

# Paulinian Philosophy Students' Perceptions of Death, Life's Absurdity, and Despair in the Light of Albert Camus' Philosophy of the Absurd

Rico M. Olores<sup>1</sup>, Maricar M. Saavedra<sup>2</sup>, Alvin J. Sumampong<sup>3</sup>,  
Rizabeth H. Condonol<sup>4</sup>, Hazel B. Montalba<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>AB-Philosophy Student, St. Paul University Surigao  
<sup>2,3,4,5</sup>Faculty, St. Paul University Surigao

## ABSTRACT

In the realm of existential philosophy, the quest for life's meaning has perpetually intrigued and challenged human intellects across generations. Among the notable figures in this discourse was Albert Camus, whose intellectual reflections on the absurdity of existence, the inevitability of death, and the confrontation with despair continue to provoke contemplation and debate. This study aimed to investigate how Paulinian Philosophy Students perceived Camus' existential philosophy, particularly regarding themes such as the search for meaning in life through concepts like death, life's absurdity, and despair. To answer this, the researcher utilized the purposive sampling method with 51 respondents (e.g., second years, third years, and fourth years). They were purposely chosen because existential philosophy is introduced in the second year of the AB Philosophy curriculum at St. Paul University Surigao. The main tool used in gathering the data was a questionnaire made by the researcher. The gathered data were treated using frequency count and percentage descriptive statistical tools, mean and standard deviation, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient. The results showed that students understand and are open to existential themes, particularly those of Camus'. To deepen their engagement, educational strategies should include more discussions, critical analysis, and interdisciplinary approaches. Integrating Camus' ideas into the curriculum will help students better grasp existentialism, enhancing the relevance and impact of their philosophical education.

**Keywords:** Albert Camus, Death, Life's Absurdity, Despair, Existentialism, Absurdism

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of existential philosophy, the quest for life's meaning has perpetually intrigued and challenged human intellects across generations. Among the notable figures in this discourse was Albert Camus, whose intellectual reflections on the absurdity of existence, the inevitability of death, and the confrontation with despair continued to provoke contemplation and debate. In places where people studied philosophy, such as at St. Paul University Surigao, philosophy students spent a lot of time trying to understand these deep ideas. Camus' ideas served as a powerful tool that helped them explore the most important questions about

being human.

This study delved into the perception of Paulinian philosophy students regarding Camus' existential philosophy, particularly focusing on three important themes: the search for meaning while facing the inevitability of death, the confrontation with life's absurdity, and the existential dread caused by despair. By understanding how these students interpreted and engaged with Camus' ideas, this study aimed to unravel not only their philosophical understanding but also the implications of such perceptions on their personal lives, academic pursuits, and broader societal perspectives.

The significance of this study lay in its potential to elucidate the relevance and resonance of existential philosophy in contemporary intellectual discourse and lived experiences. As students navigated the complexities of modern existence, grappling with issues ranging from societal confusion to existential crisis, Camus' philosophy offered a compelling framework through which to confront the inherent uncertainties and vagueness of life. Furthermore, by closely examining the perspectives of students studying philosophy at St. Paul University, this research aimed to demonstrate how their education and the values of their school influenced the way they perceived life and contemplated significant questions.

This study employed quantitative research methods, utilizing researcher-made survey questionnaires and statistical analysis, to examine the perceptions of Camus' philosophy among Paulinian Philosophy students. By gathering data directly from the students through structured questionnaires, the researcher systematically analyzed their views on existential ideas within the context of their philosophical education. Additionally, by focusing on St. Paul University Surigao as the study environment, this research aimed to contribute quantitative insights into how educational institutions influence individuals' philosophical beliefs and outlooks. This quantitative approach facilitated a comprehensive examination of the relationship between educational context and philosophical perspectives.

This study focused on understanding what students studying philosophy at St. Paul University Surigao thought about Camus' ideas on life, death, and despair. The researcher also wanted to know how these ideas related to what they were learning in their philosophy classes. By exploring these themes, the study aimed to learn more about how philosophical ideas affected the way these students viewed the world, their own lives, and society as a whole.

### **1.1 Review of Related Literature**

This review discusses existentialist philosophy, particularly focusing on Albert Camus' exploration of life's inherent absurdity and the human pursuit of meaning in an indifferent world. Camus, through *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger*, examines how individuals might find meaning despite life's lack of inherent purpose. His character, Meursault, embodies existential apathy, illustrating the philosophy that one must confront absurdity without hope for a higher purpose (Sus, 2023; Pölzler, 2018). Existentialism, by emphasizing individual agency and personal responsibility, provides a framework for confronting life's meaninglessness and embracing authenticity over resignation (Camus, 2012).

In education, existentialism encourages personal growth by focusing on individual self-discovery and authenticity, emphasizing that students must explore personal experiences, emotions, and values. Existentialist figures such as Jean-Paul Sartre argue that true education should guide individuals to confront questions of meaning, freedom, and ethical responsibility (Singh, 2020; Ricablanca et al., 2019). This philosophy underscores the importance of personal autonomy in learning, suggesting that education should foster resilience in facing life's complexities, aligning with the existential emphasis on self-awareness and personal responsibility (Gotak, 2011).

Viktor Frankl adds to this existential discourse, asserting that meaning is crucial to enduring life's hardshi-

ips. Unlike Camus, who emphasizes absurdity, Frankl argues that suffering gains significance when individuals actively create meaning or appreciate beauty and love (Frankl, 2006). This perspective suggests that personal resilience and happiness stem from confronting life's challenges with purpose, whether through active achievement or passive enjoyment (Frank et al., 2015b). Together, Camus and Frankl's ideas highlight how embracing life's challenges enables individuals to find purpose, whether by confronting absurdity or by discovering meaning in personal experiences.

