Spirituality and job satisfaction among female Jewish Israeli hospital nurses

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Abstract
Title. Spirituality and job satisfaction among female Jewish Israeli hospital nurses.
Aim. This paper is a report of a study conducted to examine the relationship between spirituality and hospital nurses’ work satisfaction and to determine the unique contributions of various specific aspects of spirituality to their work satisfaction.
Background. Spirituality has been indicated as a possible contributor to nurses’ job satisfaction. However, few researchers have examined the relationship between spirituality and nurses’ job satisfaction.
Method. During 2007, 120 female Jewish Israeli hospital nurses responded to a questionnaire including a multidimensional measure of spirituality and a measure of overall job satisfaction.
Results. Correlation analysis indicated a positive relationship between life coherency aspects of spirituality and spiritual values with job satisfaction. Hierarchical regression analysis indicated the particular importance of an idealistic spiritual orientation (positive contribution) and a transcendent spiritual orientation (negative contribution) to the prediction of nurses’ job satisfaction.
Conclusion. The relationship between spirituality and nurses’ job satisfaction is complex. Hospital managers may be able to enhance job satisfaction by providing opportunities for nurses to satisfy their spiritual needs (in particular, altruistic and ideological orientations) on the job. In addition, nurses with a strong transcendent orientation may be identified and given special attention to increase the likelihood of job satisfaction.

Keywords: female, hospital nurses, Israeli, Jewish, job satisfaction, questionnaire, spirituality

Introduction
Job satisfaction among healthcare professionals in general, and nurses in particular, has been the focus of a growing number of studies (e.g. Blegen 1993, Farrell & Dares 1999, Cimete et al. 2003, Shaver & Lacey 2003). A number of recent studies have focused on nurses’ job satisfaction in a variety of populations such as hospital nurses in Turkey (Golbasi et al. 2008), civilian and military nurses working in military hospitals (Zangaro & Johantgen 2009), and the nursing staff in intensive care units (Elpern et al. 2005). Job satisfaction among nurses has been found to be associated with a number of important organizational outcome variables such as absenteeism (Song et al. 1997), turnover (Lum...
et al. 1998) and intent to leave among Lebanese hospital nurses (El-Jardali et al. 2009) and nurses working in Macao (Chan et al. 2009). In addition, a variety of variables such as job climate (Agho 1993), personal interrelationships (Hisako & Takaaki 1997), role conflict and ambiguity (Wu & Norman 2006) and demographic characteristics (Kavanaugh et al. 2006) have been identified as being related to, and supposedly influencing, nurses’ job satisfaction.

More recently, some researchers have identified spirituality as a possibly important contributor to nurses’ job satisfaction (e.g. Brown 2003, Komala & Ganesh 2007). However, only a small number of empirical investigations focusing on the relationship between spirituality and nurses’ job satisfaction can be found in the literature (e.g. Clark et al. 2007). In addition, these investigations have usually involved single score measures of spirituality, thus limiting the possibility of uncovering more complex relationships between various aspects of spirituality and job satisfaction among nurses. In an attempt to shed light on this issue, a multidimensional measure of spirituality was used in the present study to examine the relationships between various aspects of spirituality and job satisfaction of hospital nurses.

**Background**

**Spirituality**

There are numerous definitions of spirituality in the psychological literature (see Zinnbauer et al. 1999, Zinnbauer & Pargament 2002, 2005). Koenig et al. (2001, p. 18) offered the following definition: ‘Spirituality is the personal quest for understanding answers to ultimate questions about life, about meaning, and about relationship to the sacred or transcendent, which may (or may not) lead to or arise from the development of religious rituals and the formation of community’. Westgate (1996) identified four components of spirituality in the literature: meaning and purpose in life (i.e. the sense of a search for, or the finding of, meaning and purpose), transcendent beliefs and experiences (i.e. an awareness or experience of something beyond life’s rational aspects), intrinsic values (i.e. values, held by the individual with no ulterior motives, that guide his or her life), and community or relationship aspects (i.e. relationship with others and a willingness to help them). However, while there is little agreement in the literature as to what spirituality actually is, most researchers agree that it is a multidimensional construct (Seybold & Hill 2001, Miller & Thoresen 2003, Zinnbauer & Pargament 2005).

