Research Article

# *Benchmarking*: análisis comparativo casas juveniles

# *Benchmarking:* Comparative Analysis of Youth Houses

# *Benchmarking:* Análise Comparativa de Casas Juvenis

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**INCLUSIÓN Y DESARROLLO**

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INCLUSIÓN y DESARROLLO

## RESUMEN

Este estudio de investigación de mercados, Benchmarking: Análisis comparativo de casas juveniles en Bogotá, busca identificar mejores prácticas y características para ser tenidos en cuenta en la Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, en el eventual montaje de una casa juvenil propia. Su implementación apunta a enriquecer el perfil estudiantil, abordando el fortalecimiento de espacios inclusivos y orientados al servicio y espiritualidad que fortalezcan el desarrollo integral de jóvenes desde un entorno académico. Luego de mencionar su contextualización teórica y de abordar terminología propia de la situación de análisis como: Humanismo, Pastoral Juvenil y Misionalidad propia de la institución de educación superior. Metodológicamente, se empleó un enfoque mixto, combinando entrevistas y grupos focales con administradores y estudiantes de casas juveniles. Los resultados revelan una percepción globalmente positiva, destacando la participación dinámica y actividades de alto impacto. Las conclusiones resaltan que las casas juveniles son iniciativas valiosas que promueven crecimiento personal, espiritualidad y servicio, enriqueciendo la experiencia educativa.

**Palabras clave:** desarrollo juvenil; educación superior; espiritualidad y educación; investigación de mercados; participación estudiantil.

## ABSTRACT

This market research study, Benchmarking: Comparative Analysis of Youth Houses, seeks to identify best practices and characteristics in Bogotá to be considered by the Minuto De Dios University Corporation in the potential establishment of its own youth house. Its implementation aims to enrich the student profile by addressing the strengthening of inclusive spaces oriented towards service and spirituality that foster the integral development of young people within an academic environment. After mentioning its theoretical contextualization and addressing specific terminology related to the analysis situation, such as Humanism, Youth Pastoral and Missionality characteristic of higher education institutions, a mixed approach was methodologically employed, combining interviews and focus groups with administrators and students from youth houses. The results reveal a globally positive perception, highlighting dynamic participation and high-impact activities. The conclusions emphasize that youth houses are valuable initiatives promoting personal growth, spirituality and service, enriching educational experiences.

**Key words:** youth development; higher education; spirituality and education; market research; student participation.

## RESUMO

Este estudo de pesquisa de mercado, Benchmarking: Análise Comparativa de Casas Juvenis, busca identificar melhores práticas e características em Bogotá para serem consideradas pela Corporação Universitária Minuto De Deus na eventual criação de uma casa juvenil própria. Sua implementação visa enriquecer o perfil estudantil, abordando o fortalecimento de espaços inclusivos orientados para o serviço e a espiritualidade que fortaleçam o desenvolvimento integral dos jovens em um ambiente acadêmico. Após mencionar sua contextualização teórica e abordar terminologia específica relacionada à situação de análise, como Humanismo, Pastoral Juvenil e Missionabilidade característica de instituições de ensino superior, foi empregada metodologicamente uma abordagem mista, combinando entrevistas e grupos focais com administradores e estudantes de casas juvenis. Os resultados revelam uma percepção globalmente positiva, destacando participação dinâmica e atividades de alto impacto. As conclusões enfatizam que as casas juvenis são iniciativas valiosas que promovem crescimento pessoal, espiritualidade e serviço, enriquecendo as experiências educativas.

**Palavras-chave:** desenvolvimento juvenil; educação superior; espiritualidade e educação; pesquisa de mercado; participação estudantil.

## Introduction

Youth centers are established as spaces for interaction, evangelization, and growth for both young people from educational institutions and communities in general. As a result, Corporación Universitaria Minuto De Dios, hereinafter referred to as UNIMINUTO, conducts a benchmarking evaluation of youth centers associated with provincial centers and higher education institutions in the city of Bogotá. This comparative evaluation exercise is referred to as benchmarking (Vilchez, 2023).

The following is the general objective to be addressed through its performance: Conduct benchmarking of some youth centers to identify the best practices and characteristics of youth centers in Bogotá, especially those associated with educational institutions, to provide useful information for the eventual creation of a youth center at UNIMINUTO that meets the needs and expectations of the student community.

The specific activities to be carried out in the development of this study are to conduct an initial search using internet search engines to make a personalized approach using contacts in the different provincial communities; as a second step, to apply qualitative and quantitative instruments to the selected sample; and finally present the results in a benchmarking format of the most representative characteristics of the Youth Centers that are part of the sample.