### 1.2 Conceptual Framework of the Study

The study's conceptual framework illustrated how various factors influenced Paulinian philosophy students' familiarity with Albert Camus' existential philosophy, focusing on themes of finding meaning in life through death, life's absurdity, and despair. Central to the framework was the Independent Variable (IV) – students' familiarity with Camus' philosophy – which influenced their perceptions of death, life's absurdity, and despair (the Dependent Variables, or DVs). These perceptions were shaped by students' understanding of existential themes and measured through surveys and interviews. Moderating variables, specifically age and academic level, were also considered, as they might affect students' maturity, life experience, and critical thinking skills, impacting their grasp of Camus' ideas. The study's insights had broader implications, suggesting that exposure to existential philosophy could shape students' ethical views and attitudes toward sensitive issues like mental health, despair, and life's meaning. Consequently, these findings could inform educational strategies at St. Paul University Surigao, guiding curriculum development to foster critical thinking and ethical reasoning in philosophical education.

### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to investigate how Paulinian philosophy students perceived Albert Camus' existential philosophy, particularly regarding themes such as the search for meaning in life through concepts like death, life's absurdity, and despair. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
  - 1.1. age; and
  - 1.2. academic level?
2. What is the respondents' level of perception in terms of their familiarity with Camus' philosophy of the absurd?
3. In the light of Albert Camus' Philosophy, what is the respondents' level of perception in terms of:
  - 2.1. death;
  - 2.2. life's absurdity; and
  - 2.3. despair?
4. Do the respondents' levels of perception on their familiarity with Camus' philosophy of the absurd significantly differ when they are grouped according to their profiles?
5. Do the respondents' levels of perception on death, life's absurdity, and despair significantly differ when they are grouped according to their profiles?
6. Is there a significant correlation between the respondents' level of perception on death, life's absurdity, and despair and their level of familiarity on Camus' philosophy of the absurd?
7. Based on the results of analysis, what implications can be offered?

## II. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative-descriptive approach using a researcher-made survey to assess the perceptions of Paulinian philosophy students at St. Paul University Surigao on Albert Camus' existential

philosophy, particularly regarding themes of death, life’s absurdity, and despair. Purposive sampling was employed, targeting students who had exposure to philosophical discourse on existentialism, with a sample of 51 respondents representing a diverse range of academic levels. The survey questionnaire consisted of demographic items and a section with Likert-scale questions tailored to capture students’ familiarity and engagement with Camus’ ideas. Validation of the instrument involved expert review to ensure alignment with study objectives. Data analysis utilized descriptive and inferential statistics, including means, standard deviations, ANOVA, and Pearson’s correlation, to identify general perceptions and examine differences across age and academic levels. The results indicated significant differences in familiarity with Camus’ philosophy across demographic groups, suggesting that academic progression and maturity influenced philosophical engagement.

The findings revealed that while familiarity with Camus’ philosophy varied across groups, there was no significant correlation between familiarity and perceptions of existential themes, suggesting that academic exposure did not necessarily deepen students’ philosophical reflections on these topics. Ethical considerations were paramount; respondents were fully informed about the study’s purpose, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was rigorously maintained. The study aimed to contribute to a broader understanding of how existential themes resonated with students, respecting their autonomy and ensuring sensitivity in survey design. Ultimately, this research provided insights into how philosophy students engaged with existential ideas, offering a foundation for further exploration of existential philosophy’s relevance in academic and personal contexts.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presented, analyzed, and interpreted the gathered data. The presentation followed the sequence of problems posed in Chapter 1.

**Table 1 Age Distribution of the Respondents**

Profile	f (n=51)	%
<b>Age</b>		
19-20 years old	15	29.41
21-22 years old	23	45.10
23-24 years old	8	15.69
25-26 years old	5	9.80

In the analysis of Table 1 from the study, which presented the demographics of the respondent group consisting of 51 philosophy students, the age and academic year distribution offered insightful data. The majority of respondents were between 21 and 22 years old, accounting for (15 or 45.10%) of the sample, followed by those aged 19-20 years, which made up (15 or 29.41%). Fewer respondents fell into the 23-24 and 25-26 age brackets, representing (8 or 15.69%) and (5 or 9.80%), respectively. This distribution suggested that the study predominantly involved younger students who were likely in the earlier stages of their academic careers.

**Table 2. Academic Level Distribution of the Respondents**

Profile	f (n=51)	%
<b>Academic Level</b>		
2nd Year	21	41.18

3rd Year	17	33.33
4th Year	13	25.49

For Table 2, regarding academic levels, the largest group consisted of second-year students, making up (21 or 41.18%) of the sample, with third years at (17 or 33.33%) and fourth years at (13 or 25.49%).

This demographic profile was crucial as age and academic level were often correlated with varying degrees of philosophical and existential maturity, which could influence perceptions of complex philosophical themes such as those posited by Camus (Schleier, 2016). Studies had shown that with age and educational progression, students might develop deeper cognitive and reflective abilities, impacting their understanding and acceptance of philosophical concepts (Johnson et al., 2010). The presence of younger and predominantly lower-level undergraduates might have skewed understanding or engagement with the nuanced existential themes of absurdity, despair, and death, as proposed by Camus. Younger students may not have fully formed their philosophical beliefs, potentially reflecting less confrontation with or contemplation of existential despair compared to older students, which could have influenced their responses to survey questions related to Camus’ philosophy.

Furthermore, the implications of having a larger number of younger students and fewer respondents in the upper academic levels might have also affected the generalizability of the study’s findings across different educational stages. The representation of each academic year was crucial, as senior students might have had more exposure to various philosophical concepts and were more likely to engage deeply with existential themes, potentially leading to different perceptions and interpretations of life’s absurdity and the search for meaning in the face of death. These factors were important to consider when analyzing how well respondents comprehended and resonated with the philosophical inquiries presented in the study, as well as when evaluating the impact of educational experiences on their understanding of existential philosophy.

