

Influence of Apostolic Work of the Religious Congregations On the Spiritual Growth of Students in The Diocesan Schools in Alaminos City, Pangasinan: Basis for A Training Program

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of the apostolic work of religious congregations on the spiritual growth of students in the diocesan schools of Alaminos City, Pangasinan, as a basis for proposing a training program for religious sisters. Employing a descriptive-correlational research design, the study involved 25 religious sisters and 75 students as respondents. Data were gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire that measured the level of influence of apostolic work in terms of teaching and academic formation, service and outreach programs, catechesis and religious education, vocation promotion, and counseling and guidance. The validated questionnaire was administered using Google Forms, an online survey platform that allows efficient distribution, data collection, and management. The use of an online questionnaire ensured accessibility, convenience, and anonymity for respondents, which may enhance response accuracy and honesty. Online data collection tools such as Google Forms have been found to be reliable and effective in educational research, especially in terms of reaching respondents efficiently and minimizing data entry errors (Evans & Mathur, 2018; Regmi et al., 2017). Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and the Mann–Whitney U test was used to analyze the data.

The most significant problems encountered by religious sisters in implementing apostolic work relate to time and workload management which ranked as the top concern. Difficulties in balancing teaching responsibilities with apostolic duties, limited time and spiritual renewal, and work-related fatigue were frequently reported. Other challenges include limited training and professional development, particularly in spiritual and counseling and faith integration, as engagement in some apostolic activities. Issues related to institutional support and collaboration, such as limited involvement of school leadership and insufficient coordination with lay teachers, were also noted, though the rank lower. These challenges suggest that while apostolic work is highly valued, its effective implementation is constrained by structural, organizational, and capacity related factors that need to be addressed for sustainability. Result further showed that there was no significant relationship between the level of apostolic influence and most profile variables of the religious sisters, except for language or dialect spoken. A significant difference was found between the perception of religious sisters and students, with religious rating the influence of apostolic work higher.

Based on these findings, a structured and responsive training program is necessary to sustain and enhance apostolic work by addressing identified challenges, strengthening

pastoral, pedagogical, and relational competencies, and aligning apostolic initiatives more closely with students' needs to ensure continued spiritual growth in diocesan schools.

Keywords: *Apostolic Work, Religious Congregations, Student Spiritual Growth, Religious Sisters.*

INTRODUCTION

Religious congregations have played a foundational role in Philippine education since the sixteenth century, establishing schools that integrated academic instruction with catechesis, moral formation, and pastoral care. This educational apostolate remains evident in diocesan school systems, including those in Alaminos City, Pangasinan, where religious sisters and pastoral workers actively engage in teaching, catechesis, retreats, service programs, and guidance. In the contemporary context, diocesan schools carry a dual mandate: sustaining academic quality while intentionally promoting students' spiritual growth and values formation, in line with national education priorities and the mission of Catholic education.

Despite evidence linking spirituality with positive student outcomes, diocesan schools face challenges such as workload constraints, changing youth culture, and misalignment between apostolic initiatives and students' needs. Limited empirical studies have examined how specific apostolic practices influence students' spiritual growth within local diocesan settings.

Over centuries the Catholic Church and other Christian congregations developed an educational apostolate that combined catechesis, moral formation, and academic instruction; notable outcomes include the founding of long-standing institutions and the embedding of faith formation into school life (Low, 2021; Lapsley & Kelley, 2022). This historical inheritance is particularly visible in diocesan school systems where apostolic activity—here defined as organized pastoral, catechetical, service and formation programs conducted by religious congregations and diocesan pastoral offices—remains a central feature of institutional identity and daily school practice. In Alaminos City, Pangasinan, the Diocese of Alaminos administers and coordinates a network of parochial and diocesan schools that routinely engage religious personnel (priests, sisters, brothers) and lay ministers in sacramental ministry, catechesis, retreat facilitation, service programs, and pastoral care—activities collectively framed as “apostolic work” of congregations (Diocese of Alaminos, diocesan communications, 2023–2024).

In the contemporary Philippine educational landscape, diocesan schools face a double mandate: to sustain high academic standards while intentionally promoting spiritual formation and values education. National policies and development plans emphasize quality, inclusivity, and resilience in basic and higher education—priorities articulated clearly in the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023–2028, which calls for “quality, inclusive, adaptive, resilient, and future-ready basic education for all” and highlights improved governance for human capital development (PDP, 2023). Simultaneously, the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) and other ecclesial agencies continue to advocate for formation programs that nurture moral agency, service orientation, and spiritual maturity among learners (Banusing, 2020). Empirical studies from the Philippines in recent years report positive associations between students' religiosity/spiritual practice and psychosocial outcomes such as

coping, well-being, and academic engagement (Camarines, 2021; Fabula, 2024). Case studies of spiritual formation programs in Catholic schools and seminaries show these programs can enhance students' sense of purpose, discipline, and community orientation—factors that plausibly support learning processes (Soguilon & Relator, 2022; Antonio Jr., 2025).

Filling this gap is important for several converging reasons. At the policy level, the Philippine Development Plan (2023–2028) explicitly links education outcomes to national development objectives—job creation, poverty reduction, and inclusive growth—and calls for better measurement of learning outcomes and stronger school–community linkages (PDP, 2023). Understanding how apostolic work contributes to non-cognitive skills, civic engagement, and character formation helps policymakers and school leaders design programs that align moral formation with broader human capital goals. At the level of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the apostolic mission of diocesan schools directly intersects with SDG 4 (quality education) through holistic formation that combines cognitive and affective domains, with implications also for SDG 3 (good health and well-being) via psychosocial support, and SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) through values formation that encourages participatory, nonviolent civic engagement (Philippine VNR; United Nations SDG frameworks). Recent national SDG reviews for the Philippines highlight the need for multi-stakeholder partnerships—including faith-based organizations—to accelerate progress on education and social cohesion (PIDS; SDG reports). Thus, evidence on the influence of apostolic work would support integrated strategies that advance both educational quality and the SDG agenda.

Addressing this gap, it focuses on focuses on determining the influence of the apostolic work of religious congregations on the academic and spiritual growth of students in selected diocesan schools in Alaminos City, Pangasinan. The respondents of the study include religious sisters actively involved in apostolic work and students enrolled in the identified diocesan schools during the period of the study. The profile of the religious sisters in terms of age, nationality, length of service in the congregation, highest educational attainment, bachelor's degree and specialization, number of dialects or languages spoken, school handled, and number of trainings or seminars attended related to apostolic work. It also examines the level of influence of apostolic work as perceived by both religious sisters and students in the areas of teaching and academic formation, service and outreach programs, catechesis and religious education, vocation promotion, and counseling and guidance, as well as the problems encountered in the implementation of these apostolic activities.

The historical role of religious congregations in Philippine education, the current imperative to harmonize academic quality with spiritual formation, and the policy frameworks of the PDP and SDGs together make an empirical investigation of apostolic work in Alaminos both timely and policy-relevant. The research gap—limited evidence on the specific mechanisms through which apostolic programs affect academic achievement and spiritual development—calls for a study that can translate findings into a contextually appropriate training program for pastoral workers, teachers, and school leaders. By aligning school formation practices with the national development agenda and PSU's research priorities, such a study would generate knowledge to strengthen diocesan schools' contribution to holistic student development and to the achievement of broader societal goals.

The study is delimited to diocesan schools within Alaminos City and does not include private non-diocesan schools or other religious institutions outside the area. Only the apostolic works directly implemented by religious congregations in the school setting are considered, excluding parish-based or community apostolates not connected to the schools. The investigation is further limited to identifying the relationship between the profile of the religious sisters and the level of influence of their apostolic work, and the difference in perceptions between religious sisters and students. Other factors affecting students' academic and spiritual growth, such as family background, school facilities, and administrative policies, are beyond the scope of this study. The findings of the research serve as the basis for proposing a training program intended to enhance the effectiveness of apostolic work in diocesan schools.