This project is considered relevant as it has not been carried out previously and provides a positive contribution to UNIMINUTO. In the same manner, it is considered pertinent as it relates to two focus areas: Initially, it aligns with the mission identity of UNIMINUTO, which promotes the need for a spirit of service and social impact; the institution must ensure continuous improvement aligned with the contexts and real needs of society. "This social and educational work is based on the Gospel, the Social Doctrine of the Church, and Eudist spirituality" (Flórez, 2020, p.2). The second focus area relates to marketing and market research as a tool for decision-making. It is pertinent insofar as it seeks an improvement in the services of the Pastoral Directorate through a research exercise developed by one of the flagship academic programs that boasts high-quality accreditation. This is an applied market research study.

In accordance with the above, the results directly contribute to the infrastructure and mission identity of Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios. For the Pastoral Directorate, it represents a strategic input for decision-making and for ensuring that the services offered by the youth center represent a distinguishing factor. For the Faculty of Business and Administrative Sciences and the Marketing Management Technology program, it represents an applied research exercise that can be consulted by students from different academic programs, as it is developed under a research path and includes traceability that will allow the generation of academic products. The ultimate impact sought is to contribute to the social transformation of individuals who voluntarily engage with the youth center, as they will be the ones to benefit from the services and their value offerings. According to Delgado (2021), this should be the central goal of any research framed within the pursuit of improving the quality of life of communities.

The scope of its development context is local, as it initially aims to contribute to the creation of a youth center at the Bogotá campus; however, the model is likely to be replicated in other regional campuses and their facilities.

## Problem Statement

Within the framework of innovation and in response to the growth of Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, there is a reflection and perception of the need to create spaces for interaction with students that address the mission identity of the educational institution. Therefore, the University Pastoral area has decided to establish a unit for the support, accompaniment, training, and development of students in the form of a Youth Center, with the aim of complementing the professional education for those who voluntarily wish to participate in this space. The aforementioned is in the context of humanism, which in educational environments plays a relevant role. "The latter, irrespective of the current debate concerning the implications of a conception of man as a superior entity in the universe" (Saavedra & Lopez, 2022, p.276), since it is he who creates society and is dedicated to development and social transformation.

It is therefore necessary to understand how youth centers operate in different contexts and the services they offer. The current situation revolves around the social need to stimulate soft skills and additional dimensions to training in a specific subject.

Currently, despite significant technological and scientific advancements, humanity faces a scenario of rapid changes and economic models that have engendered wars, scarcity, indifference, and other social issues. Varillas (2024) mentions that among students, there are unrealistic notions and hate speech, which are instilled, for instance, through social media. These are reinforced by the amount of exposure time to various devices.

Diseases are not only physical; paraphrasing Soriano and Jiménez (2022), the current student community faces increasing pressure to achieve academic and professional success, which may neglect equally important aspects of holistic development. According to these authors, the lack of attention to mental health and emotional well-being in traditional education increases vulnerability to issues such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation among students. For this reason, they emphasize the need to evolve pedagogy and didactics to transcend professional training and stimulate emotional and social skills in students. It is urgent to rethink the educational approach to include strategies that promote emotional and social growth, allowing young people to develop effective tools to face challenges in all contexts and build a more balanced society.

That is to say, it is necessary to address the fact that, in addition to academic training for job performance, one must consider the education of the self and its humanistic condition. This is particularly relevant to the intention of the services that will be offered at the youth center, where it is important that the services and strategies be assertive and meaningful for the student population and the communities with which they work.

Through the implementation of this benchmarking, precise and relevant information is generated for the creation of a youth center that complements professional training with soft skills, gospel, values, humanism, social responsibility, etc. Students expect to find a comprehensive education that is highly useful, not only in job performance but also in interpersonal relationships and in their personality and intimacy. It is necessary for individuals to feel valued and useful, stemming from a mindset permeated by self-esteem.

If these issues are not addressed, scenarios of injustice and negative social dynamics will continue to arise. From the perspective of education, as the first line of impact, it must be acknowledged that today's students will be the leaders of society in the future. A high-quality education can also leverage spaces for evangelization, service, and interaction with communities. The central question around which this work revolves and to which an answer will be provided is: What practices and characteristics do youth centers have that could be adopted for the eventual creation of a youth center at UNIMINUTO?

## State of the Art

There are countless studies related to the present topic within the educational context, which can be referred to as the frontier of knowledge. For example, the following can be mentioned:

This relationship is considered close because it is from the individual constituted as a person that the family and social dynamics are formed. Specifically, a behavior approach that aims for excellent workers without achieving

excellent individuals, capable of living harmoniously in society, is not valid. "In the history of ideas, humanism has upheld as a fundamental premise the recognition of the Human Being as the center of knowledge and Free Will: (...) its destiny based on autonomy in its decisions" (Escobar, 2020, p.107), its happiness, and the possibility of being useful to society.

Pérez (2021) proposes a contribution related to social pedagogy, the scientific field, social education and professional activity. In his work, he mentions how, in a holistic manner, the topics are interrelated without allowing space for specifications or isms that foster the development of a single dimension. Methodologically, different models are related and an analysis of them is conducted to conclude that given the technological advancements and social dynamics (of the world), there is a need for individuals who are well-rounded and capable of managing a multidisciplinary approach, which includes soft skills.