In terms of research on student perceptions of philosophical themes, it was important to recognize the developmental aspects of philosophical education. As students progressed in their studies, exposure to diverse philosophical thoughts including existentialism might have influenced their critical thinking and personal growth, potentially enriching their understanding and perspectives on themes such as those presented by Camus (Taylor, 2015). Therefore, the academic level and age of students were significant moderators that could have impacted the outcomes of the study, emphasizing the need for a nuanced interpretation of how these demographics influenced the perceptions of Camus’ philosophy among philosophy students.

**Table 3. Respondents’ Perception of Death in the Light of Albert Camus’ Philosophy of the Absurd**

Indicators	Mean	SD	VR	I
<b>Death</b>				
1. I believe that in the face of the inevitability of death, I am challenged to confront life with a renewed sense of urgency and authenticity.	3.65	1.21	A	S
2. I believe that death, as the ultimate certainty of human existence, compels me to embrace the absurdity of life and find meaning in the midst of its uncertainty.	4.14	1.00	A	S

3. I believe that by accepting the absurdity of our mortality, I liberate myself from the constraints of conventional values and embark on a quest for personal freedom and authenticity.	3.96	1.09	A	S
4. I believe that the awareness of my mortality serves as a catalyst for living passionately and fully, rather than succumbing to the despair of existential nihilism.	4.14	1.13	A	S
5. I believe that in the shadow of death, I am prompted to create my own meaning and purpose, forging connections with others and engaging in acts of rebellion against the absurdity of existence.	4.00	1.15	A	S
6. I believe that death confronts me with the fundamental question of whether life is worth living, compelling me to confront my deepest fears and desires in the search for meaning.	4.16	0.97	A	S
7. I believe that by embracing the inevitability of death, I affirm my capacity to find meaning and fulfillment in the face of life’s inherent absurdity and uncertainty.	4.04	1.11	A	S
8. I believe that through the recognition of my mortality, I am spurred to live authentically and passionately, confronting the absurdity of existence with courage and defiance.	4.08	1.11	A	S
Average:	4.02	0.94	A	S

**Legend:**

Scale	Range	Verbal Response	Interpretation
5	4.20-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very Strong Perception
4	3.40-4.19	Agree	Strong Perception
3	2.60-3.39	Neutral	Uncertain
2	1.80-2.59	Disagree	Weak Perception
1	1.00-1.79	Strongly Disagree	Very Weak Perception

It was observed in table 3 that the indicator *I believe that death confronts me with the fundamental question of whether life is worth living, compelling me to confront my deepest fears and desires in the search for meaning*, got the highest mean ( $M=4.16$ ,  $SD=0.97$ ), which can be described as *Agree* and is interpreted as a *Strong Perception*. This suggested that majority of respondents believed the idea of embracing life in all its absurdity, advocating for a philosophy of revolt against meaninglessness and that humans struggle for meaning in an indifferent universe. (Francev & Maciej, 2022). It also supported Sus’ (2023) statement that understanding Camus’ existentialism provided a foundational framework for analyzing his perspective on finding meaning in life despite its inherent absurdity.

Further analysis of the data revealed a significant alignment with Camus’ notion of the Absurd Hero, who acknowledges the absurdity of existence yet continues to search for meaning and purpose. This aligns with Camus’ metaphor of Sisyphus, condemned to eternally push a boulder up a hill only to watch it roll back down, symbolizing the relentless human pursuit of significance in a meaningless world. The respondents’ agreement with this perspective indicates an acceptance of life’s paradoxes and a commitment to creating personal meaning in the face of absurdity (Camus, 2012).

The indicator also correlates with respondents’ expressions of confronting their existential fears, highlighting a psychological engagement with the concepts of death and the Absurd. This engagement is

essential in understanding the human condition as posited by Camus, where the recognition of life’s inherent absurdity leads not to despair but to a defiant affirmation of existence and personal freedom. The high mean score reflects a collective inclination towards embracing Camus’ philosophy, suggesting a significant appreciation of the balance between acknowledging life’s lack of inherent meaning and the personal resolve to find or create one’s own meaning.

On the other hand, the indicator *I believe that in the face of the inevitability of death, I am challenged to confront life with a renewed senses of urgency and authenticity*, got the lowest mean (M=3.65, SD=1.21), which can be described as *Agree* and is interpreted as a *Strong Perception*. It showed that least of respondents believed that confronting the finite nature of their existence and live in accordance with their own values and possibilities (Heidegger, 1927). This also suggested that that the respondents largely view death as a compelling force for existential contemplation and personal authenticity (Camus, 1942). This perception aligns with Camus’s existential philosophy where the inevitability of death enhances the meaning of life’s moments and compels individuals to live with authenticity. This is further corroborated by scores indicating that death prompts a renewal of personal freedom and a quest to live authentically, resonating with existentialist views on confronting death as a pathway to genuine self-discovery and liberation from societal constraints (Yalom, 1980).

While the indicator received the lowest mean score among the indicators, it still reflected a strong perception. This suggests that Paulinian philosophy students appreciate the existential imperative to live authentically and urgently in the face of mortality. The challenge, as indicated by the higher standard deviation, lies in consistently applying this existential insight to their daily lives. This complexity mirrors the broader human struggle to balance philosophical understanding with practical living, further emphasizing the enduring relevance of Camus’ and Heidegger’s existential philosophies.

