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A Study on the Problems of Evil and Its Impact on Faith Among the Grade 12 Students in the Diocesan Catholic High Schools

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Abstract. This study assessed the degrees of perception of the problems of evil and its impact on faith among Grade 12 students in Diocesan Catholic High Schools. Additionally, it determined the differences and relationship between the problems of evil and the impact on faith when grouped according to their demographics. To assess these, the study employed a quantitative design, specifically descriptive-comparative, and correlational approaches. In data gathering, the study used a validated and reliability-tested researcher-made questionnaire, which was answered by 293 Grade 12 students during 2024-2025. Also, the respondents were determined using stratified random sampling. In analyzing the data, mean, standard deviation, Mann Whitney U, Kruskal Wallis, and Spearman rank correlation were utilized. Hence, the findings revealed that Grade 12 students have a strong perception of the problems of evil. Likewise, they experienced a strong impact on their faith because of a strong perception of evil. Moreover, there were no significant differences in the problem of evil relative to religion and family structure. However, there were significant differences in terms of sex, church ministry, and strand. Meanwhile, there were no significant differences in the impact on faith when grouped according to religion, strand, and family structure. However, there were significant differences relative to sex and church ministry. Lastly, there was a significant relationship between the degrees of the problems of evil and the degrees of impact on faith. The findings suggest that the schools may provide faith formation programs and spaces for theological discussions to support students in navigating the problems of evil. Also, the schools may encourage their students to actively participate in parish youth ministries, altar servers, or join the choir, as these activities may become meaningful avenues for deepening their faith amidst their strong perception of evil.

Keywords. Problem of Evil, Impact on Faith, Grade 12 students, Diocesan Catholic High Schools, Quantitative, Philippines

1.0 Introduction

If God is good, how do we reconcile His goodness with the harsh realities of natural disasters, war, and pandemics, which have caused the deaths of millions of innocent people? In

fact, many students struggle with the existence of evil in the world, which not only challenges their faith but also tests their belief in an all-loving and benevolent God (Moreno, 2017). Across the globe, studies indicate that exposure to moral and natural evils such as war, poverty, and natural disasters has a significant influence on students' religious faith (Kekes, 2020). Also, many students experience doubts about their faith when confronted with suffering that seems incompatible with their understanding of the nature of God (Habermas, 2022). Meanwhile, in regions affected by conflict, some students experience spiritual growth while others turn to skepticism (Leshem et al., 2023). With this, it is essential to examine how the problem of evil affects faith, especially among the students.

In Asia, the problem of evil remains a significant factor in shaping the faith and religious perspectives of students. In Indonesia, many students struggle with reconciling the existence of an all-good, all-powerful God with the reality of suffering, injustice, and adversity they witness in their daily lives (Cain, 2025). In Africa, this struggle is pronounced in regions where poverty, corruption, and frequent natural disasters (Boaheng et al., 2024). In Indonesia, persecution of Christians and inequality complicate students' understanding of their faith (Belcourt, 2023). In China, the experience of oppression, discrimination, or state-imposed restrictions on religious practice forces many students to confront difficult questions about divine justice and the role of suffering in their religious life (Copson, 2017).

In the Philippines, the problem of evil remains a significant concern. Many Filipinos, especially students, struggle to reconcile their faith with the widespread presence of poverty, corruption, and social injustice, which often appear to contradict the idea of a just and merciful God (Bautista et al., 2022). Similarly, natural calamities, such as typhoons and earthquakes, further intensify these existential questions as they seek meaning in their suffering (Ballano, 2022). Not to mention, personal tragedies, such as the loss of loved ones or severe illness, also challenge students' beliefs in divine justice (Andales et al., 2022). Despite these struggles, Catholic high school students' beliefs about finding meaning in suffering and God's justice continue to shape how they understand and respond to their faith (Aligan, 2016).

