aspiration alone is insufficient to guarantee school reintegration, as emotional readiness, financial capability, institutional accessibility, and sustained support systems are equally essential in enabling OSY to resume their studies successfully.

Furthermore, the study highlighted the critical role of family, community, and accessible educational pathways in supporting the educational continuity of out-of-school youth. The findings underscored the importance of strengthening support structures through active parental involvement, community engagement, and collaborative interventions among schools, local government units, and other stakeholders. The study also established the need for psychosocial and motivational interventions to address issues related to low self-esteem, emotional distress, and declining academic interest among OSY. In response to the identified challenges, the study emphasized the necessity of implementing flexible and context-specific reintegration strategies that directly address the realities experienced by out-of-school youth in rural communities. The proposed BALIK-ARAL Action Plan was identified as a responsive and comprehensive intervention framework designed to support OSY reintegration through coordinated educational, psychosocial, familial, and livelihood-based assistance.

The study further concluded that strengthening Alternative Learning System (ALS) programs is necessary to improve educational accessibility and encourage school re-entry among OSY. Greater collaboration among local school officials, stakeholders, and community leaders is essential in increasing awareness of ALS opportunities, expanding community-based learning sessions, and offering flexible learning schedules that accommodate the varying circumstances of OSY learners. The findings also highlighted the urgent need for financial and livelihood support initiatives to address economic barriers that compel many youth to prioritize

work over education. Scholarship programs, financial assistance, livelihood training, and work-and-study arrangements were recognized as critical mechanisms for reducing financial burdens and sustaining educational participation. In addition, the study reinforced the importance of parental and community engagement in strengthening the educational commitment of OSY. Active family support, mentoring initiatives, and community-based encouragement programs were identified as important factors that can motivate learners to persist in their educational goals despite existing hardships.

Moreover, the findings supported the need for psychosocial and motivational support programs to assist OSY experiencing emotional struggles, low self-confidence, and loss of academic motivation. Counseling services, peer mentoring, mental health awareness activities, and motivational interventions were recognized as important components in rebuilding emotional readiness and fostering positive educational engagement. The study also emphasized the necessity of improving educational accessibility in geographically challenged communities through alternative delivery mechanisms such as mobile teachers, modular learning systems, and satellite learning centers. These interventions were identified as practical strategies for overcoming distance-related barriers that limit participation in formal or alternative education programs. The study additionally recommended that future research examine the long-term effectiveness of reintegration programs and explore additional variables influencing educational aspirations, including gender-specific and cultural factors in similar rural contexts.

In line with these findings, the BALIK-ARAL Program Action Plan was proposed as a comprehensive community-based reintegration initiative intended to identify, support, and re-engage out-of-school youth in Barangay Bekigan. The program established a systematic approach beginning with OSY identification, registration, and profiling through house-to-house mapping, profiling and needs assessment, classification of returnable and at-risk OSY, and the creation of a verified OSY database under the supervision of the Barangay Council, SK Officials, and OSY focal persons during Months 1 to 2, with the success indicator targeting 100% OSY identification and profiling. The action plan also incorporated the BALIK-ARAL enrollment and education re-entry program, which focused on ALS enrollment assistance, referral to DepEd ALS teachers, modular learning registration, and education bridging programs for SHS and HS completion under the leadership of the DepEd ALS Coordinator, ALS teachers, school heads, and the Barangay Education Committee beginning Month 2 onward. This intervention aimed to increase the number of OSY re-enrolled in formal or alternative learning systems.

The study likewise concluded that economic empowerment strategies are essential in sustaining educational reintegration efforts. Through the “Learn and Earn” Skills and Livelihood Track, the BALIK-ARAL Program proposed TESDA short courses, barangay-based livelihood workshops, micro-income starter kits, and work-and-study arrangements to support OSY who discontinued schooling due to financial constraints. Implemented continuously from Months 2 to 6 under the coordination of the LGU, TESDA, NGOs, and the Barangay Council, the initiative sought to provide skilled OSY with income-generating opportunities while maintaining educational engagement. The psychosocial and motivation re-engagement component of the program further aimed to rebuild confidence, emotional stability, and educational motivation through monthly counseling sessions, peer mentoring through the “Ka-Balik Aral Buddy System,” motivation seminars known as “Balik Pag-asa Talks,” and mental health referral systems facilitated by guidance counselors and barangay health workers. Simultaneously, the family involvement and support component sought to strengthen parental participation through orientations, family dialogue sessions, parenting workshops, and home visitation activities coordinated by barangay officials and social workers on a quarterly basis.

In addition, the BALIK-ARAL Program incorporated a community awareness and advocacy initiative intended to reduce stigma and strengthen public support for OSY reintegration. Activities such as Barangay-wide “Balik-Aral Campaign Week,” sharing of OSY success stories, information drives regarding ALS and scholarships, and youth advocacy groups were proposed to increase community awareness and acceptance of reintegration efforts. Program monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were likewise established through the Barangay OSY Committee and DepEd ALS teachers using OSY tracking sheets, attendance logs, quarterly progress reports, and re-enrollment statistics, with quarterly evaluations and annual program reviews designed to ensure continuous assessment and program improvement. Overall, the study concluded that the BALIK-ARAL Program offers a practical and community-responsive intervention framework capable of addressing the root causes of school disengagement while promoting sustained educational participation among out-of-school youth. Through coordinated support from educators, families, community leaders, and government institutions, the program seeks to help OSY remain engaged in learning and ultimately achieve their educational aspirations.

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