On the average, *the Respondents’ Perception of Death in the Light of Albert Camus’ Philosophy of the Absurd* (M=4.02, SD=0.94), which can be described as *Agree* and is interpreted as a *Strong Perception*. The high mean score indicates that Paulinian philosophy students showed a strong perception in terms of Death. This means that the majority of respondents exhibited agreement with Camus’ philosophical perspectives on death, which is consistent with existential themes of confronting mortality and finding meaning in the face of the absurd.

**Table 4. Respondents’ Perception of Life’s Absurdity in the Light of Albert Camus’ Philosophy of the Absurd**

Indicators	Mean	SD	VR	I
<b>Life’s Absurdity</b>				
1. I believe that life's absurdity lies in its inherent lack of meaning, yet within this absurdity, I find the freedom to create my own purpose.	3.53	0.99	A	S
2. I believe that in embracing life's absurdity, I reject the false promises of meaning imposed by society and instead embrace the unpredictable and chaotic nature of existence.	3.76	1.05	A	S
3. I believe that the absurdity of life challenges me to confront the paradoxical reality of my existence, where meaning is both elusive and essential.	3.67	0.95	A	S

4. I believe that by acknowledging life's absurdity, I liberate myself from the shackles of conventional morality and societal norms, paving my way for true individuality and authenticity.	3.88	1.07	A	S
5. I believe that life's absurdity invites me to laugh in the face of its contradictions and uncertainties, finding solace in the absurdity of my own existence.	3.92	1.11	A	S
6. I believe that in the absurdity of life, I discover the absurdity of my own desires and aspirations, prompting me to reevaluate what truly matters.	3.63	1.17	A	S
7. I believe that the absurdity of life compels me to live with a heightened sense of awareness and appreciation for the fleeting moments of joy and meaning amidst the chaos.	4.06	1.07	A	S
8. I believe that through embracing life's absurdity, I embark on a journey of self-discovery and rebellion against the meaningless routines and conventions that threaten to dull my existence.	3.90	1.08	A	S
Average:	3.79	0.89	A	S

**Legend:**

Scale	Range	Verbal Response	Interpretation
5	4.20-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very Strong Perception
4	3.40-4.19	Agree	Strong Perception
3	2.60-3.39	Neutral	Uncertain
2	1.80-2.59	Disagree	Weak Perception
1	1.00-1.79	Strongly Disagree	Very Weak Perception

In was observed in table 4 that the indicator *I believe that the absurdity of life compels me to live with a heightened sense of awareness and appreciation for the fleeting moments of joy and meaning amidst the chaos*, got the highest mean ( $M=4.06$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ), which can be described as *Agree* and is interpreted as a *Strong Perception*. The data suggested an agreement with majority of respondents on Camus' statement that the solution lies in living without evasion and with integrity, in "revolt" and defiance, sustaining the inherent tension of human existence. Since "the most obvious absurdity" is death, Camus urges us to "die unreconciled and not of one's own free will". In short, he advocates for a life devoid of solace, but instead one marked by clarity and a keen awareness of and defiance against its mortality and constraints. Camus responded to his inquiry regarding suicide which involves maintaining full awareness, rejecting false remedies like religion, refusing to surrender, and persisting with vigor and passion. These are Camus' solutions. This is how a life lacking definitive meaning can be imbued with value. As stated in *Nuptials*, the joys of life are intertwined with a profound recognition of these boundaries. Saying no to any hope of solving the problem also means saying no to despair. Actually, it is possible to feel happy within these limits and even go beyond them. "Happiness and the absurd are two sons of the same earth. They are inseparable". Realizing the absurd doesn't always make us happy. Instead, it means understanding human weakness, knowing our limits, and recognizing our natural desire to exceed them. These are signs of being truly alive. (Camus, 1942). The respondents' high level of agreement with the idea that the absurdity of life compels them to live with a heightened sense of awareness and appreciation for fleeting moments emphasized their embrace of an existential mindset. This mindset, characterized by clarity, defiance, and appreciation, reflects a sophisticated understanding of the human condition and the potential for personal



growth through philosophical inquiry.

On the other hand, the indicator *I believe that life’s absurdity lies in its inherent lack of meaning, yet within this absurdity, I find the freedom to create my own purpose*, got the lowest mean (M=3.53, SD=0.99), which can be described as *Agree* and is interpreted as a *Strong Perception*. This suggested minority of respondents’ agreement with Camus that life was absurd and his call for individuals to embrace the absurdity of existence and create their own meaning and value (Hendricks, 2018). These perceptions also reflected the existentialist belief that acknowledging life’s lack of inherent meaning can lead to a liberated existence where individuals define their own values and meanings (Nietzsche, 1883). The data from this indicator revealed that while Paulinian philosophy students agree with the existential idea that life’s absurdity provides the freedom to create their own purpose, there is a significant variation in how strongly this belief is held. The recognition of this existential freedom aligns with both Camus’ and Nietzsche’s philosophies, emphasizing the potential for personal empowerment and self-created meaning. This finding emphasized the importance of existential education in fostering a mindset of resilience, autonomy, and philosophical inquiry, enabling students to navigate life’s challenges with a sense of purpose and integrity. On the average, *the Respondents’ Perception of Life’s Absurdity in the Light of Albert Camus’ Philosophy of the Absurd* (M=3.79, SD=0.89) can be described as *Agree* and is interpreted as *Strong Perception*. This means that the majority of respondents exhibited agreement with Camus’ philosophical perspectives on the existential significance of embracing life’s absurdity as a pathway to personal empowerment and self-realization.