Based on this delimitation and aligning it with the context, the approach of Orduz (2020) is revisited, who highlights the need for a Humanistic education in educational institutions. His work was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic and is interesting in the sense that it marks this event as a milestone requiring broad cognitive skills from humanity, but also in a humanistic sense, as this event necessitates cooperation among humanity.

## Theoretical Framework

From the epistemological perspective, three axes have been defined. In relation to humanism, from the perspective of education, the relationship between teaching processes and the academic environment is reflected in learning. However, there is also the possibility within the educational setting to generate interactions that allow for a profound social transformation. "The developmentalist vision and the humanist vision with a socio-critical sense" (Mansi, 2019, p.8) can be implemented through academic programs and extracurricular spaces, achieving a pedagogy that is more realistic in the face of social phenomena. Note that complementarity is provided whereas exclusion is not, since within classrooms, through concepts and tutorials, the teaching-learning process takes place. Depending on the teacher's skill, this relationship will be established by applying these concepts to real contexts. However, the approach is carried out through dialogue about the current situation, and the contribution is made from a perspective of completing the profile of the future graduate.

As a second axis concerning the Youth Ministry, it is possible to mention that it is present parting from the spirituality of individuals; likewise, it is a lifestyle dedicated to service and Social Transformation. "Addressing the topics of Youth Ministry involves considering two perspectives: one refers to the very concept of youth, and the other to the consideration of what the Church can offer to young people" (González & Basualto, 2019, p.11), being a highly advantageous scenario, as the Church is an institution capable of linking different dimensions. In pastoral work, it is expected that, through the teachings of the gospel, the values and the importance of maintaining excellent social relationships can be instilled in the student community. The concept of pastoral work and its principles emphasize the need of not neglecting or forgetting the love of God and His commandment of love and protection for one's neighbor. From the educational context, it is indicated that such a contribution stems from the knowledge acquired within the classroom setting.

Pastoral work must be understood and articulated within academic contexts; in its most basic description, it addresses religious contexts and interaction with communities.

> The new value parameters in society, the critical situation of the Catholic Church, changes in education, and the effects of the pandemic we experienced pose a disquieting complexity for schools and add new conditions for the development of a pastoral approach that attracts, inspires, and unfolds the educational beauty of faith. Furthermore, the different approaches to understanding evangelization challenge the Catholic school to rethink its "catholicity," in the sense that this mission no longer relies so much on the transmission of the contents of the faith, as on what each student resolves for their own life (Neira, 2020, p.43).

From what has been mentioned about the importance of skills for each life context and not just the religious one.

As a third axis, the Mission of Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios is addressed, which is based on Eudist thinking. It aims to train individuals who can address the needs of communities through the knowledge acquired, while also emphasizing the importance of service through the praxeological model. According to Fajardo (2021), "to educate excellent human beings, competent professionals who are ethically oriented and committed to social transformation and sustainable development. Contributing, through our commitment and our testimony, to the construction of a fraternal, just, reconciled, and peaceful society" (Institutional Educational Project (PEI), 2016; p.1).

From the cited text, it is possible to interpret that the praxeological connotation expects learning to occur through the assimilation of meanings via experiences and doing. It is complemented with a clear goal which is to learn for service. This is not an obvious aspect; on the contrary, it is a necessity in education and is the hallmark of UNIMINUTO, and in the general vision of Corporación Minuto de Dios.

Paraphrasing what was proposed by Bernate and Puerto (2024), it is theoretically possible to suggest that pastoral work in education is important for fostering the integral growth of students, encompassing intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects. Praxeology as a pedagogical approach plays a guiding role in this process, providing opportunities for reflection, dialogue, and community action. This allows students to explore their beliefs and values, developing a deeper awareness of themselves and their place in the world, the latter being susceptible to be aligned with evangelization. Similarly, from teachers, there must be a "recognition of the variable of spirituality exercised within educational processes" (De la Cruz, 2024, p.120).

The integration of spirituality, the gospel, and pastoral work in education is an ideal setting to shape conscious, committed, and spiritually mature citizens. Praxeology fosters empathy, compassion, and solidarity, developing civic and spiritual competencies that prepare students to face the challenges of the contemporary world with sensitivity and compassion. This contributes to the construction of a more just, peaceful, and humanized society, where individuals can grow and develop in an integral manner. Pastoral work in education is indispensable for addressing the spiritual needs of students and fostering meaningful personal growth, serving as a foundation for the potential missionality of the youth center from the mission concepts properly mentioned. According to Diaz, et al. (2023), these concepts allow for a purposeful and meaningful use within their different roles in society.