The faith of many Catholic students put to test when they face problems like school related stress, violence at school, unfair treatment of teachers, and learning challenges (Go, 2017). Not to mention, poverty makes life harder for them preventing them from getting a good education and need to stop from schooling which makes them question God's fairness and love (Gorski, 2017). Also, natural disasters like typhoons and pandemic can also disrupt their studies and daily lives, making them wonder why such suffering happens (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020). In addition, personal struggles such as losing a loved one, getting sick or experiencing gender based violence at school piled up as their challenges (Carpenter, 2017). Meanwhile, some students find comfort in prayer and religious activities, believing that suffering has meaning while others start to doubt and wonder if faith can really help them through tough times (Del Castillo & Alino, 2020). These experiences show a bigger question about how students understand suffering and what it means for their belief in God (Del Castillo et al., 2023).

Several studies have been conducted relative to the problem of evil and its impact on faith. Adams (2018) conducted a study about the horrendous evils and the goodness of God. Also, Swinton (2017) explored the pastoral responses to the problem of evil. Likewise, Colgrove (2019) pursued a study on the emotional impact of evil through philosophical reflections on existential problems. Meanwhile, Tooley (2019) solely focused on the problem of evil. In addition, Munywoki (2020) provides a logical and philosophical analysis of the problem of evil and its impact on faith. Lastly, Bassett (2006) philosophically examines the

problem of evil and its impact on faith but does not directly address the impact on students. Hence, there is still a dearth in the literature that solely focuses on the problem of evil and its impact on faith among the Grade 12 students in Diocesan Catholic High Schools. Thus, this is the gap that this study would like to fill in.

Hence, this study aimed to assess the degrees of perceptions of the problems of evil and its impact on faith among Grade 12 students in Diocesan Catholic High Schools when taken as a whole and grouped according to sex, strand, religion, ministry, and family structure. Also, this study determined the significant differences in the degrees of perceptions of the problems of evil and its impact on faith among Grade 12 students when grouped according to their demographics. In addition, this study examined the relationship between the degrees of perceptions of the problems of evil and its impact on faith. This study may serve as a benchmark for Diocesan Catholic high schools, guiding them in creating avenues where students can openly explore and address their questions relative to the problem of evil, which is often overlooked or taken for granted. Additionally, the statistical findings from this research may help reinforce students' faith.

This study theoretically assumed that the degrees of perceptions of the problems of evil and its impact on faith vary based on the student's sex, strand, religion, ministry, and family structure. Hence, this study was anchored on the Social Identity theory of Tajfel (1978). This theory posits that an individual's perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes are influenced by their membership in different social groups in society. In the context of the study, this theory argues that the social identity or position of the students may shape and influence how they interpret and respond to moral and theological issues. Hence, this theory helps explain why students from different backgrounds may have varying degrees of perception regarding the problem of evil and its effect on their faith.

In addition, this study was anchored on St. Augustine's concept of evil as cited in the study of Mathewes (2004) which distinguishes between moral evil and natural evil. The latter results from human free will and sinful actions like war, while the former arises from suffering and misfortunes beyond human control like natural disasters. According to Augustine, evil is not a substance but a deprivation of good, and human struggles with faith often stem from the challenge of reconciling suffering with the existence of an all-good and all-powerful God.

2.0 Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design, specifically descriptive-comparative, and correlational approaches. The chosen design and methodology statistically measured a set of variables to answer the theory-guided research questions or problems and hypotheses (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The descriptive approach assessed the perception of the problem of evil and its impact on faith among grade 12 students in Diocesan Catholic high schools when taken as a whole and grouped according to sex, strand, religion, church ministry, and family structure. On the one hand, the comparative approach examined the differences in the perception of the problem of evil and its impact on faith among the students when classified based on their demographics. On the other hand, the correlational approach determined the relationship between the problem of evil and the impact on faith. Meanwhile, the respondents were 293 grade 12 students in Diocesan Catholic high schools during 2024-2025. The respondents were determined using stratified random sampling.

Table 1. *Demographic Profile of the Respondents*

Variable	n	%
Sex		
Male	121	41.3
Female	172	58.7
Strand		
HUMSS	118	40.3
STEM	108	36.9
ABM	50	17.1
TVL	17	5.8
Religion		
Catholic	249	85.0
Non-Catholic	44	15.0
Church Ministry		
Member	94	32.1
Non-member	199	67.9
Family Structure		
Nuclear	178	60.8
Single	54	18.4
Extended	61	20.8
Whole	293	100.0

In gathering the data, the study utilized a 23-item research-made questionnaire to assess the perception of the problems of evil and its impact on faith among the students in the Diocesan Catholic High schools. The questionnaire was subjected to Lawshe's (1975) Content Validity Ratio (CVR) and yielded a valid score of 0.92. Regarding reliability, it was pilot-tested and obtained a Cronbach's alpha reliable result of 0.86. In addition, the instrument employed a 5-point Likert scale from 1- Strongly Disagree to 5- Strongly Agree in both constructs.