The significance of a multidimensional approach to spirituality is that its various components may be related to other variables, such as job satisfaction, in different ways. Therefore, while the use of a single score of spirituality may reveal low correlations with job satisfaction, a multidimensional measure of spirituality may allow for more robust relationships between specific aspects of spirituality and job satisfaction to emerge as well as identifying other aspects of spirituality that are more loosely associated with job satisfaction.

It is important to note that although most researchers today agree that religion and spirituality are not identical (e.g. Westgate 1996, Saucier & Skrzypinski 2006), i.e. a religious person may not necessarily be spiritual and a spiritual individual may not necessarily be religious, many definitions and measures of spirituality do include components that are specifically related to religion. Therefore, in the study reported here it was decided to adopt the approach proposed by Elkins et al. (1988). One of the major assumptions of their approach is that spirituality is not identical to religiosity and an individual who is unaffiliated with traditional religion can still be ‘spiritual’. On the basis of an extensive literature search, Elkins et al. (1988) developed a multidimensional definition of spirituality composed of the following nine components: (1) Transcendent Dimension, (2) Meaning and Purpose in Life, (3) Mission in Life, (4) Sacredness of Life, (5) Material Values, (6) Altruism, (7) Idealism, (8) Awareness of the Tragic and (9) Fruits of Spirituality. They then developed the Spiritual Orientation Inventory (SOI), whose nine subscales demonstrated acceptable levels of reliability (D.N. Elkins, unpublished data). The SOI has been used in a number of studies focusing on spirituality (e.g. Lauri & Elkins 1988, Zainuddin 1993, Smith 1995, Sherman 1996, Tloczynski et al. 1997, Morris 2001).

**Spirituality and job satisfaction**

The relationship between spirituality and work-related variables such as job satisfaction has been the subject of a limited number of empirical studies (Duffy 2006). Clark et al. (2007) remarked that although the past years have shown a growing interest in the relationship between spirituality and job satisfaction, only a few empirical investigations have provided support for the claimed positive influence of spirituality on job satisfaction. For example, Millman et al. (2003) and Gracia-Zamor (2003) have found that certain dimensions of spirituality, particularly those associated with life coherence such as meaning making and sense of purpose, were positively related with various aspects of work-related variables such as job satisfaction and involvement. On the other hand, other researchers have failed to uncover statistically significant correlations between spirituality and
job satisfaction. For example, Holder and Vaux (1998) found no relationship, either direct or indirect, between spirituality and job satisfaction among a sample of African-American professionals.

If the number of empirical studies dealing with spirituality and work outcomes such as job satisfaction is small, the number focusing on healthcare professionals is even more limited. Komala and Ganesh (2007) have pointed out that although much research exists that examines the relationship between spirituality and health outcomes, very few researchers have examined the role of spirituality in the work of healthcare professionals. On the basis of the work of Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2004), these researchers developed a measure of spirituality providing seven scales (Physical, Affective, Cognitive, Interpersonal, Service, Spiritual and Mystical) and uncovered a medium-sized positive correlation between the total spirituality score and job satisfaction among hospital doctors and nurses. However, the correlations between the various dimensions of spirituality and job satisfaction were not reported. In a similar manner, Clark et al. (2007) uncovered a small positive relationship between a measure of spiritual well-being (Hungelmann et al. 1996) and work satisfaction among interdisciplinary team members working in a hospice setting. While relevant to this study, it should be noted that spiritual well-being and spirituality may be different constructs.

In summary, although theorists have identified spirituality as a possible contributor to the job satisfaction of nurses, only a few empirical studies have been performed. In addition, most of the studies reported in the literature used unidimensional measures of spirituality or a single score of spirituality that combined together various aspects of spirituality, thus not allowing for a more complex relationship between various aspects of spirituality and job satisfaction to be uncovered. In the present study, a multidimensional measure of spirituality that allowed for the examination of a more complex relationship between spirituality and nurses’ job satisfaction was used.