## Methodology

The research approach was mixed, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the studied phenomenon. This approach was deemed pertinent "as it requires evidence that provides accurate solutions for the benefit of social actors, given that the issues are complex. Such complexity can only be addressed with measurable and interpretable data" (Albayero et al., 2020, p.49).

"Regarding the scope of the study, it is descriptive, as it presents the fundamental characteristics or traits of what was studied, demonstrating how the selected object manifests itself" (Osorio & Castro, 2021, p.78). In this way, the characteristics of the selected youth centers were described in detail, highlighting their operation and the services they offer.

The studied population included both administrators and youths associated with various youth centers. The sampling was by convenience, supplemented with snowball sampling to recruit additional participants through referrals.

> In this type of sampling, participants in a study recruit other participants for a test or study. Here, the researchers use their own judgment to select the original participants, as opposed to simple random sampling where the probabilities of any member being chosen are the same (Manzini, 2023, p.84).

In particular, a systematic documentary review was conducted on websites where youth centers are described, complemented by qualitative instruments. The documentary analysis was an important phase, as it allowed for the development of instrumental skills and provided a useful methodological guide for the research. This approach facilitated a comprehensive and organized review of the relevant literature (Corona et al., 2023). The literature review focused on the websites of youth centers, which provided key information about their structure and operation.

Regarding the fieldwork, initially, a focus group was conducted with students linked to the pastoral direction of Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, due to its frequent use in various research contexts (Torres et al., 2020). Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with administrative staff from various youth centers, such as: Casa de Juventud El Frailejón in Usme, Ice Carmelitano, Casa Ignaciana de la Juventud, Congregación de Hermanas de la Sagrada Familia de Urge, Fundación Gilberto Álzate Avendaño. Additionally, interviews were conducted with young people associated with these institutions and with the organization Youth for Change in Mexico. As such, the inclusion criteria referred to individuals actively participating in youth centers with a connection to an educational institution.

This method was considered suitable because, in qualitative research, "the interviewee answers such questions freely and in the manner they prefer. In the case of qualitative research, the most common methods are non-standardized and unstructured or semi-structured interviews" (Gonzales et al., 2022, p.3). All data collection instruments were recorded in audio and video as evidence, ensuring the informed consent of the participants and explaining that its performance does not impact or harm any principles of bioethical norms.

Thus, it included:

- 9 youth centers tracked via web

- 6 youth centers whose administrative staff were interviewed - 1 in Medellín, 1 in Mexico, and 4 in Bogotá

- Two young students linked to youth centers interviewed

- 8 participants in the Focus Group between participating students and administrative staff

Seeking the validity and reliability of the data collection instruments, they have been validated by two faculty members with postgraduate training and full-time dedication in research areas related to social sciences.

Regarding the focus group, the following engagement questions were posed:

**Table 1.** *Engagement questions in focus groups*

| 1. | What aspects motivate you to participate in the activities of the university pastoral unit? Why? |
| --- | --- |
| 2. | What activities or services of the university pastoral unit have been most significant for you? Why? |
| 3. | What barriers or challenges have you faced when participating in the activities of the university pastoral unit? Why? |
| 4. | What new activities or services would you like to see implemented in the university pastoral unit? Why? |
| 5. | How do you think the university pastoral unit could improve its engagement and reach among students? |

Note: engagement questions. Prepared by the authors

Subsequently, each person was asked to fill out the following questionnaire:

**Table 2.** *Quantitative Form Questions*

| 1. | Mention 3 words that, for you, represent your connection and/or work in the pastoral unit. |
| --- | --- |
| 2. | Complete the paragraph: The pastoral unit is important within UNIMINUTO's mission-oriented framework, because....... |
| 3. | What service, activity, or similar would you add to the pastoral unit to make it better and have a greater impact both for yourself and the community? |

Note: Quantitative Form Questions Prepared by the authors

Once the exercise was completed within UNIMINUTO, data collection proceeded in the youth centers. For administrative staff, the following data collection instrument was initially assigned, and with the aim of addressing the sample, the following contact script was developed:

**Table 3.** *Contact Script*

Good (Morning, Afternoon), my name is ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆.
 I am contacting you from Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios. With whom do I have the pleasure of speaking?

The reason for my call is as follows: we are currently conducting research to characterize youth centers, youth pastoral centers, vocational youth centers, etc. I would like to know if we can schedule an in-person visit and with whom we could arrange an interview to learn more about your organization.

Contact Name: ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆

Office hours: ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆

Possible day of visit: ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆

Thank you very much, I will be in contact to confirm the visit. I appreciate your assistance.