**Table 5. Respondents’ Perception of Despair in the Light of Albert Camus’ Philosophy of the Absurd**

Indicators	Mean	SD	VR	I
<b>Despair</b>				
1. I believe that in the depths of despair, I confront the void of existence and am challenged to create my own meaning in defiance of its emptiness.	3.53	1.14	A	S
2. I believe that despair serves as a gateway to the realization of life’s absurdity, prompting me to seek meaning in the face of its apparent futility.	3.76	1.16	A	S
3. I believe that through embracing despair, I awaken to the inherent absurdity of life and the urgency of forging my own path towards meaning and fulfillment.	3.86	1.06	A	S
4. I believe that despair, rather than being a source of hopelessness, becomes a catalyst for my existential rebellion and the pursuit of authentic existence.	3.90	1.06	A	S
5. I believe that in the grip of despair, I am confronted with the existential question of whether life is worth living, compelling me to search for meaning amidst the darkness.	3.98	1.03	A	S
6. I believe that despair strips away the illusions of certainty and purpose, leaving me with the raw truth of my existence and the imperative to find meaning in spite of it.	3.80	1.06	A	S

7. I believe that through confronting despair, I cultivate a deeper understanding of myself and my place in the universe, enabling me to transcend the limitations of my condition.	3.86	1.08	A	S
8. I believe that despair, when embraced with courage and honesty, becomes a transformative force that propels me towards a more authentic and meaningful way of living.	3.75	1.15	A	S
Average:	3.81	0.95	A	S

**Legend:**

Scale	Range	Verbal Response	Interpretation
5	4.20-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very Strong Perception
4	3.40-4.19	Agree	Strong Perception
3	2.60-3.39	Neutral	Uncertain
2	1.80-2.59	Disagree	Weak Perception
1	1.00-1.79	Strongly Disagree	Very Weak Perception

In was observed in table 5 that the indicator *I believe that in the grip of despair, I am confronted with the existential question of whether life is worth living, compelling me to search for meaning amidst the darkness*, got the highest mean (M=3.98, SD=1.03), which can be described as *Agree* and is interpreted as a *Strong Perception*. This suggested a resonance with majority of respondents on Camus’ statement that “there is only one really serious philosophical question,” Camus said, “and that is suicide. Deciding whether or not life is worth living is to answer the fundamental question in philosophy” and that we could live “with the certainty of a crushing fate, without the resignation that ought to accompany it” (Camus, 2012). The data also suggested that the respondents were in agreement with Camus’ idea of the absurd, which highlighted the conflict between our “desire for meaning and the universe’s silence.” He suggested that accepting “life’s absurdity could lead to a more genuine and free existence (Camus, 2012).”

The highest mean also suggested that majority of respondents supported Rossi’s (1958) statements that ‘the Absurd’ had served as a solution to despair and nihilism because it had placed a heavy focus on the need for human concern for civilizing the world. Because of this, the characters who had taken on this new deadly obligation were typically referred to as rebels in their stories. The new enthusiasm had suggested that man had been sent back to the center of a metaphysical tightrope above an exceptionally natural death and had acted dangerously in his revolt both from a cowardly suicide and an equally cowardly embrace of faith. The metaphysical rope walker had behaved as if his activities counted in the face of death, even if he had known he would die. He had understood that he would ultimately collapse, yet he hadn’t rushed to either the extremes of hope or suicide. His life and the lives of everyone else had been insignificant. Death had been a predictable conclusion. To take advantage of his perilous position and in stark contrast to death, he had transformed his behaviors, dispersing delight and a feeling of absurd duty. However, he had mustered new bravery knowing that he could only rely on himself; he could now cast aside religious ideas that had held that man was a slave to a god or deity. The only one left to blame for man’s plight had been himself. “God’s will” had been no longer a legitimate explanation for failure. Because of his or her power, a man could succeed or fail. Camus had urged us to take on the tasks he had all too often delegated to the divine.

On the other hand, the indicator *I believe that in the depths of despair, I confront the void of existence and am challenged to create my own meaning in defiance of its emptiness*, got the lowest mean (M=3.53, SD=1.14), which can be described as *Agree* and is interpreted as a *Strong Perception*. The data suggested

minority of respondents’ views are in resonance with Kierkegaard’s invitation to individuals to confront the inherent contradictions of existence and embrace the irrationality of life as an essential aspect of human freedom and self-realization. This also supported his view that existential despair is not just a state of hopelessness but as a catalyst for personal growth and existential rebellion, as proposed by existential philosophers who argue that through despair, one can achieve a deeper understanding of one’s place in the universe (Kierkegaard, 1843).

The lower mean score, coupled with the relatively higher standard deviation, indicates a more varied response among respondents to this particular aspect of existential philosophy. While some students agree with the notion that despair can lead to the creation of personal meaning, others may find this concept challenging to fully embrace or apply in their own lives. This variability suggests differing levels of comfort with and acceptance of the idea that confronting existential despair can be a transformative and liberating experience.

On the average, *the Respondents’ Perception of Despair in the Light of Albert Camus’ Philosophy of the Absurd* (M=3.81, SD=0.95) can be described as *Agree* and is interpreted as *Strong Perception*. The high mean score indicates that the respondents generally resonate with Camus’ philosophy concerning despair.