**Spirituality and nurses’ job satisfaction**

A number of possible explanations for the influence of spirituality and job satisfaction among nurses can be offered. One explanation is based on Holland’s (1997) theory of vocational personality types and work environments. According to Holland, individuals can be characterized into one of six personality types on the basis of their vocational preferences. In a similar manner, vocations can also be identified as belonging to one of six vocational categories. When an individual’s occupational choice is congruent with their personality type, then that individual will be satisfied with their job. On this basis, it would be reasonable to predict that, for an individual working in an occupation that is inherently spiritual, the more that individual possesses spiritual tendencies, the more satisfied that individual will be with their job. Nursing has been described as being essentially spiritual in nature (Goddard 2000). Graber and Johnson (2001) pointed out that there has been a historic association between the healthcare professions, such as nursing, and spirituality. Therefore, it is expected that nurses who are more spiritually inclined should find the nursing profession more congruent with their needs and therefore be more satisfied with their jobs.

A second explanation for the relationship between spirituality and job satisfaction among nurses is based on the demanding nature of a hospital nurse’s job. These nurses work long hours, including night shifts, weekends and holidays. In addition, in the course of taking care of hospitalized patients suffering from a variety of ailments, hospital nurses often deal directly with many tasks that most people would describe as difficult and unpleasant. These factors would seem to lead to low job satisfaction. However, if nurses see their profession as a calling and as an opportunity to fulfill their purpose in life, then such a profession may be a source of satisfaction despite its difficulties. Indeed, some studies (e.g. Gracia-Zamor 2003, Millman et al. 2003) have shown that certain dimensions of spirituality, particularly those associated with life coherency aspects of spirituality such as meaning making and sense of purpose, were positively correlated with various aspects of work-related variables such as job satisfaction and involvement. According to Ellis et al. (2002), healthcare professionals see their profession as a calling and therefore experience more job satisfaction. In a similar manner, Craigie and Hobbs (1999) found that healthcare providers tend to conceive themselves as instruments of a higher power. Therefore, it is expected that nurses who demonstrate stronger orientations to the life coherency aspects of spirituality should find the nursing profession more satisfying.

Many healthcare professionals, and in particular hospital nurses, deal with human suffering on a day-to-day basis. This constant exposure to pain and death can be assumed to have an emotional impact on them and would seem to detract from their job satisfaction. Two aspects of spirituality would seem to be relevant in coping with such intense exposure to human suffering. The first is the transcendent aspect of spirituality. As discussed above, according to most theorists dealing with spirituality the belief in the
transcendent aspect of life – that there is more to life than the here-and-now – and associated transcendent experiences are a major component of spirituality. Such an orientation may help to put human suffering into proportion and therefore lessen the detrimental effects of intensive contact with this suffering on job satisfaction. Awareness of the Tragic, one of the dimensions in the Elkins et al. (1988) model of spirituality that is defined as an outlook on tragic incidents of life as opportunities for spiritual growth, would also seem to contribute to nurses’ job satisfaction. Finally, the Fruits of Spirituality dimension, which represents an individual’s feeling of benefiting from spirituality, would seem to be relevant to enhancing nurses’ job satisfaction and counterbalancing the contact with suffering and pain.

Spiritual values are an additional aspect of spirituality. Komala and Ganesh (2007) claim that an individual’s personal spiritual values should have an effect on the manner in which that individual responds to work-related events. Olive (1995) found that job satisfaction among physicians was related to their role in helping patients and facilitating their recovery. Fillion et al. (2007) found that a people-oriented culture was a good predictor of job satisfaction among a sample of French nurses providing palliative care. Therefore, it would be expected that spirituality dimensions related to interpersonal, altruistic and ideological values would be positively related to job satisfaction among nurses.

The study

Aim

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between spirituality and hospital nurses’ work satisfaction and to determine the unique contributions of various specific aspects of spirituality to their work satisfaction.