In data analysis, descriptive and inferential analyses were employed. Specifically, the mean and standard deviation were utilized to analyze the degrees of perception of the problems of evil and its impact on faith. Meanwhile, the Shapiro-Wilk test was used to determine the normality of the variables. The normality test revealed that the variables problem of evil [SW=0.893, p=0.000], and impact on faith [SW=0.928, p=0.000] are not normally distributed. Hence, both in the problem of evil and impact on faith, the Mann-Whitney U test was used in the variables of sex, religion, and church ministry, while the Kruskal Wallis test was used in the variables of strand and family structure. Lastly, Spearman rank correlation was used to determine the significant relationship between the perceptions of the problem of evil and its impact on faith.

This study adhered to the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB) ethical guidelines and addressed the general principles of respect for persons, non-maleficence, beneficence, and justice to ensure the ethical soundness of the study. Specifically, it addressed the respondents' vulnerability, the anonymity of their identity, and the confidentiality of the data.

3.0 Results and Discussions

3.1 Degrees of Perception of the Problems of Evil Among Grade 12 Students in Diocesan Catholic High Schools

Many students struggle with the existence of evil in the world, which not only challenges their faith but also tests their belief in an all-loving and benevolent God (Moreno 2017). Table 2 presents the degrees of perceptions of the problem of evil among Grade 12 students in Diocesan Catholic High schools. As a whole (M=3.85, SD=0.50), respondents have a strong perception of the problem of evil. Male (M=3.80, SD=0.47) and female (M=3.88, SD=0.53) both have a strong perception of the problem of evil. In terms of strands, HUMSS students (M=3.78, SD=0.54), STEM students (M=3.94, SD=0.41), and ABM students (M=3.96, SD=0.38) all exhibited a strong perception, while TVL students (M=3.36, SD=0.74) experienced a moderate perception. In terms of religion, both Catholic (M=3.84, SD=0.51) and non-Catholic (M=3.87, SD=0.48) students reported a strong perception. Students involved in church ministry (M=3.95, SD=0.42) demonstrated a strong perception, as did non-members (M=3.80, SD=0.53). Regarding family structure, students from nuclear families (M=3.89, SD=0.43), single-parent families (M=3.74, SD=0.66), and extended families (M=3.82, SD=0.55) all reported a strong perception of the problem of evil.

Generally, the finding suggests that Grade 12 students in Diocesan Catholic schools have a strong perception of the problem of evil. This means that students are highly aware of and acknowledge the existence of evil based on their experiences. This could be because of the religious and moral education provided by Catholic schools, which emphasize theological discussions on the nature of evil, suffering, and divine justice (Thomas Massaro, 2023; Pollefeyt, 2021; McKinney, 2016). Also, this could be attributed to their school affiliation, where they are exposed to religious teachings that shape their perception of the problem of evil (Teehan, 201; Goldman, 2022). Based on the study of Samol (2024) and Hayatunnisa et al. (2024), religious education plays a crucial role in shaping students' moral consciousness and perception of ethical issues. It is also supported by the research of Levine et al. (2021), which suggests that religious affiliation and instruction significantly influence how individuals perceive and interpret moral and existential questions. In addition, this could be because Grade 12 students had a personal experience with this kind of phenomenon, which leads to a strong perception. It means they are not taking for granted the things they experienced (Kekes, 2020; van Kessel 2017). Hence, this implies that Diocesan Catholic high schools may continue to strengthen their religious education programs and provide more opportunities for students to engage in discussions, reflections, and avenues that address their moral and existential queries.