**Table 6. Respondents’ Perception in terms of their familiarity with Albert Camus’ Philosophy of the Absurd**

Indicators	Mean	SD	VR	I
Familiarity with Albert Camus’ Absurdism				
1. I am familiar with the philosophy of Absurdism developed by Camus.	3.00	0.00	N	U
2. I have read works by Camus, such as “The Stranger” or “The Myth of Sisyphus”.	3.00	0.00	N	U
3. I often encounter Absurdist themes or ideas in literature, films, or other art forms.	3.65	0.48	A	H
4. I have a clear understanding of Camus’ notion regarding the absurdity of life.	3.00	0.00	N	U
5. I can explain how Camus defines the concept of the absurdity of life.	3.00	0.00	N	U
6. I have encountered challenges in comprehending Camus’ existential philosophy, particularly his notion regarding the absurdity of life.	3.00	0.00	N	U
7. I believe that studying Camus’ works has influenced my perspective on life and existence.	3.00	0.00	N	U
8. I believe that the resources provided (books, articles, lectures, discussions, etc.) have been effective in helping me understand Camus’ existential philosophy.	3.00	0.00	N	U
Average:	3.08	0.06	N	U

**Legend:**

Scale	Range	Verbal Response	Interpretation
5	4.20-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High Familiarity

4	3.40-4.19	Agree	High Familiarity
3	2.60-3.39	Neutral	Uncertain
2	1.80-2.59	Disagree	Low Familiarity
1	1.00-1.79	Strongly Disagree	Very Low Familiarity

In was observed in table 6 that the indicator *I often encounter Absurdist themes or ideas in literature, films, or other art forms*, got the highest mean ( $M=3.65$ ,  $SD=0.48$ ), which can be described as *Agree* and is interpreted as a *High Familiarity*. The elevated mean score indicates an agreement among the majority of respondents regarding the prevalence of Absurdist themes in artistic works, suggesting a high level of familiarity and recognition of these existential themes. This is supported by Ricablanca et. al (2019), wherein Sarte’s philosophical texts have been extrapolated to discussions on learning, curriculum design, and the ethical dimensions of education. Existentialism’s wide-reaching influence spanned diverse cultures, resulting in varied interpretations, possibly stemming from its complex and multifaceted nature. The moderate familiarity with Camus’ absurdist philosophy as indicated in the study could suggest a need for philosophical education that not only covers the theoretical aspects of such philosophies but also encourages students to explore these ideas through personal and societal lenses.

However, the rest of the indicators (1) *I am familiar with the philosophy of Absurdism developed by Camus*, (2) *I have read works by Camus, such as “The Stranger” or “The Myth of Sisyphus”*, (4) *I have a clear understanding of Camus’ notion regarding the absurdity of life*, (5) *I can explain how Camus defines the concept of the absurdity of life*, (6) *I have encountered challenges in comprehending Camus’ existential philosophy, particularly his notion regarding the absurdity of life*, (7) *I believe that studying Camus’ works has influenced my perspective on life and existence*, (8) *I believe that the resources provided (books, articles, lectures, discussions, etc.) have been effective in helping me understand Camus’ existential philosophy*, got the same means ( $M=3.00$ ,  $SD=0.00$ ), which can be described as *Neutral* and is interpreted as *Uncertain*. The data found out that majority of respondents showed moderate familiarity with Camus’ absurdist philosophy. This indicated a need for philosophical education that not only covers the theoretical aspects of such philosophies but also encourages students to explore these ideas through personal and societal lenses. This could help in deepening students’ understanding and making the learning experience more relevant and transformative (Singer, 2015).

The neutrality of these scores could be indicative of the educational context in which these students are learning. While they are exposed to existential themes and perhaps discuss them in academic settings, there might not be enough depth in their curriculum or instructional methods that facilitate a deeper understanding or personal reflection on these themes (Kremer, 2017). This is supported by the responses to statements regarding the effectiveness of the resources provided and the impact of studying Camus’ works on their personal perspectives, both scoring neutrally.

The implications of these findings could be significant for educational strategies within St. Paul University Surigao’s philosophy department. If students are to truly grasp and critically engage with complex philosophical ideas like those of Camus, educators might need to consider integrating more comprehensive resources, interactive learning methods, or cross-disciplinary approaches that help students connect philosophical concepts to personal and contemporary issues (Barnett, 2011).

On average, the *Respondents’ level of perception in terms of their familiarity with Albert Camus’ Philosophy of the Absurd* ( $M=3.08$ ,  $SD=0.06$ ) can be described as *Neutral* and is interpreted as *Uncertain*. The data showed that the respondents neither strongly agree nor strongly disagree with statements about their understanding of Camus’ ideas, indicating moderate awareness or a lack of strong opinion. The low

standard deviation (SD=0.06) showed little variation in responses, suggesting consistent uncertainty and possibly general unfamiliarity with Camus’ philosophy. Further analysis could explore factors like education and interest in philosophy to understand this neutrality better.

The respondents may have had limited exposure to Camus’ works and the philosophy of Absurdism, resulting in general uncertainty about their familiarity and understanding. This is supported by the identical means and zero standard deviation, indicating a homogenous perception across the sample.

The way Camus’ philosophy is taught may not have been engaging or in-depth enough to move students from a state of neutrality to a more defined understanding. Passive teaching methods or a lack of interactive discussions might contribute to this consistent uncertainty (Alzahrani, 2018).

The resources provided, such as books, articles, lectures, and discussions, might not have been sufficient or effective in facilitating a deeper understanding of Camus’ existential philosophy. If the materials were not comprehensive or accessible, students would likely struggle to grasp complex philosophical ideas (Malik and Akhter, 2015).

Interest levels among students in existential philosophy might be low, leading to a lack of motivation to engage deeply with Camus’ works (Koirala, 2011). This resulted in neutral responses as students neither strongly agree nor disagree with statements about their understanding.

Camus’ ideas on Absurdism are complex and can be challenging to comprehend fully without significant effort and guidance. The uniform uncertainty might reflect the inherent difficulty of the material, which requires more rigorous instructional support to be understood clearly.

**Table 7. Respondents Profiles and the level of perception of their familiarity with Camus’ Philosophy of the Absurd**

Profile	Dependent	F	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Age	Familiarity	51.89	0.000	Reject H <sub>0</sub>	Significant
Academic Level		16.08	0.000	Reject H <sub>0</sub>	Significant

As shown in Table 7, at 0.05 level of significance, it is hypothesized that there is a significant difference between the respondents *Age* and *their familiarity with Albert Camus Philosophy of the Absurd* (p-value=0.000). This means that there are significant differences in familiarity with Camus’ philosophy among different age groups.