Specifically, the following predictions were tested:

• Prediction 1: spirituality is positively related to job satisfaction among nurses.

• Prediction 2: life coherency aspects of spirituality (meaning and purpose in life, and mission in life) are positively related to job satisfaction among nurses.

• Prediction 3: transcendent and experiential aspects of spirituality (transcendent dimension, awareness of the tragic and fruits of spirituality) are positively related to job satisfaction among nurses.

• Prediction 4: spiritual values (sacredness of life, material values, altruism and idealism) are positively related to job satisfaction among nurses.

Design

The data collected for this study were part of a larger study of spirituality at the workplace conducted at a number of work sites that focused on spirituality as a buffer for work-related stress. Data were collected by means of a questionnaire and a correlational design was employed.

Participants

A convenience sample of 120 female nurses working in a public hospital in a large city in the northern part of central Israel participated in the study, which was conducted in cooperation with the office of the head nurse. Questionnaires were distributed to nursing staff by two female research assistants. The nurses returned the research instruments to the research assistants immediately upon completion. The response rate was close to 100% as almost all nurses approached agreed to participate in the study. As soon as the goal of 120 questionnaires was reached, no additional nurses were approached. This goal was set to insure a subject-to-variable ratio of 10 to 1 that is recommended for regression analysis (Okolo 1991). Three questionnaires were not included because of incomplete data, resulting in an effective sample of 117 nurses.

Data collection

Data were collected using a questionnaire including the following measures.

Spiritual Orientation Inventory

This 85-item measure was developed by Elkins et al. (1988) and has nine subscales of spirituality: (1) Transcendent Dimension, 13 items (e.g. ‘I have had transcendent, spiritual experiences which seem almost impossible to put into words’); (2) Meaning and Purpose in Life, 10 items (e.g. ‘Even though I may not always understand it, I do believe that life is deeply meaningful’); (3) Mission in Life, nine items (e.g. ‘I believe life presents one with a mission to fulfill’); (4) Sacredness of Life, 15 items (e.g. ‘Even such activities as eating, work, and sex have a sacred dimension to them’); (5) Material Values, six items, (e.g. ‘It is much more important to pursue spiritual goals than to pursue money and possessions’); (6) Altruism, seven items (e.g. ‘I am often overcome with feelings of compassion for human beings’); (7) Idealism, 10 items (e.g. ‘I believe the human spirit is powerful and will win in the end’); (8) Awareness of the Tragic, five items, (e.g. ‘It seems that pain and suffering are often necessary to make us examine and re-orient our
The original scale used a 7-point Likert scale with anchors for the two extremities only (1, *intensely disagree* and 7, *intensely agree*). For the sake of conformity with the other scales used in the study, a 5-point Likert scale with comparable anchors (1, *strongly disagree* and 5, *strongly agree*) was used. A number of researchers have addressed the issue of various response scale formats and the equivalence between them. Matell and Jacoby (1971) compared 18 different formats of response scales (2- to 19-point) and concluded that ‘both reliability and validity are independent of the scale points used for Likert-type items’ (p. 666). Schutz and Rucker (1975) compared factor scores derived from various Likert-type scale formats (2- to 7-point) and came to the conclusion that ‘the number of available response categories, at least within the 2- to 7-point range, does not materially affect the cognitive structure derived from responses to that scale’ (p. 323). Colman et al. (1997) found that a simple linear conversion from a 5- to a 7-point scale, and vice-versa, accounted for between 76% and 85% of the variance. More recently, Robins et al. (2001) examined the convergent validity of a single-item measure of global self-esteem as well its relationship with social desirability using both 5- and 7-point Likert scales for the various measures. Their results were almost identical for the two scales and they concluded that the length of the response scale does not appear to affect the convergent validity of the scale. On the basis of these sources it can be seen that the use of a 5-point scale in place of the original 7-point scale should not have a considerable effect on the reliability or validity of the SOI.

**Job satisfaction**

Overall job satisfaction was measured with a 9-item scale combining the three items from Camman et al.’s (1983) measure of job satisfaction and the six items from Agho et al.’s (1992) scale of overall job satisfaction.