Table 2. Perception of the Problem of Evil among Grade 12 Students

Variable	Natural Evil			Moral Evil			Problem of Evil		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Sex									
Male	3.88	0.50	SP	3.73	0.58	SP	3.80	0.47	SP
Female	3.93	0.57	SP	3.84	0.57	SP	3.88	0.53	SP
Strand									
HUMSS	3.91	0.56	SP	3.69	0.62	SP	3.78	0.54	SP
STEM	3.95	0.47	SP	3.93	0.48	SP	3.94	0.41	SP
ABM	4.00	0.44	SP	3.93	0.44	SP	3.96	0.38	SP
TVL	3.46	0.81	SP	3.29	0.78	MP	3.36	0.74	MP
Religion									

Catholic	3.91	0.54	SP	3.79	0.58	SP	3.84	0.51	SP
Non-Catholic	3.92	0.51	SP	3.82	0.57	SP	3.87	0.48	SP
Church Ministry									
Member	4.02	0.49	SP	3.90	0.50	SP	3.95	0.42	SP
Non-Member	3.86	0.55	SP	3.74	0.61	SP	3.80	0.53	SP
Family Structure									
Nuclear	3.95	0.46	SP	3.84	0.52	SP	3.89	0.43	SP
Extended	3.83	0.70	SP	3.66	0.72	SP	3.74	0.66	SP
Single	3.87	0.60	SP	3.79	0.59	SP	3.82	0.55	SP
Whole	3.91	0.54	SP	3.80	0.58	SP	3.85	0.50	SP

Legend:

4.51-5.00	Very Strong Perception	(VSP)
3.51-4.50	Strong Perception	(SP)
2.51-3.50	Moderate Perception	(MP)
1.51-2.50	Weak Perception	(WP)
1.00-1.50	Very Weak Perception	(VWP)

3.2 Degrees of Impact on Faith Among Grade 12 Students in Diocesan Catholic High Schools

Table 3 presents the degrees of impact on faith among Grade 12 students in Diocesan Catholic High Schools. As a whole (M=3.67, SD=0.51), respondents perceived the impact on faith as a strong impact. Male (M=3.62, SD=0.52) and female (M=3.71, SD=0.50) both reported a strong impact on faith. Across academic strands, HUMSS students (M=3.67, SD=0.54), STEM students (M=3.70, SD=0.43), and ABM students (M=3.74, SD=0.36) all perceived a strong impact, while TVL students (M=3.26, SD=0.85) rated it as moderate impact. In terms of religion, both Catholic (M=3.67, SD=0.51) and non-Catholic (M=3.65, SD=0.51) students reported a strong impact on faith. Students involved in church ministry (M=3.80, SD=0.43) perceived a strong impact, as did non-members (M=3.61, SD=0.53). Regarding family structure, students from nuclear families (M=3.73, SD=0.44), single-parent families (M=3.52, SD=0.72), and extended families (M=3.60, SD=0.45) all reported a strong impact on faith.

Overall, the finding suggests that Grade 12 students in Diocesan Catholic schools perceive the impact of the problem of evil on their faith as strong. This means that students recognize how experiences of evil influence their faith. This could be because students often reflect on their faith when confronted with moral and existential challenges, prompting them to seek deeper meaning and understanding (Cotter, 2019; Cotter, 2011; Small, 2023; Fernando et al., 2024). In addition, this could also be attributed to the religious education provided by Catholic schools, which encourages discussions on theodicy and faith resilience (Thomas Massaro, 2023; Pollefeyt, 2021). Additionally, students' exposure to real-life adversities, societal injustices, and personal struggles may impact their faith (Dollahite et al., 2020). The finding of the study is consistent with the study by Del Castillo and Alino (2020), which highlights that religious coping mechanisms play a significant role in how individuals process suffering and maintain their faith. It is also supported by Pargament and Park (2019) which suggests that spiritual struggles and crises often lead to either a deepened faith or doubt. This finding implies that Diocesan Catholic schools may continue to provide faith formation

programs, retreats, and open dialogues where students can process their struggles in the context of their beliefs and maintain their faith amidst adversities.