Note: Contact Script. Prepared by the authors

**Table 4.** *Administrative questions for the youth center*

| |
|---|
| It begins with a brief introduction of the person. |
| It continues with a brief presentation of the youth center and its general functioning. |
| 1. What are the main services offered by your youth center, and how are they aligned with the needs of the educational community? |
| 2. How would you describe the profile of young individuals who voluntarily participate in your youth center? |
| 3. What aspects do you consider most important for strengthening the mission identity and social transformation through your youth center? |
| 4. How has the integration of the youth center with local educational institutions been, and what benefits has this collaboration brought? |
| 5. What challenges have been faced when implementing innovative programs or services within the youth center? |
| 6. How do you assess the impact of the activities and programs of the youth center on the young participants and on the community at large? |
| 7. What strategies are utilized to maintain the active participation of young people in the activities of the youth center? |
| 8. What are the main lessons learned or best practices that could be shared with other youth centers or institutions interested in developing similar programs? |
| 9. How do you foresee the future of the youth center in terms of growth and expansion of services? |
| 10. What recommendations would you offer to improve collaboration between youth centers and educational institutions in Bogotá? |
| Note that the exercise focuses on 2 central issues: |
| 11. What should a youth center include? |
| 12. What should a youth center not have? |

Note. Questions for the administrative staff of the youth centers. Prepared by the authors

**Table 5.** *Questions for Students Linked to the Youth Center*

| | |
|---|---|
| Name | Age |
| University Affiliation: (Program, Schedule and semester) | |

1. What aspects motivate you to participate in the activities of the university pastoral unit and why?
2. What activities or services of the university pastoral unit have been most significant to you and why?
3. What barriers or challenges have you encountered when participating in the activities of the university pastoral unit, and why?
4. What new activities or services would you like to see implemented in the university pastoral unit and why?
5. How do you think the university pastoral unit could improve its engagement and reach among students?
6. How do you think the activities of the university p astoral unit have impacted your personal life, the student community, or the community at large?

Note: Questions to students. Prepared by the authors

In relation to data processing, quantitative data is grouped by systematically searching for patterns through repetition – mode –, while qualitative data is handled through the hermeneutic paradigm, interpreting its meaning; in both cases, the categories refer to each question. As a conclusion, a triangulation of the outcomes is conducted to obtain a holistic view of the information contrasted with the studied situation; in this way, the outcomes are further enriched (Stasiejko, et al., 2024).

# Results and Analysis

Outcomes and Analysis:

## Focus group qualitative data

**Table 6.** *Qualitative outcomes.*

| Category | Descripción | Participantes |
|---|---|---|
| Motivations | Sense of help towards others | P1, P2, P5 |
| | Positive impact on the community | P3, P4 |
| | Transmission of values | P4, P6 |
| | Empathy and gratitude towards those in need | P1, P5 |
| Meaningful experiences | Shared Bread: Sharing food with students in need | P1, P2 |
| | Hygiene kits: Assistance for vulnerable women | P2, P3 |
| | Spiritual Retreats: Spaces for reflection and connection | P4, P5 |
| | Cultural activities: Integration and recreational events | P6, P7 |
| Barriers and Challenges | Communication: Difficulties in reaching students | P1, P2 |
| | Resources: Lack of resources to harness talents | P4 |
| | Schedules: Schedule conflicts for participation | P5 |
| | Stigmatization: Misconception of pastoral work | P6 |
| Suggestions for New Activities | Musical events for students | P1, P7 |
| | Retreats for families and pets Inclusive Activities | P2 |
| | More Service and Connection Events | P3, P4 |
| Improvements in engagement and reach | Greater participation of teachers | P1 |
| | Improvement in communication with students | P2, P6 |
| | More financial and human support | P4 |

Nota: Elaboración propia

## Focus group quantitative data

Participants were requested to mention 3 words that represent their connection and/or work in the pastoral unit. Based on the data provided, the following keywords can be highlighted:

**Table 7.** *Keywords*

Identity, Commitment, Empathy, Transformation, Love, Impact, Community, Service, Spirituality, Humanism, Volunteering, Help, Interest, Honesty, Clarity.

Note: Prepared by the authors

These words represent concepts related to work and connection in the pastoral unit, such as personal and community identity, commitment to service and helping others, empathy and the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, personal and community transformation, love and compassion, positive impact on the community, spirituality and humanism, among others. This is mapped out as follows:

**Grafica 1.** *Mapa palabras clave*
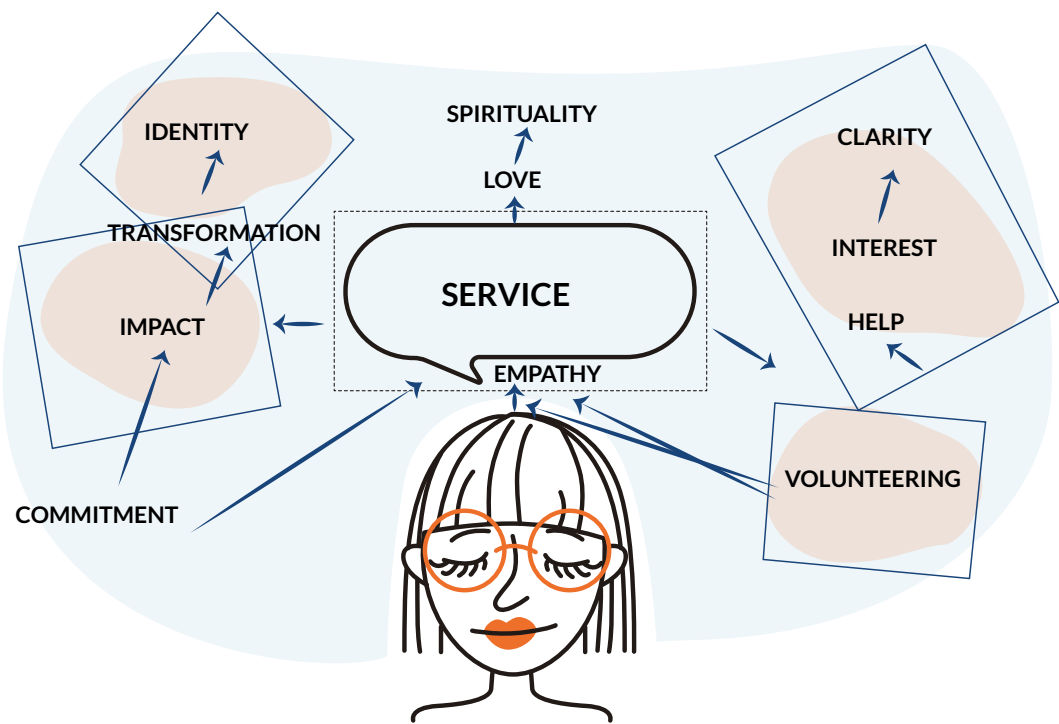


Note: Prepared by the authors

In this word map, service acts as the base word that connects various related concepts. These concepts include the commitment to service, volunteering as a form of voluntary service, the positive impact that service can have on the community and individuals, empathy towards those being served, and the act of helping others. Additionally, the service paves the way for personal and community transformation, aligning with spirituality and humanism, and promotes values such as love, engagement, clarity, and honesty in service interactions and relationships.

**Table 8.** *Outcomes and Analysis of Quantitative Form*

| **The pastoral unit is important within UNIMINUTO's mission-oriented framework, because.......** |
|---|
| Strengthening of values and spiritual support: The pastoral work provides spiritual support to the university community. This involves working within the individual realities and environment of each person, recognizing the diversity among community members. |
| Integral human development and transformation of lives: The pastoral work is integral to human development as it transforms lives and cultural and sporting spaces. |
| Community Service: The pastoral work is distinguished by its service to the university community, especially to middle-class and working-class students who study and work or have educational loans. |
| Moral growth and personal development: The pastoral approach assists individuals in their moral growth and engages in their personal development process. |
| Creation of Identities and Community Spaces: The pastoral work creates spaces that contribute to the identity of the university and foster a united and participatory community. |
| Focused on the Gospel: It is emphasized that the gospel should be the center of all pastoral work, suggesting an orientation towards Christian values and teachings. |
| It should be taken into account: from the strengthening of values and spiritual support to community service and the promotion of personal and moral growth. |
| **What service, activity, or similar would you add to the pastoral unit to make it better and have a greater impact both for yourself and the community?** |
| Based on the responses provided, several suggestions can be identified to improve and expand the services offered by the pastoral unit, with the aim of increasing its impact both for community members and for the community at large. Here is an analysis of the responses: |
| Outings for families and ecological meetings: These activities can promote family integration and environmental awareness, offering opportunities for recreation and learning in a natural setting. |
| Greater economic support and resources: It is suggested that there is a need for increased financial support to acquire musical instruments, dance equipment, and expand the workforce in the pastoral care sector. This would allow for a variety of activities to be offered on different days and expand the reach of the services. |
| Activities related to fine arts and student needs: It is proposed to offer activities related to the fine arts, such as music and art, as well as activities that address the needs and concerns of students, promoting their personal growth and providing practical support. |
| Promotion and Visibility: The importance of advertising and the periodic promotion of pastoral activities is emphasized to increase their visibility and participation. This involves sharing activities with students from other disciplines and reintroducing retreats as a means to foster interaction and spiritual growth. |
| Cultural and Interactive Services: It is suggested to offer services that promote culture and creative interaction, providing opportunities for artistic expression and community participation. This approach aligns with educational methodologies that integrate traditional music teaching as a means to enhance cultural literacy and community engagement. |

Note: Prepared by the authors

These outcomes suggest the need to expand the range of services offered by the pastoral unit, including cultural, artistic, ecological, and economic support activities. It also highlights the importance of promoting and ensuring the visibility of pastoral activities to guarantee their impact on the university community. These suggestions can serve as a foundation for identifying new services and activities that meet the needs and desires of students and the broader community. However, it is necessary to emphasize the sense of service.