**Religiousness**

A single-item 5-point Likert scale of self-reported level of religiousness was used (1, *not at all religious* and 5, *very religious*).

**Demographics**

Participants were requested to report their age, sex, family status, level of education and religious group identity (ultra-religious, religious, traditional, secular/non-religious and others).

**Ethical considerations**

This study was approved by the appropriate ethics committee. Anonymity was guaranteed and it was stressed that participation in the study was voluntary and could be ended at any time. No incentive was offered for participating.

**Data analysis**

The data were analysed by correlational analysis and hierarchical regression using SPSS version 16.0.

**Validity and reliability**

Reliability coefficients for the subscales of the SOI ranged from 0.68 to 0.93, with the exception of Awareness of the Tragic (x = 0.56), and this is comparable to those reported by Sherman (1996). Intercorrelations between the nine SOI subscales were found to be similar to those reported by Johnson (2001). The reliability coefficient for the 9-item measure of job satisfaction was 0.85.

**Results**

The nurses participating in the study were between 21 and 62 years old (mean = 39.6 years; SD = 10.0) and all were female Jewish Israelis. Most were married (81%), 16% were single and 3% were divorced, widowed or other. Approximately half reported holding a BA or MA degree and 47% reported having some postsecondary school education. The demographics are presented in Table 1.

Scores for SOI scales and job satisfaction were calculated by averaging scale items, resulting in scores ranging from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Total SOI was calculated by averaging the nine specific spirituality scores. Pearson correlations between the spirituality scores with job satisfaction are presented in Table 2.

These correlations reveal a statistically significant positive relationship between Total SOI and job satisfaction (r = 0.31, P < 0.01) and thus provide support for Prediction 1. The correlations in Table 1 indicate that the dimensions of spirituality associated with life coherency – Meaning and Purpose in Life and Mission in Life – were both positively related to job satisfaction, thus providing support for Prediction 2. The dimensions associated with the transcendent and experiential aspects of spirituality demonstrated a more complex picture. Only Awareness of the Tragic had a statistically significant correlation with job satisfaction. The other two dimensions of spirituality in this category – Transcendent Dimension and Fruits of Spirituality – were
not statistically significantly related to job satisfaction. Thus, these findings provide partial support for Prediction 3.

Finally, the correlations between three dimensions of spiritual values – Sacredness of Life, Altruism, and Idealism – and job satisfaction were statistically significant and positive. However, Material Values was not statistically significantly related to job satisfaction. Therefore, these findings provide partial support for Prediction 4.

As stated before, spirituality is a multidimensional concept. The zero-order correlations presented in Table 2 take into account the relationship between job satisfaction and a single dimension of spirituality at a time. Therefore, multivariate hierarchical regression analysis was performed. In this analysis, job satisfaction was regressed on to the specific spirituality scores. Since the correlations between a number of spirituality dimensions were close to or above the widely-accepted $0.80$ level (Licht 2001) (Transcendent Dimension and Fruits of Spirituality, $r = 0.91$; Idealism and Altruism, $r = 0.77$; Mission in Life and Meaning and Purpose in Life, $r = 0.74$), the latter scale of each pair (i.e. Fruits of Spirituality, Altruism, Meaning and Purpose in Life) was dropped from the regression analyses to avoid multicollinearity. Age and Religiousness were entered on the first step as control variables and the remaining six dimensions of spirituality were entered on the second step. The results of this analysis, including the standardized beta coefficients for each of the predictors, are presented in Table 3.

### Table 2 Correlations of dimensions of spirituality with job satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Spiritual Orientation Inventory</th>
<th>Transcendent dimension</th>
<th>Meaning and purpose in life</th>
<th>Mission in life</th>
<th>Sacredness of life</th>
<th>Material values</th>
<th>Altruism</th>
<th>Idealism</th>
<th>Awareness of the tragic</th>
<th>Fruits of spirituality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.31**</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.32**</td>
<td>0.30**</td>
<td>0.34**</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
<td>0.54**</td>
<td>0.19*</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$. 