Table 3. *Impact on Faith among Grade 12 Students in Diocesan Catholic High Schools*

Variable	M	SD	Interpretation
Sex			
Male	3.62	0.52	SI
Female	3.71	0.50	SI
Strand			
HUMSS	3.67	0.54	SI
STEM	3.70	0.43	SI
ABM	3.74	0.36	SI
TVL	3.26	0.85	MI
Religion			
Catholic	3.67	0.51	SI
Non-Catholic	3.65	0.51	SI
Church Ministry			
Member	3.80	0.43	SI
Non-member	3.61	0.53	SI
Family Structure			
Nuclear	3.73	0.44	SI
Single	3.52	0.72	SI
Extended	3.60	0.45	SI
Whole	3.67	0.51	SI

Legend:

4.51-5.00	Very Strong Impact	(VSI)
3.51-4.50	Strong Impact	(SI)
2.51-3.50	Moderate Impact	(MI)
1.51-2.50	Weak Impact	(WI)
1.00-1.50	Very Weak Impact	(VWI)

3.3 Differences in the Degrees of Perception of the Problems of Evil Among Grade 12 Students In Diocesan Catholic High Schools

Table 4 presents the difference in the degrees of perceptions of the problem of evil among grade 12 students in diocesan catholic high schools. There was no significant difference in the problem of evil when they were grouped according to religion [U=5296.500, p=0.726], and family structure [$\chi^2(2)=1.479$, p=0.477]. There was a significant difference in the problem of evil when they were grouped according to sex [U=8850.000, p=0.029], church ministry [U=7645.500, p=0.012], and strand [$\chi^2(3)=16.409$, p=0.001]. Female students reported a higher perception of the problem of evil compared to male students. Similarly, students who were members of a church ministry had a higher perception of the problem of evil than non-members. Among the different academic strands, students in the ABM and STEM strands had higher perceptions of the problem of evil compared to those in the HUMSS and TVL strands.

In terms of sex, there is a significant difference in the perception of the problem of evil between male and female students, with female students reporting a strong perception. This means that female students are more likely to recognize and be affected by the presence of both natural and moral evil in their surroundings. This could be because women, in general, tend to exhibit higher levels of empathy and emotional sensitivity, making them more perceptive of moral and environmental issues (Tracy & Giummarra, 2017; de Camargo et al., 2022; Fernando & Bual, 2024). Also, this could be attributed to social and cultural factors, as females are often more engaged in discussions about morality, ethics, and human suffering (Gibbs 2021). This finding is consistent with the study by Brabeck (2019), which argues that women tend to have a more relational and care-oriented moral perspective, making them more responsive to ethical dilemmas. It is also supported by Tronto (2020) which suggests that women's ethical reasoning is often shaped by a stronger sense of care and concern for others. Hence, this implies that Diocesan Catholic schools may recognize the different ways male and female students perceive and process moral issues and provide inclusive discussions that address diverse perspectives on the problem of evil.

In terms of church ministry, the finding suggests that students who are members of a church ministry have a significantly higher perception of the problem of evil than those who are not involved in church activities. This means that engagement in religious ministry strengthens students' awareness and reflection on the problem of evil (McKinney, 2016). This could be because active participation in church activities exposes students to discussions on sin, suffering, and moral struggles, reinforcing their understanding of evil (Swinton, 2017; Kekes, 2020). In addition, this could also be attributed to their experiences in outreach programs initiated by the parish, pastoral missions, and church teachings, which often highlight the realities of human suffering (Jones, 2020; Nixon, 2021). This finding is consistent with the study by Zinnbauer et al. (2015) which emphasizes that religious involvement enhances individuals' engagement with moral and spiritual questions. It is also supported by Dollahite and Marks (2019) who found that religious youth exhibit stronger moral consciousness and ethical awareness due to their exposure to faith-based activities. With this, it implies that Diocesan Catholic schools may encourage more students to participate in church ministries as a way of deepening their spiritual development.

In terms of the strand, there is a significant difference in the perception of the problem of evil among students from different academic strands, with ABM and STEM students reporting higher perceptions than those in HUMSS and TVL. This means that students in business- and science-related tracks are more likely to engage with or critically reflect on the problem of evil. This could be because STEM students, who are exposed to topics like volcanic eruptions, natural phenomena, experiments, and investigations in the surroundings, may have a heightened their perceptions (del Puerto et al., 2021; Mulvey et al., 2023). Similarly, ABM students, who study economic and business ethics, may encounter moral dilemmas that strengthen their perception of evil in financial and social structures (Cruz et al., 2019; Fernando & Bual, 2024). This could also be attributed to differences in curriculum focus, as HUMSS students may emphasize human behavior and social issues differently, while TVL students may engage in more technical and skills-based education, which may limit discussions on the problems of evil (Barrot, 2023). This finding is consistent with the study by Martinov-Bennie and Mladenovic (2015) which highlights that different academic backgrounds influence students' ethical perception and awareness. It is also supported by the research of Rutland and Killen (2015) which suggests that moral perception varies depending on educational exposure and subject focus. This finding implies that Diocesan Catholic schools may integrate

discussions on moral and ethical issues across all academic strands to help the students process their questions about the reality of evil in this world and help them understand how to strengthen their faith.