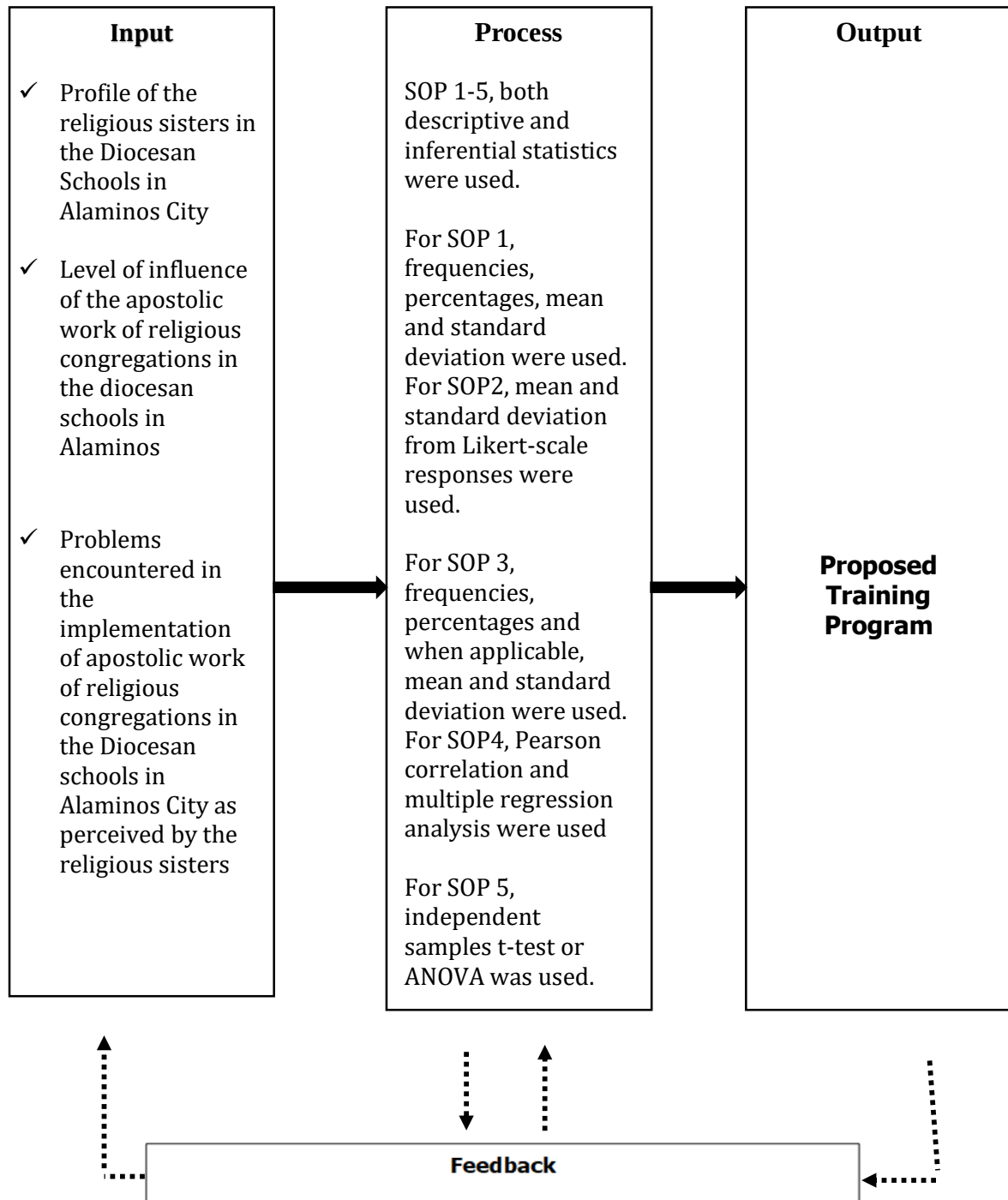
Statement of the Problem

The main purpose of this study is to assess the influence of apostolic work of the religious congregations to the spiritual growth of the students in the diocesan schools in Alaminos city, Pangasinan: basis for a training program. Specifically, it intends to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the religious sisters in the Diocesan Schools in Alaminos City in terms of the following variables:
 - a. Age;
 - b. Nationality;
 - c. Length of service in the congregation;
 - d. Highest Educational attainment;
 - e. Bachelor's Degree;
 - f. Specialization;
 - g. Number of dialect or language/s spoken;
 - h. Type of School handled; and
 - i. Number of training or seminars attended related to apostolic work?
2. What is the level of influence of the apostolic work of religious congregations on the spiritual growth of students in the diocesan schools in Alaminos City as perceived by the religious sisters and students in the following areas:
 - a. Teaching and Academic Formation;
 - b. Service and Outreach Programs;
 - c. Catechesis and Religious Education;
 - d. Vocation Promotion; and
 - e. Counseling and Guidance?
3. What are the problems encountered in the implementation of apostolic work of religious congregations in the Diocesan schools in Alaminos City as perceived by the religious sisters?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the level of influence of the apostolic work of religious congregations on the spiritual growth of students in the diocesan schools in Alaminos City and the profile of the religious sisters?
5. Is there a significant difference in the level of influence of the apostolic work of religious congregations on the spiritual growth of students in the diocesan schools in Alaminos City as perceived by the religious sisters and themselves?

6. What training program for the religious sisters may be proposed to sustain the implementation of apostolic work of the religious congregations to the spiritual growth of the students in the diocesan schools in Alaminos city, Pangasinan?

Fig.1 Paradigm of the Study



METHODS

This chapter describes the research design and methods employed to examine the influence of the apostolic work carried out by religious congregations on the academic performance and spiritual growth of students in selected diocesan schools in Alaminos City, Pangasinan. The study uses a quantitative research approach to systematically gather and analyze numerical data, allowing for an objective assessment of how various factors related to the religious sisters' profiles and activities affect students' development in both academic and spiritual dimensions.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design aimed at systematically investigating the influence of the apostolic work of religious congregations on the academic performance and spiritual growth of students in selected diocesan schools in Alaminos City, Pangasinan. By using a structured and numerical approach, this design enables the researcher to collect measurable data that can be analyzed to reveal patterns, relationships, and differences related to the impact of religious sisters' work in the schools.

The quantitative method was well-suited for this study because it allows for the objective assessment of how various characteristics of the religious sisters — such as their age, nationality, length of service, educational background, and training experiences — relate to their effectiveness in fostering both academic and spiritual development among students. Moreover, the study investigates how both religious sisters and students perceive the level of influence across different aspects of apostolic work, including teaching, outreach, religious education, vocation promotion, and guidance.

Data were gathered through carefully designed questionnaires distributed to religious sisters and students within the selected diocesan schools. The questionnaires were capturing detailed information on the sisters' profiles, the perceived influence of their apostolic activities, and any challenges faced in implementing their mission. The quantitative data collected were then analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the profiles and perceptions, and inferential statistics to test for significant relationships and differences.

Through this approach, the study aims not only to provide a clear understanding of the current impact of religious congregations' apostolic work but also to identify areas for improvement. The findings were served as a foundation for proposing a targeted training program that can enhance the role of religious sisters in supporting both the academic success and spiritual growth of students in diocesan schools.

Quantitative research focuses on the collection and analysis of numerical data, making it suitable for determining patterns, relationships, and statistical significance in large datasets (Creswell, 2014). For this study, the independent variables include the profile of the religious sisters in terms of age, nationality, number of years in service, grade level handled, and the number of relevant training programs attended. The dependent variables include the level of influence that the religious sisters exert on students in the following areas: teaching and academic formation, service and outreach programs, catechesis and religious education, vocation promotion, and counseling and guidance.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this quantitative study consist of 25 religious' sisters from four religious congregations assigned to nine diocesan schools in Alaminos City, Pangasinan. These

sisters are directly involved in apostolic work, including teaching, catechesis, outreach programs, counseling, and vocation promotion. They were selected through purposive sampling, a method chosen to ensure that only those who meet specific criteria related to their apostolic involvement are included. This sampling technique allows the researcher to focus on individuals who can provide relevant and insightful data regarding the research objectives. The selection was based on their active roles in student academic and spiritual development, their willingness to participate, and their experience in apostolic work within the school setting.

In addition to the religious sisters, the study also includes 75 student respondents from the same diocesan schools. These students were selected using purposive sampling with the assistance of campus ministry coordinators and school administrators to ensure they have adequate exposure to the apostolic work conducted by the sisters. The student participants are currently enrolled in Grades 10 to 12 and have been part of the school community for at least one academic year. A balance of male and female students was maintained to capture diverse perspectives. These students were chosen because they are direct beneficiaries of the religious sisters' apostolic work, placing them in a position to meaningfully assess its influence on both their academic performance and spiritual growth. Together, the perspectives of the religious sisters and the students provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of apostolic work in the diocesan schools of Alaminos City.

Distribution of Respondents

Respondent Group	Number of Respondents
Religious Sisters	25
Students (Grades 10–12)	75
TOTAL	100

Data Gathering Instrument

The primary data-gathering instrument used in this study is a researcher-made questionnaire designed to determine the influence of the apostolic works of religious congregations on the academic and spiritual growth of students in diocesan schools in Alaminos City, Pangasinan. The questionnaire was carefully constructed based on an extensive review of related literature and studies to ensure alignment with the objectives and variables of the study. It consists of structured items intended to capture respondents' perceptions of apostolic activities, academic outcomes, and spiritual development using clear, concise, and contextually appropriate statements.

To establish the validity of the instrument, content validation was conducted by a panel of five experts in the fields of education, religious studies, educational management, and research methodology. The experts evaluated the questionnaire in terms of clarity, relevance, adequacy, and alignment with the research objectives. Their comments and recommendations were incorporated to refine the items, improve wording, and ensure that the instrument adequately represents the domains being measured. Content validation through expert judgment is recognized as an appropriate and rigorous approach for ensuring the quality and

credibility of researcher-made instruments, particularly in educational and social science research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Taherdoost, 2016).

The validated questionnaire was administered using Google Forms, an online survey platform that allows efficient distribution, data collection, and management. The use of an online questionnaire ensured accessibility, convenience, and anonymity for respondents, which may enhance response accuracy and honesty. Online data collection tools such as Google Forms have been found to be reliable and effective in educational research, especially in terms of reaching respondents efficiently and minimizing data entry errors (Evans & Mathur, 2018; Regmi et al., 2017).