**2025**

JANUARY | JUNE

**11** .2

Inclusión y Desarrollo No.

Benchmarking: análisis comparativo casas juveniles

INCLUSIÓN y DESARROLLO

# Outcomes and Analysis of Interviews with Youth Centers

Based on the conversations with the administrative staff, we find that:

**Table 9.** *Outcomes and Analysis Interviews with Administrative Staff*

| | |
|---|---|
| **1. What are the main services offered by your youth center, and how are they aligned with the needs of the educational community?** | |
| Complementary continuing education, recreational and interaction workshops with communities in the form of volunteering, as well as dialogue spaces based on spirituality, are available. For those who wish, there are dedicated spaces for evangelization. "Here we offer workshops for optimizing free time, drumming workshops, DJ vocal technique workshops, and other workshops that we implement for the benefit of young people in the locality" (Frailejón, 2024). | |
| **2. How would you describe the profile of young individuals who voluntarily participate in your youth center?** | |
| In addition to identifying students, which can be an exclusion factor, it is considered in cases with vulnerable populations. "Almost all are from socio-economic levels one and two; it is also widely recognized thanks to word of mouth of the participants themselves. The priority is also to reach vulnerable populations" (Fn. Gilberto, 2024). | |
| **3. What aspects do you consider most important for strengthening the mission identity and social transformation through your youth center?** | |
| Addressing the reality and the needs of the context requires very spiritual and faithful individuals. "I would say that we take responsibility for the needs of our world, specifically for our brothers and sisters, because the needs are global" (Urgel, 2024). | |
| **4. How has the integration of the youth center with local educational institutions been, and what benefits has this collaboration brought?** | |
| Many have their own educational institutions; when this is not the case, agreements exist that allow for earning credits in certain subjects, such as internships. "The schools in the area know us, and furthermore, they send students as volunteers for community service. If they wish to help, they are welcome, and thus we accompany them throughout their academic journey, not only in high school" (Fn. Gilberto, 2024). | |
| **5. What challenges have been faced when implementing innovative programs or services within the youth center?** | |
| The retention of young people, the resources of time and money, and empathy. "Understanding with others, managing language, and asserting one's stance. I have mine, but let us find common ground." (Ignatian House, 2024). | |
| **6. How do you assess the impact of the activities and programs of the youth center on the young participants and on the community at large?** | |
| In addition to providing clear feedback, the entire process is traceable, and the permanence and willingness to repeat the activities serve as indicators. "It is based on listening, as this determines what type of service will be offered. When an activity resonates, that type of activity continues; if not, changes are made. Listen, understand, observe, analyze, and if it works, proceed further" (Comunidades, 2024). | |
| **7. What strategies are utilized to maintain the participation of young people in the activities of the youth center?** | |
| The articulation with institutions and a wide variety of activity offerings, in addition to maintaining a permanent digital ecosystem. "Something that is very useful for us is the social media, the ability to interact with them, create engaging videos, and utilize platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. We manage all these social media, along with our own website" (Ice Carmelitano, 2024). | |
| **8. What are the main lessons learned or best practices that could be shared with other youth centers or institutions interested in developing similar programs?** | |
| Working collaboratively, always highlighting the purpose of each activity and maintaining focus. "Do not fall into activism; often, we focus on what is urgent rather than what is important. We desire a well-executed process of high impact" (Casa Ignaciana, 2024). | |

**9.  How do you foresee the future of the youth center in terms of growth and expansion of services?**

We increasingly have more opportunities to expand services; however, this entails the responsible use of resources to provide assurances to all stakeholders. "Assist a greater number of young individuals and bring in larger projects, support those from outside the region, students, or those who lack sufficient resources to obtain a quality education" (Comunidades, 2024).

**10.  What recommendations would you offer to improve collaboration between youth centers and educational institutions in Bogotá?**

Show willingness to request and offer assistance, cooperation, by reaching out and assertively identifying stakeholders. "It is important to work on identifying educational institutions, because that is where the young people are, and thus they can be accompanied in: Schooling; university and work" (Frailejón, 2024).

**11.  What should a youth center include?**

Spaces that go beyond the religious and focus on spirituality and the dimensions of the being-individual-person, where religion is not the priority, but rather the feeling of being useful and at peace with oneself, because the youth has significantly changed its beliefs. Clearly, evangelization is present and constitutes a pathway for work. "The population is mixed, there must be tolerance and interculturality. We believe in areas of personal adjustment, and that is where we focus our work" (Fn. Gilberto, 2024).

**12.  What should a youth center not have?**

Totalitarian or impartial discourses dedicated to religion or politics; too many activities without any objective; spaces solely for recreation without activities dedicated to service. "The values must be clear. It should not be just a place to spend time; it is a place where we go to grow as individuals" (Urgel, 2024).