Table 4. *Difference in the Degrees of Perceptions of the Problem of Evil among Grade 12 Students in Diocesan Catholic High Schools*

Variable	U	z	p
Sex	8850.000*	-2.183	0.029
Religion	5296.500	-0.351	0.726
Church Ministry	7645.500*	-2.527	0.012
Variable	χ^2	df	p
Strand	16.409*	3	0.001
Family Structure	1.479	2	0.477

Note: *the difference in the means is significant when $p \leq 0.05$

3.4 Differences in the Degrees of Impact on Faith Among Grade 12 Students in Diocesan Catholic High Schools

Table 5 presents the differences in the degrees of the impact on faith among grade 12 students in diocesan catholic high schools. There was no significant difference in the impact on faith when they were grouped according to religion [$U=5444.500$, $p=0.948$], strand [$\chi^2(3)=4.136$, $p=0.247$], and family structure [$\chi^2(2)=4.597$, $p=0.100$]. There was a significant difference in the impact on faith when they were grouped according to sex [$U=8992.500$, $p=0.047$], and church ministry [$U=7426.500$, $p=0.004$]. Female students reported a higher impact on faith compared to male students. Similarly, students who were members of a church ministry experienced a greater impact on faith than non-members.

In terms of sex, the finding suggests that there is a significant difference in the impact of the problem of evil on faith when grouped according to sex, with female students reporting a stronger impact than male students. This means that female students are more likely to experience challenges or deep reflections on their faith when confronted with the problem of evil. Likewise, these made them more sensitive to moral and existential questions. Hence, this could be because women are more emotionally expressive and tend to engage more in religious and spiritual practices like attending mass (Čarapina, 2015; Smith 2012). In fact, according to some studies, more female students attend mass than males, which becomes an avenue to examine their faith (Muli et al., 2020; Rusae & Sinun, 2022). This finding is consistent with the study by Francis et al. (2013) which found that females tend to have stronger religious commitments and are more affected by religious and ethical concerns than males. This finding implies that Diocesan Catholic schools may consider incorporating pastoral programs that address the emotional and spiritual struggles that female students may face regarding faith.

In terms of Church ministry, there is a significant difference in the impact of the problem of evil on faith when grouped according to church ministry involvement, with members of a church ministry experiencing a greater impact than non-members. This means that students who actively participate in church activities are more likely to engage in deeper reflections on the problem of evil and its implications to their faith (McKinney, 2016). This could be because their involvement in religious ministries immerses them in theological discussions and moral teachings, allowing them to grapple with complex questions about divine justice, free will, and human suffering that made them examine their faith (Swinton, 2017; Kekes, 2020). It could

also be attributed to their participation in church activities, which make them more attuned to moral dilemmas and existential concerns that challenge their faith (McKinney, 2016; Swinton, 2017; Kekes 2020). Furthermore, their exposure to parish activities and participation in church organizations deepen their emotional and intellectual engagement with the realities of suffering, which arguably impacts their faith (Jones, 2020; Nixon 2021). This finding is consistent with the study by Dollahite and Marks (2019), which found that religious participation strengthens both personal faith and moral awareness. This finding implies that Diocesan Catholic schools may continue to encourage student participation in church ministries, provide structured opportunities for theological reflection, and offer pastoral support to help students navigate the challenges of faith in the face of the problem of evil.