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedure of the study was conducted systematically to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and ethical integrity of the information collected. Prior to data collection, the researcher will seek approval from the school administrators of the selected diocesan schools in Alaminos City and secure informed consent from the respondents. A validated researcher-made questionnaire will be administered to students to gather data on the extent of apostolic works of religious congregations and their perceived influence on academic and spiritual growth. The instrument will be pilot-tested to establish reliability and clarity before its final administration, following recommended research protocols (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data collection was carried out through scheduled on-site distribution of questionnaires, with clear instructions provided to ensure uniform understanding among respondents. The researcher will personally monitor the process to address queries and to ensure completeness of responses. Ethical considerations such as confidentiality, voluntary participation, and anonymity was strictly observed throughout the procedure in compliance with contemporary research ethics standards (American Psychological Association, 2020; Israel & Hay, 2021). After retrieval, the gathered data was organized, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis to serve as the basis for interpreting results and formulating a training program grounded on empirical findings.

Statistical Treatment of Data

This study utilized both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to analyze the data gathered from 25 religious sisters and 75 students from nine diocesan schools in Alaminos City. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the general characteristics of the respondents and their perceptions.

For the demographic profile of the religious sisters, frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed to describe variables such as age, nationality, length of service, highest educational attainment, specialization, number of languages spoken, school assignment, and number of apostolic-related trainings attended. Likewise, descriptive statistics were used to determine the perceived level of influence of apostolic work in five key areas, namely: teaching and academic formation, service and outreach programs, catechesis and religious education, vocation promotion, and counseling and guidance. Responses to the Likert-scale items were averaged to obtain the overall level of influence in each domain.

To examine relationships and differences among variables, inferential statistical tools were applied. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to determine the relationship between the profile variables of the religious sisters and the level of influence of their apostolic work on students' spiritual growth, with correlation coefficients closer to +1 or -1 indicating stronger relationships. In cases where the data did not meet the assumptions for parametric testing, appropriate non-parametric alternatives were employed.

To determine whether there was a significant difference in perception between religious sisters and students regarding the influence of apostolic work, the Mann-Whitney U test was utilized. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance, wherein a computed p-value less than 0.05 led to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

The results were interpreted to identify patterns and trends, including which profile variables were significantly related to apostolic influence and whether differences existed between the perceptions of religious sisters and students. Although limitations such as sample size, self-reported responses, and potential response bias may affect generalizability, the statistical analysis provided meaningful insights into the role and impact of apostolic work in promoting the spiritual growth of students in diocesan schools in Alaminos City

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study presented the results of the data analysis and the corresponding questionnaire based on the findings derived from the data gathered.

Table 1: *Profile of the Religious Sisters*

Variables	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage
Age	20-29	11	44.00%
	30-39	4	16.00%
	40-49	4	16.00%
	50-59	4	16.00%
	60 and above	2	8.00%
Nationality	Filipino	25	100.00%
Length of Service	Less than 1 year	6	24.00%
	1-5 years	8	32.00%
	6-10 years	3	12.00%
	11-15 years	3	12.00%
	16+ years	5	20.00%
Highest Educational Attainment	Bachelor's Degree	17	68.00%
	with Units in Master	2	8.00%
	Master's Degree	5	20.00%
	with units in Doctorate	1	4.00%
Specialization	None	2	8.00%
	Education	18	72.00%
	Theology/Religious Studies	4	16.00%
	Generalist	1	4.00%
Number of dialects/languages spoken	1	4	16.00%

	2	5	20.00%
	3	16	64.00%
Type of School Handled	pre-school	1	4.00%
	elementary	7	28.00%
	high school	11	44.00%
	senior high school	1	4.00%
	all	5	20.00%
Number of Trainings and Seminars	None	4	16.00%
	1-2	10	40.00%
	3-5	3	12.00%
	More than 5	8	32.00%

Understanding their demographic, educational, and professional characteristics is essential in contextualizing their involvement in apostolic works and in interpreting how these factors may influence the academic and spiritual growth of students. The variables included in this profile—such as age, nationality, length of service in the congregation, educational background, areas of specialization, linguistic capability, school assignment, and exposure to relevant trainings and seminars—provide a comprehensive description of the respondents. These data serve as a foundational basis for subsequent analyses and for identifying areas that may be strengthened through the proposed training program.

Age

In terms of age reveal that the majority of the respondents fall within the 20–29 age bracket, accounting for 44.00% ($n = 11$) of the total respondents. This indicates that most of the religious sisters involved in diocesan schools in Alaminos City are relatively young adults who are likely at the early stage of their religious and apostolic ministry. The presence of a large proportion of younger sisters suggests a workforce that is potentially energetic, adaptable, and open to continuous formation and skills development—an important consideration in designing a training program that emphasizes capacity-building and sustained apostolic engagement.

The remaining respondents are evenly distributed across the 30–39, 40–49, and 50–59 age groups, each comprising 16.00% ($n = 4$) of the sample. This balanced representation across middle-age groups reflects a healthy mix of experience and maturity within the congregation. Sisters in these age brackets are typically characterized by deeper pastoral exposure, established teaching competence, and stronger institutional knowledge, which are crucial in mentoring younger members and ensuring continuity of apostolic traditions. Studies have shown that educators with longer service and maturity often demonstrate stronger instructional confidence and leadership in faith-based institutions (Day et al., 2016; Llego & Corpus, 2021).

Meanwhile, the 60 years and above category accounts for the smallest proportion at 8.00% ($n = 2$). Although fewer in number, senior religious sisters often play a vital role as spiritual guides, counselors, and custodians of the congregation's charism. Their continued involvement underscores the value of intergenerational collaboration in Catholic schools, where wisdom and lived experience complement youthful enthusiasm. Research supports the

idea that age diversity among religious educators enhances institutional stability and strengthens spiritual formation programs (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2019).

Overall, the age distribution implies a dynamic and multi-generational apostolic workforce capable of addressing both academic and spiritual needs of students. The dominance of younger sisters highlights the necessity for structured and continuous training programs to further enhance their pedagogical skills, theological grounding, and pastoral competence. At the same time, the presence of experienced and senior sisters provides a strong foundation for mentoring and values transmission. These findings align with recent literature emphasizing the importance of age-responsive professional and spiritual development programs in sustaining the mission effectiveness of Catholic educational institutions (Guerra & Boyle, 2020; Mapile & Dela Cruz, 2022).

Nationality

In terms of Nationality indicates that all respondents (100.00%, $n = 25$) are Filipino, reflecting a homogeneous nationality profile among the religious sisters serving in the diocesan schools of Alaminos City, Pangasinan. This overall result suggests that the apostolic and educational mission of these schools is being carried out entirely by local religious personnel, which underscores the strong participation of Filipino religious congregations in sustaining Catholic education at the diocesan level. The absence of foreign nationals highlights the localization of apostolic work and the reliance on indigenous vocations to fulfill both academic and spiritual formation roles.

Length of Service

Regarding the length of Service in the Congregation shows that the largest proportion of the respondents in terms of length of service in the congregation falls within the 1–5 years category, comprising 32.00% ($n = 8$) of the total respondents. This overall result suggests that a significant number of religious sisters serving in the diocesan schools of Alaminos City are relatively new in their apostolic assignments. Such a distribution implies a formative stage in ministry where enthusiasm and openness to learning are typically high, but where structured guidance and continuing formation are also critically needed to strengthen effectiveness in both academic and spiritual roles.

Highest educational Attainment

In terms of Highest Educational Attainment results reveal that the majority of the respondents have attained a Bachelor's degree, representing 68.00% ($n = 17$) of the total. This overall result indicates that most of the religious sisters serving in the diocesan schools of Alaminos City possess the minimum academic qualification required for teaching positions in basic education. This educational profile suggests that the apostolic mission in these schools is largely carried out by sisters who are academically prepared at the undergraduate level and are actively engaged in classroom instruction and student formation.

Overall, the educational attainment profile suggests a solid academic foundation among the religious sisters, complemented by a growing orientation toward advanced studies. This combination presents a strong opportunity for designing a training program that builds on

existing qualifications while promoting higher levels of academic preparation and deeper apostolic competence, ultimately enhancing the academic and spiritual growth of students in diocesan schools.

Specialization

In terms of Specialization data shows that the majority of the respondents possess a specialization in Education, comprising 72.00% (n = 18) of the total. This overall result suggests that most of the religious sisters assigned to diocesan schools in Alaminos City are academically trained for formal teaching roles. Such a concentration in education-related specialization reflects institutional compliance with professional teaching standards and underscores the central role of religious sisters as classroom educators who directly influence students' academic performance while integrating apostolic values into daily instruction.

The specialization profile reflects a balanced yet education-centered apostolic workforce, capable of supporting students' academic achievement while fostering spiritual growth. This distribution reinforces the need for a comprehensive and inclusive training program that maximizes existing strengths and addresses identified gaps, thereby strengthening the overall influence of apostolic work in diocesan schools.