Similarly, at 0.05 level of significance, it is hypothesized that there is a significant difference between the respondents *Academic Level* and *their familiarity with Albert Camus Philosophy of the Absurd* (p-value=0.000). This means that these differences are statistically significant, suggesting that respondents’ academic level influences their level of familiarity with Camus’ Philosophy of the Absurd.

These findings suggested that both age and academic progression significantly impact students’ familiarity with Camus’ philosophy. It’s reasonable to infer that as students age and progress through their academic careers, they gain more exposure to, and thus a deeper understanding of, existential philosophies like that of Camus. This is consistent with educational theories that suggest cognitive and intellectual development progresses with age and education, enabling students to grasp more complex and abstract concepts over time (Piaget, 1972).

The significant differences by age could reflect a maturity aspect, where older students might have had more life experiences that resonate with existential themes, potentially making them more receptive to or interested in exploring such philosophies. On the academic level, the progression likely provides more

opportunities to encounter and study existentialist texts and ideas, not only in philosophy classes but also in other humanities courses that integrate interdisciplinary approaches, thereby enhancing their understanding and appreciation of such material (Vygotsky, 1978).

These results highlight the importance of considering demographic factors like age and academic level when designing curriculum and pedagogical strategies. Educators might need to tailor philosophical education to better meet the developmental stages and intellectual readiness of students at different academic levels or ages. This could involve introducing foundational concepts of existentialism at earlier stages but gradually increasing the depth and complexity of materials as students advance, ensuring that they are both challenged and intellectually engaged (Bloom, 1956).

**Table 8. Respondents’ Profiles and their level of perception on Death, Life’s Absurdity, and Despair**

Profile	Dependent	F	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Age	Death	0.70	0.555	Do not reject $H_0$	Not Significant
	Life’s Absurdity	0.59	0.626	Do not reject $H_0$	Not Significant
	Despair	0.25	0.858	Do not reject $H_0$	Not Significant
Academic Level	Death	0.95	0.393	Do not reject $H_0$	Not Significant
	Life’s Absurdity	1.01	0.373	Do not reject $H_0$	Not Significant
	Despair	1.55	0.223	Do not reject $H_0$	Not Significant

As shown in Table 7, at 0.05 level of significance, it is hypothesized that there are no significant differences between the respondents’ *perception on Death* (p-value=0.555), *Life’s Absurdity* (p-value=0.626), and *Despair* (p-value=0.858) when grouped according to their age. The obtained p-values are greater than 0.05 significance level. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected, indicating that age does not have a statistically significant impact on respondents’ level of perception regarding these existential themes.

These findings indicated that respondents’ perceptions of Death, Life’s Absurdity, and Despair are relatively consistent across different age groups among the respondents. This consistency suggests that age may not be a determining factor in how individuals understand and internalize these existential concepts (Langle, 2001). This is further supported by Yalom (2020) that existential themes such as death, freedom, isolation, and meaning, arguing that these concerns are universal and central to human existence, transcending age and cultural boundaries. Yalom’s perspective can support the idea that perceptions of death, life’s absurdity, and despair are fundamental human experiences not significantly influenced by age. The consistent perception of these themes across age groups highlights their universal relevance and significance throughout different stages of life.

The absence of significant age-based differences highlights the enduring resonance of existential themes across generations, suggesting that questions about life’s meaning, death’s inevitability, and the absurdity of existence are fundamental to the human experience. This implies that factors other than age, such as

personal experiences, educational background, and cultural influences, may more significantly shape individuals' perceptions of existential concepts. This will be supported with logotherapy approach suggesting that existential concerns and the quest for meaning are pervasive across all stages of life (Frankl, 1984). This supports the notion that age does not significantly alter one's engagement with existential questions.

On the other hand, at 0.05 level of significance, it is hypothesized that there are no significant differences between the respondents' *level of perception on Death* (p-value=0.393), *Life's Absurdity* (p-value=0.373), and *Despair* (p-value=0.223) when grouped according to their academic level. The obtained p-values are greater than 0.05 significance level. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected, indicating that academic level does not have a statistically significant impact on respondents' level of perception regarding these existential themes.

The data showed that respondents' understanding of Death, Life's Absurdity, and Despair is consistent across different academic levels. This implies that academic exposure does not significantly influence perceptions of these existential themes, which may be inherently understood similarly regardless of academic experience. Frankl (1984) highlighted the universality of the search for meaning, suggesting that existential concerns are pervasive regardless of one's educational background. His ideas support the notion that academic level does not significantly impact how individuals perceive existential issues like death, life's absurdity, and despair.

The uniformity in perception highlights the universal appeal of existential questions and suggests that personal introspection, life experiences, and cultural context may play more significant roles. The data suggested that existential concerns are not contingent on one's academic exposure but are instead deeply rooted in human existence (Burnham and Papandreopoulos, n.d.). Educators might enhance students' engagement with existential concepts by incorporating experiential learning and personal reflection activities alongside traditional academic approaches, fostering a deeper, more personal connection to these themes (Chang, 2019).

**Table 9. Correlation between respondents' level of perception on death, life's absurdity, and despair and their level of familiarity on Camus' Philosophy of the Absurd**

Variables		r	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Death	Familiarity	0.02	0.883	Do not reject H <sub>0</sub>	Not Significant
Life's Absurdity		0.00	0.989	Do not reject H <sub>0</sub>	Not Significant
Despair		0.00	0.996	Do not reject H <sub>0</sub>	Not Significant

As presented in Table 9, there is no significant relationship between the respondents' *level of perception on Death* and *their level of familiarity on Camus' Philosophy of the Absurd* (p-value=0.883). There is a negligible correlation between the two (r=0.02). This means that familiarity with Camus' Philosophy of the Absurd does not substantially influence respondents' perceptions of death. In other words, whether individuals are well-versed in Camus' existential ideas or not, their understanding and perception of death remain largely unchanged.