Table 5. *Differences in the Degrees of the Impact on Faith among Grade 12 Students in Diocesan Catholic High Schools*

Variable	U	z	p
Sex	8992.500*	-1.986	0.047
Religion	5444.500	-0.065	0.948
Church Ministry	7426.500*	-2.855	0.004
Variable	χ^2	df	p
Strand	4.136	3	0.247
Family Structure	4.597	2	0.100

*Note: *the difference in the means is significant when $p \leq 0.05$*

3.5 Relationship Between the Degrees of the Problems of Evil and Degrees of Impact on Faith Among Grade 12 Students in Diocesan Catholic High Schools

Table 6 presents the relationship between the degrees of the problems of evil and degrees of impact on faith among grade 12 students in diocesan catholic high schools. There was a significant relationship between the degrees of the problems of evil and degrees of impact on faith [$r_s(291)=0.576, p=0.000$].

This finding indicates a significant correlation between the perception of the problem of evil and its impact on faith among Grade 12 students in Diocesan Catholic high schools. It means that as students' perception of the problem of evil increases, its effect on their faith also deepens. The finding suggests that those who strongly perceive the existence of evil, whether in the form of natural disasters or moral transgressions, are more likely to experience challenges, reflections, or even transformations in their faith (Foyle, 2006; Moreno 2017). This relationship could be attributed to the fact that evil and faith are considered paired opposites. It means one affects the other. Faith serves as a refuge amidst the realities of evil. Likewise, evil challenges one's faith (Silverman et al., 2020; Adams, 2018; Peterson, 2018). In addition, the finding highlights the stronger the recognition of evil, the more they engage in questioning, reaffirming, or even struggling with their faith (Peterson, 2018; Kekes, 2020). Similarly, Stauner et al. (2016) emphasize that individuals who confront profound moral and existential dilemmas often experience shifts in their spiritual beliefs, either strengthening their commitment or leading to spiritual disagreement. Hence, this finding underscores the consideration for Diocesan Catholic High schools to provide theological guidance and avenues for open discussion to help students process their understanding of evil and its impact on their faith.

Table 6. *Relationship between the Degrees of the Problems of Evil and Degrees of Impact on Faith among Grade 12 Students in Diocesan Catholic High Schools*

Variable	r_s	df	p
Problem of Evil x Impact on Faith	0.576*	291	0.000

Note: *correlation is significant when $p \leq 0.05$

This study theoretically assumes that the degrees of perceptions of the problems of evil and its impact on faith vary based on the Grade 12 student's sex, strand, religion, ministry, and family structure. Hence, this study validated the social identity theory of Tajfel (1978). This theory posits that an individual's perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes are influenced by their membership in different social groups. Factors such as sex, academic strand, religion, ministry involvement, and family structure shape a person's identity and influence how they interpret and respond to moral and theological issues. Hence, the findings of the study affirm the position of the social identity theory that indeed the perceptions of the problems of evil vary based on the individual's background. Meanwhile, further studies are encouraged to validate the claim of the study.

4.0 Conclusion

Diocesan Catholic High schools may deepen the discussions on natural and moral evil that are strongly perceived by the students. The schools may consider providing possible answers to the queries of their students relative to the problems of evil. Also, the schools may provide activities that may strengthen the faith of students. Meanwhile, the institutions may also recognize that male and female students may have different ways of understanding and dealing with moral issues, so they may create inclusive discussions. In addition, they may encourage students to take part in church organizations that may help them grow spiritually. Schools may also provide open discussions and activities where students can express their struggles and questions about the problems of evil. The schools may encourage their students to actively participate in parish youth ministry, serve as altar servers, or join the choir, as these activities may become meaningful avenues for deepening their faith amidst their strong perception of evil. Similarly, engaging in these church organizations may help students develop a stronger connection with God. Hence, these efforts show that Catholic education plays an important role in helping students develop a strong moral foundation and guiding them to strengthen their faith.

Meanwhile, this paper acknowledges certain limitations. The study was conducted in ten Diocesan Catholic High Schools and is limited to Grade 12 students, which means the result may not be generalizable to other Catholic schools or in other Dioceses. Also, this was limited to sex, academic strand, religion, church ministry, and family structure as the respondent's demographics. Likewise, this study utilized the quantitative research design, particularly descriptive-comparative, and correlational approaches. In addition, the study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire. Given these limitations of the paper, further studies are encouraged utilizing the same or other research designs and methodology, additional demographics, assumptions, standardized instruments, and theory to validate the findings of this study.

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