The Number of Dialects or Languages

The Number of Dialects or languages spoken show that the majority of the respondents are multilingual, with 64.00% (n = 16) reporting the ability to speak three dialects or languages. This overall finding suggests that most of the religious sisters assigned to diocesan schools in Alaminos City possess strong linguistic competence, which is a valuable asset in both academic instruction and apostolic ministry. Multilingual ability enables religious educators to communicate more effectively with students from diverse linguistic backgrounds and to contextualize lessons and spiritual messages in ways that are culturally and linguistically meaningful.

The implications of these findings are significant for both academic and spiritual formation. Multilingual religious sisters are better positioned to explain complex academic concepts, address learners' needs, and facilitate inclusive classroom discussions. In terms of apostolic work, language proficiency enhances pastoral care, catechesis, and faith-sharing activities, as students are more receptive when religious teachings are communicated in familiar dialects. Studies in faith-based and multicultural schools indicate that linguistic responsiveness strengthens students' sense of belonging and supports holistic development, including moral and spiritual growth (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2019; Reyes & Jocson, 2020).

Type of school handled

In terms of the School Handled results in Table 1 indicate that the majority of the respondents are assigned to high school, accounting for 44.00% (n = 11) of the total. This overall finding suggests that a substantial portion of the apostolic work of religious congregations in the diocesan schools of Alaminos City is concentrated at the secondary level, where students undergo critical academic, moral, and spiritual formation. High school students are at a developmental stage characterized by identity formation and increased cognitive and moral reasoning, making the presence and influence of religious sisters particularly significant in guiding both academic discipline and values formation.

The Number of Seminars or Training

Finally, the Number of Seminars or Training Attended show that the largest proportion of the respondents have attended 1–2 trainings or seminars related to apostolic work, accounting for 40.00% (n = 10) of the total. This overall finding indicates that most of the religious sisters serving in the diocesan schools of Alaminos City have had limited but initial exposure to formal training opportunities. Such participation suggests an awareness of the importance of continuing formation, yet it also points to the need for more sustained and structured professional and apostolic development to further enhance their effectiveness in both academic instruction and spiritual guidance.

Meanwhile, 12.00% (n = 3) of the respondents reported attending 3–5 trainings or seminars, indicating a moderate level of engagement in apostolic formation activities. This group represents religious sisters who have gone beyond minimal exposure but may still benefit from more regular and advanced training opportunities. Research emphasizes that consistency and continuity in professional development are critical factors in translating training experiences into improved classroom practice and effective pastoral ministry (Day et al., 2016; Llego & Corpus, 2021).

On the other hand, 16.00% (n = 4) of the respondents indicated that they have not attended any training or seminar related to apostolic work, representing the least favorable outcome. This finding suggests a gap in access to or participation in formation activities, which may affect instructional competence, confidence in pastoral roles, and the overall quality of apostolic engagement. Literature consistently highlights that the absence of targeted training can limit educators' ability to adapt to evolving educational demands and to effectively integrate spiritual formation within academic settings (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2019).

Table 2: Summary of the Level of Influence of the Apostolic Work of Religious Congregations in the Spiritual Growth of Students as Perceived by the Religious Sisters and Themselves in Terms of Teaching and Academic Formation

Indicators	5		4		3		2		1		AW M	DE
A. Teaching and Academic Formation	f	p	f	p	f	p	f	p	f	p		
1. Religious sisters promote prayer and spiritual reflection during classes.	5 2	52.00 %	3 2	32.00 %	1 1	11.00 %	5 5	5.00 %	0 0	0.00 %	4.3 1	VHI
2. They model faith-centered teaching.	4 5	45.00 %	3 4	34.00 %	1 5	15.00 %	6 6	6.00 %	0 0	0.00 %	4.1 8	HI

3. Their lessons help deepen students' sense of purpose.	50	50.00 %	32	32.00 %	13	13.00 %	5	5.00 %	0	0.00 %	4.27	VHI
4. They help integrate Gospel values into academic tasks.	51	51.00 %	31	31.00 %	12	12.00 %	6	6.00 %	0	0.00 %	4.27	VHI
5. They create a classroom atmosphere that nurtures spirituality.	44	44.00 %	34	34.00 %	15	15.00 %	6	6.00 %	1	1.00 %	4.14	HI
								4.23	Very High Influence			

Legend: f – frequency; p – percentage

Descriptive Equivalent (DE) : 5 – Very High Influence (VHI); 4 – High Influence (HI); 3 – Moderate Influence (MI); 2 – Slight Influence (SI); 1 – No Influence (NI)

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that the apostolic work of religious congregations has a very high influence on the spiritual growth of students in terms of Teaching and Academic Formation, as perceived by the religious sisters and the students themselves, with an overall Average Weighted Mean (AWM) of 4.23, described as Very High Influence. This overall finding underscores the integral role of religious sisters in embedding spirituality within the academic environment, affirming that teaching in diocesan schools goes beyond intellectual development and deliberately nurtures students' faith and values.

Among the indicators, the statement “Religious sisters promote prayer and spiritual reflection during classes” obtained the highest AWM of 4.31 (Very High Influence), suggesting that prayerful practices are consistently integrated into daily classroom routines. This practice reinforces the notion that spirituality is not confined to religious subjects alone but is woven into the broader learning experience. Similarly, the indicators “Their lessons help deepen students' sense of purpose” and “They help integrate Gospel values into academic tasks” both garnered an AWM of 4.27, also interpreted as Very High Influence. These findings imply that students perceive their academic learning as meaningfully connected to faith, morality, and life purpose, which is a core objective of Catholic education. Research supports that faith-integrated pedagogy significantly contributes to students' moral reasoning, personal meaning-making, and spiritual maturity (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2019; Boyle & Dosen, 2020).

The implications of these findings are significant for the proposed training program. The consistently high to very high ratings across all indicators highlight teaching and academic formation as a major strength of apostolic work in diocesan schools. However, the slight variation among indicators suggests the need for continuous capacity-building focused on faith-centered pedagogy, reflective teaching practices, and the intentional creation of spiritually nurturing classroom environments. Strengthening these areas through structured training can further enhance the already strong influence of religious sisters on students' spiritual growth.

Similar studies conducted in Catholic schools locally and internationally affirm that sustained formation of religious educators is essential in maintaining the vitality of faith-integrated teaching and ensuring long-term spiritual impact on learners (Mapile & Dela Cruz, 2022; Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2019). Overall, the findings affirm that teaching and academic formation serve as a powerful avenue through which apostolic work effectively nurtures the spiritual growth of students

Table 3: *Level of Influence of the Apostolic Work of Religious Congregations in the Spiritual Growth of Students as Perceived by the Religious Sisters and Themselves in Terms of Service and Outreach Programs.*

Indicators	5		4		3		2		1		AW M	DE
B. Service and Outreach Programs	f	p	f	p	f	p	f	p	f	p		
1. Religious sisters show how service is an expression of faith.	50	50.00 %	29	29.00 %	16	16.00 %	5	5.00 %	0	0.00 %	4.24	VHI
2. Outreach programs nurture compassion and empathy.	41	41.00 %	40	40.00 %	15	15.00 %	4	4.00 %	0	0.00 %	4.18	HI
3. Students grow spiritually through their involvement in service.	44	44.00 %	37	37.00 %	15	15.00 %	4	4.00 %	0	0.00 %	4.21	VHI
4. They lead reflections that connect service with the Gospel.	50	50.00 %	32	32.00 %	11	11.00 %	7	7.00 %	0	0.00 %	4.25	VHI
5. Their apostolic actions inspire deeper spiritual engagement.	49	49.00 %	33	33.00 %	12	12.00 %	6	6.00 %	0	0.00 %	4.25	VHI
							4.23		Very High Influence			

Legend: f – frequency; p – percentage

Descriptive Equivalent (DE) : 5 – Very High Influence (VHI); 4 – High Influence (HI); 3 - Moderate Influence (MI); 2 - Slight Influence (SI); 1 - No Influence (NI)

The results presented in Table 3 show that the apostolic work of religious congregations in terms of Service and Outreach Programs has a very high influence on the spiritual growth of students, as perceived by the religious sisters and the students themselves, with an overall Average Weighted Mean (AWM) of 4.23, interpreted as Very High Influence. This overall finding highlights service-oriented apostolic activities as a powerful avenue through which students deepen their spirituality by translating faith into concrete action, consistent with the mission of Catholic education to form socially responsible and spiritually grounded individuals.

Among the indicators, the statements “They lead reflections that connect service with the Gospel” and “Their apostolic actions inspire deeper spiritual engagement” both obtained the highest AWM of 4.25, described as Very High Influence. These results suggest that students strongly perceive outreach activities as meaningful when they are intentionally linked to Gospel values and guided reflection. This underscores the importance of reflective practice in service-learning, where experience is integrated with faith reflection to foster spiritual growth. Studies affirm that faith-based service programs that include structured reflection significantly enhance students’ moral sensitivity, spiritual awareness, and sense of Christian responsibility (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2019; Boyle & Dosen, 2020).

The indicator “Students grow spiritually through their involvement in service” also yielded a Very High Influence with an AWM of 4.21, reinforcing the view that direct participation in outreach programs contributes to students’ spiritual maturation. Engagement in service allows students to encounter real-life situations of poverty, injustice, and human need, which often leads to deeper reflection, empathy, and faith commitment. Meanwhile, “Outreach programs nurture compassion and empathy” obtained a slightly lower AWM of 4.18, interpreted as High Influence, yet still reflects a strong positive impact. This result suggests that while compassion is effectively developed, it can be further strengthened through more intentional formation and guided reflection.