Note: Prepared by the authors

Following the conversations with the interviewed students, we find that:

**Table 10.** *Outcomes and Analysis of Interviews with Linked Students*

| | |
|---|---|
| **What motivated them to participate in the Youth Center?** | a.  Alejandra: "A desire to serve and spiritual reconciliation."<br>b.  Andrés: "Opportunities for encounter and spiritual connection." |
| **Which activities have been significant?** | a.  Alejandra: "Spiritual exercises and walks."<br>b.  Andrés: "Social projects, leadership, and volunteering." |
| **What barriers or challenges have been encountered?** | a.  Alejandra: "Personal time management."<br>b.  Andrés: "Travel time and economic resources, but with arrangements to participate." |
| **What activities or services would you like to see implemented?** | a.  Andrés: "Themes of feminism, sexuality, masculinities, and spirituality through art."<br>b.  Alejandra: "Ecology, green dialogues, and spirituality and art." |
| **How to improve participation and reach?** | c.  Andrés: "By establishing connections with more universities and promote on social media."<br>d.  Alejandra: "Through social media and personal recommendations." |
| **How did you come to know the Youth Center?** | a.  Andrés: "Through the school and university pastoral work."<br>b.  Alejandra: "Personal recommendations and social media." |
| **How do you perceive the duration and turnover of young people?** | a.  Alejandra: "It varies according to interests and stages of life."<br>b.  Andrés: "It depends on life moments and personal interests." |
| **How does your participation generate an impact on activities in personal and community life?** | a.  Andrés: "Tools for leadership, awareness, and application in different fields."<br>b.  Alejandra: "Leadership development, proactivity, and service." |

| How does the Youth Center make you better people? | a. Andrés: "By providing tools to apply in various settings."<br>b. Alejandra: "Empowering leadership and service." |
|---|---|
| How has being in the Youth Center made you a better student? | a. Alejandra: "It helps me to focus, discern, and apply what I have learned." |
| What services should a Youth Center offer? | a. Alejandra: "Community connection, modern spirituality, and social dialogues."<br>b. Andrés: "Community processes, spiritual, social, and cultural dialogues." |
| What mistakes should be avoided when setting up a Youth Center? | a. Alejandra: "Closed groups, lack of hospitality, and diversity of proposals."<br>b. Andrés: "Exclusion, power hoarding, and lack of opportunities." |
| How do you view the difference between gospel in pastoral work and spirituality? | a. Andrés: Spirituality is broader, multidisciplinary, and inclusive. |

Note: Prepared by the authors

By triangulating the data collected from the interviews and focus groups conducted with administrators and students of Youth Centers, it is interpreted that the Youth Center should be an inclusive space that fosters community connection, spirituality, and social dialogue. The main premise should be to avoid exclusion and power hoarding by allowing committed and equitable participation.

The evaluation of youth centers reveals a globally positive perception, characterized by dynamic participation and high-impact activities. Although improvement ideas emerge, initiatives predominantly focus on increasing their social influence. Participants appreciate the opportunity to collaborate on projects that align with their academic interests and social values, fostering a sense of purpose and community commitment.

## Conclusions

The concept of evangelization and its religious connotation are present as they form the foundation upon which the creation of the youth center is based. This is valid considering that it refers to love for one's neighbor and sharing messages through testimonies, in doctrines and biblical practices (Strahsburger, et al., 2021). However, in favor of an inclusive narrative and taking into account the ideologies of the students, a broader and equally accurate concept is spirituality. It can be defined as believing in a meaning beyond the physical, which aims for mental, social, and physical harmony (Carmo, 2023).

Youth centers are distinguished by their diversity of projects and activities aimed at commemorating significant dates, fostering enriching encounters among individuals. The approach transcends attendance at religious events, promoting personalized communication and a space for listening and being heard. Youth centers must be more assertive, surpassing their perception as just another unit within educational institutions, as in the specific case of UNIMINUTO.

The practices and characteristics that youth centers have, which can be adopted for the eventual creation of a youth center at UNIMINUTO, are:

Allow course of credits or subjects in the form of volunteering in youth centers, specifically internships and degree options, that is, to develop specific activities with identified communities alongside the creation of intercultural spaces for education and service. It is also relevant to achieve the maintenance of short-term training in soft skills, trades, and competencies.

The youth centers must adapt to contemporary reality, including family diversity and emerging needs. These innovative initiatives will address the current and future needs of the community by promoting a comprehensive and sustainable education that is at the forefront of identified lifestyle preferences and dynamics from data collection. It is crucial that each activity aligns with serving others, and this aspect should be emphasized. It is recommended to engage in further research to measure the impact of the youth center after a defined period.

As a final comment, it is appropriate to acknowledge this type of initiative, given that in the epistemology of education, there is frequent mention of the need to construct holistic and suitable profiles that complement strong skills, professionalism, and professional competencies, enabling excellent job performance. Service is the axis from which the functioning of youth centers unfolds.

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