This finding suggests that perceptions of death are deeply ingrained and not significantly influenced by familiarity with specific philosophical teachings, such as Camus' Philosophy of the Absurd. This will be

supported by Becker's (1973) statement that existential fears, particularly the fear of death, are fundamental to the human psyche. He argued that these fears are deeply ingrained and manifest in various aspects of human behavior and culture, suggesting that they are not easily influenced by intellectual or philosophical knowledge alone.

Additionally, there is no significant relationship between the respondents' *level of perception on Life's Absurdity* and *their level of familiarity on Camus' Philosophy of the Absurd* ( $p$ -value=0.989). There is a negligible correlation between the two ( $r=0.00$ ). This means that familiarity with Camus' philosophical ideas does not substantially influence respondents' perceptions of life's absurdity. In other words, whether individuals are familiar with Camus' Philosophy of the Absurd or not, their understanding and perception of life's absurdity remain unchanged.

The data suggests that other factors beyond philosophical familiarity may have a more significant impact on individuals' perceptions of life's absurdity. These factors could include personal experiences, cultural upbringing, psychological traits, and existential outlook. This will be supported by Yalom's (1980) collection of case studies illustrating how personal experiences and psychological traits influence individuals' confrontations with existential themes, including life's absurdities. It demonstrates the diverse ways in which people make sense of existential questions. Understanding these alternative influences is crucial for gaining a comprehensive understanding of how individuals interpret and navigate the inherent absurdities of existence. Further research in this area could help uncover the intricate interplay of these factors and provide deeper insights into the diverse ways in which people make sense of life's complexities. Such insights could have implications for existential therapy, education, and broader societal discourse on the human condition.

Moreover, there is no significant relationship between the respondents' *level of perception on Despair* and *their level of familiarity on Camus' Philosophy of the Absurd* ( $p$ -value=0.996). There is a negligible correlation between the two ( $r=0.00$ ). This means that familiarity with Camus' philosophical ideas does not substantially influence respondents' perceptions of despair. In other words, whether individuals are familiar with Camus' Philosophy of the Absurd or not, their understanding and perception of despair remain unchanged.

This finding suggests that perceptions of despair, like those of death, are deeply ingrained and more influenced by personal experiences, inherent existential anxieties, and cultural backgrounds than by specific philosophical teachings. This statement will be supported by the Terror Management Theory, suggesting that existential concerns, including despair, are managed through personal and cultural mechanisms rather than through intellectual understanding of philosophical concepts (Solomon et. al, 2015).

To summarize Table 9, the correlation between *respondents' levels of familiarity with Albert Camus' philosophy of the absurd and their perceptions on three existential themes: death, life's absurdity, and despair*. The correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) reported in the table are very low across all three themes, with values close to zero, and the  $p$ -values are significantly high (0.883 for death, 0.989 for life's absurdity, and 0.996 for despair), leading to the decision not to reject the null hypothesis in all cases. This indicates that there are no significant correlations between the respondents' familiarity with Camus' philosophy and their perceptions on these existential themes.

The lack of significant correlation suggests that even if respondents are familiar with Camus' philosophy, this familiarity does not necessarily translate into a heightened or altered perception of death, absurdity, and despair as explored in his works. This finding might imply that understanding Camus' philosophical



concepts does not directly influence how individuals internally perceive these deep existential issues. This could be due to several reasons. For instance, the personal impact and reflection on existential themes might be influenced more by personal experiences, emotional maturity, or other educational inputs rather than solely by intellectual familiarity with philosophical concepts.

Moreover, the absence of correlation might also reflect on the methods of teaching or the depth of engagement that the respondents have with Camus' works. If the teachings are more theoretical and less applied, students might not relate the philosophical doctrines directly to their personal life perspectives or existential contemplations. This points to a potential gap in the pedagogical approach, where philosophical education might benefit from more integrative methods that connect philosophical theories directly to personal and practical life experiences.

This result also suggests a broader reflection on the nature of philosophical education and its goals. If the aim is to make philosophical concepts relevant to students' personal lives, then educators might need to rethink how these ideas are presented and explore more interactive or experiential learning methods that can make these connections more explicit and impactful. Additionally, it raises questions about the subjective nature of existential reflections and how they are influenced by a variety of factors beyond academic learning, such as cultural, social, and psychological factors.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, while students were generally receptive to and understood existential themes, there was a crucial need for educational strategies that would enhance the depth of their engagement with philosophical content. The sample size indicated that they had an understanding of existentialist philosophy, which resonated with Albert Camus' ideas, suggesting that including his philosophy in discussions on existentialism could greatly benefit students seeking a deeper comprehension of the subject. They were encouraged to read more of Camus' works. This could involve integrating more comprehensive discussions, critical analysis, and potentially interdisciplinary approaches that connect philosophical theories to broader humanistic and social scientific perspectives. Additionally, fostering a curriculum that evolves in complexity with students' academic and personal growth could enhance the applicability and impact of philosophical education.

The recommendations emphasized enhancing engagement with existential philosophy by encouraging students to join discussion groups and keep reflective journals. Educators were advised to use dynamic teaching methods like debates and case studies and pursue professional development for effective teaching. Professionals, including counselors and researchers, were urged to adopt interdisciplinary approaches, linking existential philosophy with psychology and sociology to apply it in areas like leadership training and wellness. Future researchers were recommended to conduct studies on the impact of different teaching methods and cultural contexts on students' understanding of existential philosophy.

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