The implications of these findings are significant for the proposed training program. The consistently high ratings across all indicators indicate that service and outreach programs are a major strength of apostolic work in diocesan schools. However, the results also suggest the need for continuous formation of religious sisters in areas such as service-learning design, reflective facilitation, and Gospel-centered social action. Training programs that enhance these competencies can further deepen the spiritual impact of outreach initiatives. Similar findings in Catholic school research emphasize that well-structured service programs, when led by well-formed educators, are among the most effective means of promoting students’ holistic and spiritual growth (Mapile & Dela Cruz, 2022; Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2019).

Overall, the findings affirm that service and outreach programs serve as a vital expression of apostolic work, enabling students to experience faith in action. Strengthening these programs through targeted training will further enhance their influence on students’ spiritual growth and support the mission of diocesan schools in forming compassionate, faith-filled learners.

Table 5: Level of Influence of the Apostolic Work of Religious Congregations in the Spiritual Growth of Students as Perceived by the Religious Sisters and Themselves in Terms of Vocation Promotion

Indicators	5		4		3		2		1		AW M	DE
D. Vocation Promotion	f	p	f	p	f	p	f	p	f	p		
1. Religious sisters encourage students to reflect on God's call.	5 5	55.00 %	2 7	27.00 %	1 4	14.00 %	4	4.00 %	0	0.00 %	4.3 3	VHI
2. They share their vocation stories as spiritual inspiration.	5 0	50.00 %	3 2	32.00 %	1 3	13.00 %	4	4.00 %	1	1.00 %	4.2 6	VHI
3. They help students discern their life mission.	4 4	44.00 %	3 5	35.00 %	1 6	16.00 %	4	4.00 %	1	1.00 %	4.1 7	HI
4. They organize vocation activities and reflections.	4 1	41.00 %	3 7	37.00 %	1 7	17.00 %	5	5.00 %	0	0.00 %	4.1 4	HI
5. Their example strengthens openness to religious life.	5 1	51.00 %	3 0	30.00 %	1 4	14.00 %	4	4.00 %	1	1.00 %	4.2 6	VHI
							4.23		Very High Influence			

Legend: f – frequency; p – percentage

Descriptive Equivalent (DE) : 5 – Very High Influence (VHI); 4 – High Influence (HI); 3 – Moderate Influence (MI); 2 – Slight Influence (SI); 1 – No Influence (NI)

The results presented in Table 5 indicate that the apostolic work of religious congregations in terms of vocation promotion has a very high influence on the spiritual growth of students, as perceived by the religious sisters and the students themselves, with an overall Average Weighted Mean (AWM) of 4.23, described as Very High Influence. This overall finding highlights vocation promotion as a vital dimension of apostolic work, emphasizing the role of religious sisters in guiding students toward deeper self-awareness, discernment, and openness to God's call in their lives.

Among the indicators, “Religious sisters encourage students to reflect on God’s call” obtained the highest AWM of 4.33 (Very High Influence). This result suggests that students strongly recognize the influence of religious sisters in fostering a reflective environment where vocational awareness is nurtured. Encouraging discernment allows students to reflect not only on religious life but also on their broader life mission rooted in faith and service. Studies affirm that early and consistent exposure to vocation-oriented guidance positively shapes students’ spiritual identity and sense of purpose (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2019; Groome, 2020).

Meanwhile, the indicators “They help students discern their life mission” (AWM = 4.17) and “They organize vocation activities and reflections” (AWM = 4.14) were both described as High Influence. Although slightly lower than the other indicators, these results still reflect a strong positive impact. They suggest that structured vocation activities and discernment processes are present but may benefit from further strengthening and systematization. Literature indicates that sustained vocation programs—such as retreats, mentoring, and guided reflection—are more effective when they are intentional, age-appropriate, and integrated into the overall pastoral and educational program of schools (Boyle & Dosen, 2020).

The implications of these findings are significant for the proposed training program. The consistently high to very high influence ratings affirm that vocation promotion is a strength of apostolic work in diocesan schools. However, the variation among indicators points to the need for enhanced training of religious sisters in vocation accompaniment, youth discernment processes, and the design of engaging vocation programs. Capacity-building initiatives that equip religious sisters with skills in mentoring, storytelling, and spiritual direction can further deepen students’ vocational awareness and spiritual growth. Similar findings in Catholic education research emphasize that well-formed religious educators are instrumental in sustaining a culture of vocation and faith-filled discernment among students (Mapile & Dela Cruz, 2022; Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2019).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that vocation promotion significantly contributes to students’ spiritual growth by fostering reflection, discernment, and openness to religious life and service. Strengthening this apostolic dimension through targeted and continuous training will further support the mission of diocesan schools in guiding students toward meaningful, faith-centered life choices.

Table 6: *Level of Influence of the Apostolic Work of Religious Congregations in the Spiritual Growth of Students as Perceived by the Religious Sisters and Themselves in Terms of Counseling and Guidance*

Indicators	5		4		3		2		1		AW M	DE
E. Counseling and Guidance	f	p	f	p	f	p	f	p	f	p		
1. Religious sisters offer spiritual advice during personal struggles.	5 2	52.00 %	2 9	29.00 %	1 5	15.00 %	2	2.00 %	2	2.00 %	4.2 7	VHI

2. They listen with compassion and guide spiritually.	4 6	46.00 %	3 0	30.00 %	1 9	19.00 %	2	2.00 %	3	3.00 %	4.1 4	HI
3. They help students develop a deeper relationship with God.	6 1	61.00 %	2 5	25.00 %	1 1	11.00 %	3	3.00 %	0	0.00 %	4.4 4	VHI
4. They offer comfort during spiritual and emotional challenges.	4 5	45.00 %	3 6	36.00 %	1 6	16.00 %	3	3.00 %	0	0.00 %	4.2 3	VHI
5. They are approachable and available for spiritual guidance.	4 9	49.00 %	3 4	34.00 %	1 2	12.00 %	3	3.00 %	2	2.00 %	4.2 5	VHI
								4.27		Very High Influence		

Legend: *f* – frequency; *p* – percentage

Descriptive Equivalent (DE) : 5 – Very High Influence (VHI); 4 – High Influence (HI); 3 – Moderate Influence (MI); 2 – Slight Influence (SI); 1 – No Influence (NI)

The results presented in Table 6 indicate that the apostolic work of religious congregations in terms of Counseling and Guidance has a very high influence on the spiritual growth of students, as perceived by the religious sisters and the students themselves, with an overall Average Weighted Mean (AWM) of 4.27, interpreted as Very High Influence. This overall finding underscores counseling and guidance as a crucial pastoral dimension of apostolic work, highlighting the significant role of religious sisters in accompanying students through personal, emotional, and spiritual challenges.

Among the indicators, “They help students develop a deeper relationship with God” obtained the highest AWM of 4.44 (Very High Influence). This result suggests that students strongly experience counseling encounters with religious sisters as spiritually formative, enabling them to deepen their prayer life, trust in God, and personal faith commitment. This finding aligns with literature emphasizing that faith-based counseling, when grounded in compassion and spiritual accompaniment, plays a vital role in nurturing adolescents’ spiritual resilience and religious identity (Guerra & Boyle, 2020; Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2019).

The implications of these findings are significant for the proposed training program. The consistently high to very high influence ratings affirm counseling and guidance as a strong area of apostolic work in diocesan schools. However, the results also indicate the importance of equipping religious sisters with updated skills in spiritual accompaniment, youth counseling, and referral systems, while maintaining clear ethical boundaries. Training programs that integrate pastoral theology, basic counseling techniques, and adolescent psychology can further enhance the effectiveness of this apostolic dimension. Similar studies in Catholic education highlight that well-formed pastoral caregivers are instrumental in promoting students’ holistic growth, particularly in strengthening spiritual well-being amid academic and personal pressures (Guerra & Boyle, 2020; Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2019).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that counseling and guidance significantly contribute to students’ spiritual growth by fostering trust, healing, and deeper relationship with God. Strengthening this area through targeted and continuous training will further support the

mission of diocesan schools in providing compassionate, faith-centered accompaniment that nurtures both the spiritual and emotional development of students.

Table 7: *Summary on the Level of Influence of the Apostolic Work of Religious Congregations on the Spiritual Growth of Students as Perceived by the Religious Sisters and Themselves*

Indicators	Average Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
A. Teaching and Academic Formation	4.23	Very High Influence
B. Service and Outreach Programs	4.23	Very High Influence
C. Catechesis and Religious Education	4.84	Very High Influence
D. Vocation Promotion	4.23	Very High Influence
E. Counseling and Guidance	4.27	Very High Influence
Overall Mean	4.37	Very High Influence

The summary presented in Table 7 shows that the apostolic work of religious congregations has an overall very high influence on the spiritual growth of students in the diocesan schools of Alaminos City, as perceived by both the religious sisters and the students themselves. The overall mean of 4.37, interpreted as Very High Influence, clearly indicates that apostolic initiatives are highly effective in nurturing students' spirituality across multiple dimensions. This overall result affirms the central role of religious congregations in fulfilling the mission of Catholic education, which seeks the holistic formation of learners by integrating faith, values, and academic life.

Among the five areas assessed, Catechesis and Religious Education emerged as the highest-rated indicator with an average weighted mean of 4.84, also described as Very High Influence. This finding suggests that structured religious instruction, faith integration, and catechetical practices are the most influential contributors to students' spiritual growth. It reflects the effectiveness of religious sisters in deepening students' understanding of the faith, promoting prayer and sacramental life, and making religious teachings relevant to everyday experiences. Similar studies emphasize that catechesis remains the core strength of Catholic schools, serving as the foundation of students' religious identity and spiritual maturity (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2019; Groome, 2020).

The remaining areas—Teaching and Academic Formation, Service and Outreach Programs, and Vocation Promotion—all obtained identical average weighted means of 4.23, while Counseling and Guidance slightly ranked higher with 4.27. Despite minor variations, all areas were consistently rated as Very High Influence, indicating a balanced and comprehensive impact of apostolic work. Teaching and academic formation highlight how faith-centered pedagogy and values integration strengthen spirituality within academic contexts. Service and outreach programs demonstrate how faith is translated into action through compassion and social responsibility. Vocation promotion fosters discernment and openness to God's call,

while counseling and guidance provide pastoral accompaniment that supports students during personal and spiritual challenges. These findings are consistent with research showing that holistic, multi-dimensional apostolic engagement significantly enhances students' spiritual well-being and moral development (Guerra & Boyle, 2020; Bryk et al., 2017).

Overall, the findings affirm that the apostolic work of religious congregations plays a vital and transformative role in the spiritual growth of students in diocesan schools. The strong influence across all domains underscores the importance of investing in a well-designed training program that builds on existing strengths while addressing emerging needs. Such a program will help ensure the sustainability, relevance, and deeper impact of apostolic work, thereby strengthening the mission of diocesan schools in forming spiritually grounded, values-oriented, and socially responsible students.

Table 8: *Problems Encountered in the Implementation of Apostolic Work of Religious Congregations in the Diocesan Schools in Alaminos City as Perceived by the Religious Sisters.*

Indicator	Statement	Frequencies	Rank
A. Time and Workload Management	Difficulty balancing teaching responsibilities with apostolic work	15	1
	Feeling overwhelmed by the volume of work	12	
	Limited personal time for rest and spiritual renewal	11	
	Inability to regularly interact with students outside the classroom	3	
	Lack of time for spiritual formation activities	2	
B. Training and Professional Development	Limited access to professional development in religious education	11	3
	Few formation sessions for improving apostolic work	11	
	Insufficient training in spiritual counseling and guidance	8	
	Inadequate preparation for integrating Catholic values in instruction	5	
	Lack of confidence in handling students' spiritual concerns	4	
C. Institutional Support and Collaboration	Minimal involvement of school leadership in faith-based programs	12	5
	Lack of collaboration with lay teachers or staff	7	
	Weak administrative support for apostolic initiatives	5	
	Apostolic activities not prioritized in the school curriculum	5	
	Poor communication between religious and administrative teams	3	
D. Resources and Student Engagement	Insufficient materials or facilities for apostolic work	9	2
	Students show low interest in spiritual or religious activities	9	
	Few opportunities for student involvement in service or outreach	8	
	Lack of manpower or volunteers to assist in programs	7	
	Difficulty motivating students to consider religious vocations	7	

	Experiencing physical or emotional fatigue due to workload	12	
E. Student Engagement and Participation	Influence of secular trends undermining faith-based values	10	4
	Language or cultural barriers when relating to students	8	
	Resistance from students to religious teachings or moral guidance	4	
	Feeling unappreciated or unsupported in apostolic efforts	3	

Among the identified problem areas, Time and Workload Management ranked first, indicating it as the most pressing concern. The most frequently cited issue under this category was the difficulty in balancing teaching responsibilities with apostolic work ($f = 15$), followed by feeling overwhelmed by the volume of work ($f = 12$) and limited personal time for rest and spiritual renewal ($f = 11$). These findings suggest that the increasing academic and administrative demands placed on religious sisters significantly limit their capacity to engage meaningfully in apostolic activities. This concern is consistent with studies noting that excessive workload and role overload among faith-based educators often lead to burnout, reduced pastoral presence, and diminished effectiveness in ministry (Day et al., 2016; Llego & Corpus, 2021). The lack of time for spiritual formation activities further implies a risk to the sisters' own spiritual well-being, which is essential for sustaining authentic apostolic witness.

The second-ranked problem area is Resources and Student Engagement, highlighting structural and participatory constraints. Both insufficient materials or facilities for apostolic work and low student interest in spiritual or religious activities recorded relatively high frequencies ($f = 9$ each). These findings indicate that even well-designed apostolic initiatives may fail to achieve their intended impact without adequate logistical support and active student participation. Research emphasizes that student engagement in faith-based activities is strongly influenced by relevance, resources, and opportunities for meaningful involvement, especially in increasingly secularized educational environments (Guerra & Boyle, 2020; Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2019).

Ranking third is Training and Professional Development, where limited access to professional development in religious education and few formation sessions for improving apostolic work were both frequently reported ($f = 11$). Additionally, issues such as insufficient training in spiritual counseling and guidance and lack of confidence in handling students' spiritual concerns further suggest gaps in preparation. These findings imply that while religious sisters are committed to apostolic service, they may not be adequately equipped with updated pedagogical, pastoral, and counseling skills. Similar studies affirm that continuous formation is critical for religious educators to effectively address contemporary student concerns and integrate faith meaningfully into school life (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Mapile & Dela Cruz, 2022).

The fourth-ranked category, Student Engagement and Participation, reflects challenges rooted in changing student attitudes and socio-cultural contexts. Issues such as physical or emotional fatigue due to workload ($f = 12$) and the influence of secular trends undermining faith-based values ($f = 10$) indicate that students' responsiveness to apostolic work is affected by broader societal influences. Resistance to religious teachings and feelings of being unsupported in apostolic efforts, although reported less frequently, still point to relational and motivational gaps. Literature suggests that increasing secularization among youth poses

significant challenges to religious education and requires more dialogical, youth-centered, and culturally responsive approaches (Groome, 2020; Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2019).

Finally, Institutional Support and Collaboration ranked fifth, making it the least cited but still significant concern. Problems such as minimal involvement of school leadership in faith-based programs ($f = 12$), lack of collaboration with lay teachers, and apostolic activities not being prioritized in the school curriculum indicate systemic issues. These findings suggest that apostolic work may be perceived as secondary to academic concerns, limiting its integration into the overall school program. Studies consistently emphasize that strong leadership support and collaboration between religious and lay educators are essential for sustaining the Catholic identity and apostolic mission of schools (Bryk et al., 2017; Guerra & Boyle, 2020).

The implications of these findings are critical for the proposed training program. The dominance of workload-related and formation-related challenges highlights the need for training initiatives that include time management, self-care, and spiritual renewal, alongside pedagogical and pastoral skill development. Moreover, addressing issues of student engagement and institutional support requires capacity-building not only for religious sisters but also for school leaders and lay collaborators. Overall, the findings underscore that strengthening apostolic work requires a holistic and systemic approach—one that balances workload, enhances training, fosters collaboration, and responds to the evolving spiritual needs of students. These insights provide a strong empirical basis for designing a responsive and sustainable training program that will enhance the effectiveness of apostolic work in diocesan schools.

Table 9: *Significant Relationship Between the Level of Influence of the Apostolic Work of Religious Congregations in the Diocesan Schools in Alaminos City and the Profile of the Religious Sisters*

Test of Relationship			
Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.	Decision
Age	-0.331	0.106	$0.106 > 0.05$; Do not reject H_0
Nationality	not applicable because there is only 1 category		
Length of Service in the congregation	-0.296	0.151	$.151 > 0.05$; Do not reject H_0
Highest Educational Attainment	0.271	0.19	$.190 > 0.05$; Do not reject H_0
Specialization	-0.048	0.819	$.819 > 0.05$; Do not reject H_0

Number of Dialect or Language Spoken	-0.152	0.009	.009 > 0.05; Reject Ho
School Handled	-0.36	0.077	.077 > 0.05; Do not reject Ho
Number of training or seminars attended related to apostolic work	-0.131	0.533	.533 > 0.05; Do not reject Ho

The results presented in Table 9 indicated that there is generally no significant relationship between the level of influence of the apostolic work of religious congregations on the spiritual growth of students and most of the profile variables of the religious sisters in the diocesan schools of Alaminos City. This is evidenced by the computed significance values for age, length of service, highest educational attainment, specialization, school handled, and number of trainings or seminars attended, all of which are greater than the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the decision to fail to reject the null hypothesis for these variables. Overall, the findings suggest that the effectiveness and influence of apostolic work on students' spiritual growth are not largely dependent on the demographic or professional characteristics of the religious sisters.

Specifically, age showed a negative but weak correlation ($r = -0.331$, $p = 0.106$), indicating that differences in age do not significantly affect the level of apostolic influence. This implies that both younger and older religious sisters are equally capable of contributing to students' spiritual growth. Similarly, length of service in the congregation ($r = -0.296$, $p = 0.151$) was found to be not significantly related to apostolic influence, suggesting that spiritual impact is not necessarily a function of longer experience in religious life. These findings support earlier studies which argue that personal commitment, authenticity of witness, and relational presence are more critical than age or tenure in influencing students' spiritual development (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2019; Guerra & Boyle, 2020).

In terms of highest educational attainment ($r = 0.271$, $p = 0.190$) and specialization ($r = -0.048$, $p = 0.819$), the results further indicate no significant relationship with the level of apostolic influence. This suggests that while academic qualifications and field of specialization are important for instructional competence, they do not automatically translate into greater spiritual influence. Literature in Catholic education consistently emphasizes that spiritual formation is more deeply shaped by educators' faith witness, values integration, and pastoral sensitivity rather than formal academic credentials alone (Bryk et al., 2017; Groome, 2020).

Likewise, school handled ($r = -0.360$, $p = 0.077$) and number of trainings or seminars attended related to apostolic work ($r = -0.131$, $p = 0.533$) were found to have no significant relationship with apostolic influence. These findings imply that the spiritual growth of students is consistently supported across different school levels and regardless of the frequency of formal training attended.

An exception to the general trend is the variable number of dialects or languages spoken, which showed a statistically significant relationship with the level of apostolic influence ($p = 0.009 < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Although the correlation coefficient is weak ($r = -0.152$), the significance suggests that linguistic ability plays a role in enhancing apostolic engagement. This finding implies that religious sisters who

can communicate in multiple languages or dialects may establish stronger connections with students, thereby facilitating more meaningful spiritual accompaniment. Studies support that linguistic and cultural responsiveness enhances relational ministry, student engagement, and the effectiveness of faith-based guidance, especially in diverse educational contexts (Lucas & Villegas, 2017; García & Wei, 2018).

The implications of these findings are important for the proposed training program. Since most profile variables do not significantly influence apostolic effectiveness, training initiatives should focus less on demographic differentiation and more on strengthening core apostolic competencies, such as faith integration, pastoral presence, communication skills, and relational ministry. The significant role of language proficiency highlights the need to include communication and cultural sensitivity training to further enhance the reach and impact of apostolic work. Overall, the findings affirm that apostolic influence is rooted primarily in lived witness and authentic engagement rather than personal profile characteristics, reinforcing the need for formation programs that nurture the spiritual, relational, and pastoral capacities of religious sisters.

Table 10: Significant Difference on the Level of Influence of the Apostolic Work of Religious Congregations in the Diocesan Schools in Alaminos City as Perceived by the Religious Sisters and Students

Test of Difference (Mann-Whitney U Test)						
Categories	N	Mean	SD	Test Statistic	Sig.	Decision
Religious Sisters	25	4.686	0.367	-4.679	0.000	0.000 > 0.05; reject H ₀
Students	75	4.027	0.673			

A closer examination of the results shows that the religious sisters reported a higher mean score ($M = 4.686$, $SD = 0.367$) compared to the students ($M = 4.027$, $SD = 0.673$). This suggests that religious sisters perceive the apostolic work of their congregations as having a stronger influence on students' spiritual growth than the students themselves do. The smaller standard deviation among the religious sisters further indicates greater consistency in their perceptions, while the higher variability among students suggests a wider range of experiences and interpretations regarding apostolic influence.

This difference in perception may be attributed to the distinct roles and perspectives of the two groups. Religious sisters are directly involved in planning, implementing, and sustaining apostolic initiatives; hence, they may have a deeper awareness of the intentions, efforts, and expected spiritual outcomes of these programs. Students, on the other hand, experience apostolic work primarily as recipients and may assess its influence based on personal relevance, engagement, and immediate impact. Similar perceptual gaps have been noted in previous studies, where educators often rated the effectiveness of faith-based or

values-oriented programs higher than students, who tend to evaluate such programs based on lived experience and personal resonance (Guerra & Boyle, 2020; Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2019).

The findings are consistent with research in Catholic education indicating that teachers and religious educators generally hold more favorable views of the spiritual impact of school-based faith initiatives than students, largely because of their strong identification with the school's mission and charism (Bryk et al., 2017; Groome, 2020). Moreover, students' comparatively lower mean score does not imply a weak influence, but rather suggests that while apostolic work is positively perceived, there may be gaps in engagement, communication, or contextualization that affect how students internalize its spiritual value.

Overall, the findings affirm that while apostolic work is highly influential, differences in perception between religious sisters and students must be acknowledged and addressed. Doing so through targeted training and reflective practice will help ensure that apostolic initiatives are not only well-intentioned and well-implemented, but also deeply experienced and valued by students, thereby strengthening their spiritual growth and the overall mission of diocesan schools.

TRAINING PROGRAM FOR THE RELIGIOUS SISTERS

I. Introduction

The apostolic work of religious congregations plays a vital role in nurturing the spiritual growth of students in the diocesan schools of Alaminos City, Pangasinan. Findings of the study revealed that the influence of apostolic work in areas such as teaching and academic formation, catechesis and religious education, service and outreach programs, vocation promotion, and counseling and guidance is generally very high. These results affirm the strong commitment and effectiveness of religious sisters in fulfilling their mission as educators and spiritual mentors. However, the study also identified several challenges that may affect the sustainability of these efforts, including time and workload constraints, limited access to continuous training and professional development, varying levels of student engagement, and the need for stronger institutional support and collaboration.

The results showed a significant difference between the perceptions of religious sisters and students regarding the level of influence of apostolic work, indicating a need to further align apostolic initiatives with students' lived experiences. While most profile variables of the religious sisters were not significantly related to apostolic influence, communication skills—particularly language and relational competence—emerged as an important factor in enhancing spiritual engagement. These findings suggest that sustaining effective apostolic work requires not only dedication and faith witness but also systematic formation that addresses contemporary educational, pastoral, and youth-related concerns.

In response to these findings, this training program is proposed to strengthen the capacities of religious sisters in sustaining and enhancing their apostolic mission. The program is designed to build on existing strengths, address identified gaps, and promote holistic formation that integrates spirituality, pedagogy, pastoral care, and personal well-being. Ultimately, the training program aims to support religious sisters in responding more effectively to the spiritual needs of students and in ensuring that apostolic work remains relevant, impactful, and sustainable within the diocesan school context.

II. General Objective

To enhance and sustain the effectiveness of the apostolic work of religious congregations by equipping religious sisters with strengthened spiritual, pedagogical, pastoral, and relational competencies that promote the holistic spiritual growth of students in diocesan schools in Alaminos City.

III. Specific Objectives

- To deepen the religious sisters' competencies in faith-integrated teaching and catechetical approaches.
- To strengthen skills in pastoral counseling, guidance, and spiritual accompaniment of students.
- To enhance the implementation of service, outreach, and vocation promotion programs through reflective and student-centered strategies.
- To address challenges related to time management, workload balance, and personal spiritual renewal.
- To foster collaboration, communication, and shared responsibility among religious sisters, school leaders, and lay teachers in apostolic initiatives

IV. Action Plan (In the next page)

Key findings from the Study	Strategies/ Activities	Objectives	Key performance Indicators (KPIs)	Persons involved	Time Frame	Source of Funds/ Budget
1. Very high influence of Catechesis and Religious education	Conduct a 1-day Seminar-workshop on innovative catechetical methods and faith-life integration	To deepen the religious sisters' competencies in faith-integrated teaching and catechetical approaches.	Improved lessons plans; positive feedback from students	Religious sisters, Catechists, Facilitators	1 st Quarter	School Funds, Diocesan support =P40,000
2. High Influence of Counseling and Guidance	1-day Training on pastoral counseling and youth accompaniment	To strengthen skills in pastoral counseling, guidance, and spiritual	Increased confidence in counseling documented	Religious Sisters, guidance counselors	2 nd Quarter	Diocesan training Fund = P40,000

		accompani ment of students.	guidance sessions			
3.Strong impact of service and outreach programs	2-day Workshop on service - learning and reflective practices	To strengthen the service and outreach programs of the religious sisters in order to deepen students' compassion, social responsibilit y.	Increased student participatio n in outreach activities	Religious sisters, students, communit y partners	2 nd -3 rd Quarter	Schools & Partner Organiza tion Funds = P80,000
4.Vocation promotion rated and outreach programs	1-day Retreat and mentoring training and vocation accompanimen t	To enhance the implementat ion of service, outreach, and vocation promotion programs through reflective and student- centered strategies.	Conducted vocation activities; student reflection	Religious sisters, Vocations directors	3 rd Quarter	Congreg ation funds = P40,000
5.Time and Workload management identified as top problem	1-day Seminar on time management self-care, spiritual renewal	To address challenges related to time managemen t, workload balance, and personal	Improved work -life balance plans	Religious sisters, Resource speaker	1 st Quarter	Congreg ation funds = P40,00 0

		spiritual renewal.				
6. Limited access and continuous training	1-day Establish annual formation and training calendar	To provide limited but meaningful access to resources and continuous training for the religious sisters and school heads.	Approved and implemented training plan	School heads, sisters	Annual	Diocesan & School fund =P160,000
7. Gaps in student engagement	Conduct a 2-day Training on youth-centered and participatory approaches	To increase students' engagement in school activities by providing meaningful learning experiences that encourage active participation, responsibility, and interest in their studies and school community.	Increased student engagement ratings	Religious sisters, Teachers	3 rd quarter	School funds =P40,000
8. Need for stronger collaboration	1-day Team – building and collaboration workshops	To strengthen collaboration between the religious sisters and lay teachers in order to	Improvement coordination among staff	Sisters, Administrators, Lay teachers	4 th Quarter	School budget =P40,000

		promote unity, shared mission, and effective cooperation in the formation and education of students.				
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V. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of the training program were conducted systematically to ensure that objectives are met and desired outcomes are achieved. Formative evaluation will be carried out after each training activity through participant feedback forms, reflection journals, and focus group discussions. These tools will assess the relevance, effectiveness, and applicability of the training sessions. Summative evaluation will be conducted at the end of the academic year to measure overall impact, focusing on changes in apostolic practices, student engagement, and perceived spiritual growth. School administrators and designated coordinators will review key performance indicators such as improved lesson integration, increased participation in spiritual activities, and enhanced counseling support. The results of the evaluation will be used to refine future training programs and to inform decision-making for sustained apostolic formation.

VI. Sustainability Plan

To ensure sustainability, the training program was institutionalized as part of the diocesan schools' annual formation and professional development plan. A core team composed of religious sisters, school administrators, and diocesan representatives will oversee the continuous implementation and improvement of the program. Peer mentoring and regular sharing of best practices will be encouraged to reinforce learning beyond formal training sessions. Collaboration with diocesan offices, congregations, and external partners will be strengthened to secure ongoing funding and technical support. Most importantly, the program will emphasize a culture of continuous spiritual and professional growth, enabling religious sisters to sustain their apostolic mission and remain responsive to the evolving spiritual needs of students in diocesan schools.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study on the influence of the apostolic work of religious congregations on the spiritual growth of students in the diocesan schools of Alaminos City, Pangasinan.

Based on these findings, meaningful conclusions are drawn and practical recommendations are offered, including a proposed training program, to further strengthen and sustain the apostolic mission of religious congregations in promoting the holistic spiritual formation of students.

Summary of Findings

The followings are the findings of the study-based form the data collected.

1. The findings revealed that the religious sisters serving in the diocesan schools of Alaminos City are predominantly young to middle-aged adults, with most belonging to the 20–29 age group. All respondents were Filipino, indicating a culturally homogenous group closely attuned to the local context. In terms of length of service, the majority had 1–5 years of experience, reflecting a relatively young apostolic workforce. Most sisters held a bachelor's degree, primarily in Education, while a smaller proportion had graduate-level units. The majority specialized in education, spoke three dialects or languages, and were assigned mainly to high school and elementary levels. Most had attended one to two trainings related to apostolic work, although some had attended more than five. Overall, the profile suggests a committed but developing apostolic workforce with strong educational foundations and a need for continuous formation.

2. The study found that the level of influence of apostolic work on students' spiritual growth was very high across all areas as perceived by both religious sisters and students. Among the five areas, Catechesis and Religious Education obtained the highest overall rating, indicating its central role in nurturing students' faith and spiritual understanding. Teaching and Academic Formation, Service and Outreach Programs, Vocation Promotion, and Counseling and Guidance also received very high influence ratings, highlighting the holistic nature of apostolic engagement in diocesan schools. These findings demonstrate that apostolic work is effectively integrated into academic instruction, pastoral care, and student life. The consistently high ratings affirm the strong presence and impact of religious sisters in promoting faith formation, moral values, and spiritual accompaniment, thereby contributing significantly to students' overall spiritual growth.

3. The findings revealed that the most significant problems encountered by religious sisters in implementing apostolic work relate to time and workload management, which ranked as the top concern. Difficulties in balancing teaching responsibilities with apostolic duties, limited time for spiritual renewal, and work-related fatigue were frequently reported. Other challenges included limited training and professional development, particularly in spiritual counseling and faith integration, as well as resource constraints and low student engagement in some apostolic activities. Issues related to institutional support and collaboration, such as limited involvement of school leadership and insufficient coordination with lay teachers, were also noted, though ranked lower. These challenges suggest that while apostolic work is highly valued, its effective implementation is constrained by structural, organizational, and capacity-related factors that need to be addressed for sustainability.

4. The results showed that most profile variables of the religious sisters had no significant relationship with the level of influence of apostolic work on students' spiritual growth. Variables such as age, length of service, educational attainment, specialization, school handled, and number of trainings attended did not significantly affect apostolic influence. This indicates that spiritual impact is not primarily determined by demographic or professional characteristics but by personal commitment and lived witness. However, a significant relationship was found between the number of dialects or languages spoken and apostolic

influence, suggesting that communication ability enhances pastoral connection and spiritual engagement with students. Overall, the findings imply that apostolic effectiveness transcends personal profiles and is rooted more in relational presence, authenticity, and meaningful interaction with students.

5. The study revealed a significant difference in the level of influence of apostolic work as perceived by religious sisters and students, with religious sisters rating the influence significantly higher than students. This indicates that while both groups acknowledge the positive impact of apostolic work, religious sisters tend to have a more favorable perception of its effectiveness. This difference may be attributed to the sisters' direct involvement in planning and implementing apostolic activities, as well as their strong identification with the mission of the congregation. Students, on the other hand, may evaluate influence based on personal relevance and lived experience. The finding highlights the importance of aligning apostolic intentions with student experiences and emphasizes the need for more participatory, student-centered, and dialogical approaches to enhance perceived impact.

6. Based on the findings, a comprehensive training program was proposed to sustain and enhance the implementation of apostolic work in diocesan schools. The program focuses on strengthening competencies in faith-integrated teaching, catechesis, pastoral counseling, service-learning, vocation promotion, communication skills, and time management. It also addresses identified challenges such as workload balance, limited training opportunities, and gaps in student engagement. The proposed training emphasizes continuous formation, collaboration with school leaders and lay teachers, and the well-being of religious sisters. By building on existing strengths and addressing identified needs, the training program aims to ensure the sustainability, relevance, and effectiveness of apostolic work in promoting the holistic spiritual growth of students in the diocesan schools of Alaminos City.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The religious sisters serving in the diocesan schools of Alaminos City generally possess adequate educational qualifications, relevant specializations, multilingual abilities, and varying lengths of service, indicating that they are sufficiently prepared and capable of carrying out apostolic responsibilities that support the spiritual growth of students.

2. The apostolic work of religious congregations exerts a very high level of influence on the spiritual growth of students across teaching and academic formation, service and outreach, catechesis and religious education, vocation promotion, and counseling and guidance, affirming the effectiveness of faith-centered school practices.

3. The major problems encountered in implementing apostolic work include time and workload constraints, limited training opportunities, resource limitations, student engagement challenges, and insufficient institutional support, which collectively hinder the sustained and effective delivery of apostolic initiatives in diocesan schools.

4. There is generally no significant relationship between the level of influence of apostolic work and most profile variables of the religious sisters, except for language proficiency, indicating that apostolic effectiveness is primarily rooted in faith witness and relational engagement rather than demographic or professional characteristics.

5. There is a significant difference between the perceptions of religious sisters and students regarding the level of influence of apostolic work, with religious sisters rating the influence significantly higher than students, suggesting a perceptual gap between apostolic intention and student experience.

6. A structured and responsive training program is necessary to sustain and enhance apostolic work by addressing identified challenges, strengthening pastoral, pedagogical, and

relational competencies, and aligning apostolic initiatives more closely with students' needs to ensure continued spiritual growth in diocesan schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above-mentioned findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

1. To sustain the very high influence of apostolic work, regular formation activities focusing on faith integration, reflective teaching, and pastoral presence may be institutionalized. Periodic sharing of best practices among religious sisters can further reinforce effective approaches that nurture students' spiritual growth.

2. To help manage workload-related challenges, scheduling adjustments and shared apostolic responsibilities may be explored. Integrating apostolic activities within academic tasks and providing opportunities for spiritual renewal can help maintain balance, well-being, and sustained enthusiasm among religious sisters.

3. To address gaps in formation, continuous training in catechesis, counseling, youth accompaniment, and service-learning may be strengthened. Offering modular and needs-based training sessions can enhance confidence and competence in responding to students' evolving spiritual and pastoral concerns.

4. To increase student participation, apostolic programs may be redesigned to be more experiential, relevant, and student-centered. Incorporating dialogue, reflection, and real-life applications of faith can help students connect more meaningfully with spiritual and religious activities.

5. To align perceptions, regular feedback mechanisms such as reflection sessions and student consultations may be introduced. Listening to student experiences can help refine apostolic initiatives and ensure that intended spiritual outcomes are more clearly felt and appreciated by learners.

6. To enhance sustainability, stronger collaboration among religious sisters, school leaders, and lay teachers may be encouraged. Clear integration of apostolic initiatives into school plans and shared leadership in faith-based programs can further support effective and coordinated implementation.

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