### Table 3 Summary of hierarchical regression analysis for the prediction of nurses’ job satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiousness</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcendent dimension</td>
<td>-0.29*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission in life</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacredness of life</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialistic values</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealism</td>
<td>0.61**</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tragic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.06*</td>
<td>0.37**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.31**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The coefficients shown are standardized beta weights at each step.

* $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$. 

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**JAN: ORIGINAL RESEARCH**

**Spirituality and nurses’ job satisfaction**

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The hierarchical regression analysis indicates that, after controlling for age and Religiousness, the dimensions of spirituality made a statistically significant and unique contribution to the prediction of job satisfaction. In particular, two dimensions of spirituality made statistically significant contributions to this prediction. Idealism demonstrated a positive contribution to the prediction of job satisfaction, whereas a negative contribution for Transcendent Dimension emerged.

Discussion

Study limitations

A number of limitations of the study should be mentioned. The first is because of the fact that the study was correlational. Although the results are, in general, congruent with the assumption that spirituality contributes to job satisfaction, it may very well be that the degree to which individuals are satisfied with their specific occupation may influence their worldview and be the cause for their degree of spirituality. Future researchers should use longitudinal research methodologies to help clarify the cause and effects relationship between spirituality and job satisfaction.

A second limitation is inherent in any study focusing on such an elusive construct as spirituality. As mentioned above, the definition of spirituality is an issue upon which there is far from agreement. Therefore, any study using a particular measure of spirituality is limited to the definition of spirituality that the measure is based upon. Elkins et al.’s (1988) SOI was chosen for this study because of its multidimensional nature and its humanistic approach to spirituality. However, it is recommended that future researchers should examine the relationship between spirituality and nurses’ work satisfaction using alternative measures of spirituality, such as Piedmont’s (1999) three-factor Spiritual Transcendence Scale and MacDonald’s 5-factor (MacDonald 1997, 2000) Expressions of Spirituality Inventory which includes, among other dimensions, Paranormal Beliefs and Religiousness.

Finally, all of the research participants were female Israelis who identified as Jewish, albeit about a third as secular Jews. Therefore the generalizability of the findings may be limited. First is the question of gender. Basic findings in the field of religion are that women are more religious than men, and that the relationship between religious variables and various outcome measures, e.g. physical and mental health, is stronger for women in comparison to men (Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle 1997). It is reasonable to assume that the same is true for spirituality. Second is the question of religion. Although the measure of spirituality used was humanistic in nature and in addition religiousness was statistically controlled for in a limited manner, the influence of religion on the participants cannot be totally negated. In Israel, there is no separation of religion from the state, and religion permeates virtually all aspects of life. Even Israeli Jews who identify as secular and non-religious are known to perform a large number of religious rituals (e.g. participating in a Passover Seder, fasting on Yom Kippur) associated with the Jewish tradition (Kedem 1991, Levy et al. 1993). Therefore, it is recommended that future research should include more heterogeneous samples in terms of gender as well as religious affiliation.

Discussion of results

Although it is proposed in the theoretical literature that spirituality should contribute to job satisfaction in general, and among healthcare professionals in particular, few empirical investigations have been performed in this area. The results presented here, on the basis of a sample of hospital nurses in Israel, provide additional support for this notion. In addition, the unique contribution of spirituality, over and above that of religiousness, was demonstrated. However, the unique contribution of this study is the use of a multidimensional measure of spirituality, which allowed an examination of the complexity of the relationship between different dimensions of spirituality and nurses’ job satisfaction. On the basis of the results uncovered here, these dimensions can be divided into three groups. The first group consists of the life coherency dimensions of spirituality (Meaning and Purpose in Life and Mission in Life), Sacredness of Life and Awareness of the Tragic. These dimensions of spirituality demonstrated low to medium correlations with job satisfaction. However, in conjunction with the other dimensions of spirituality, these dimensions were not found to make unique contributions to job satisfaction. This would seem to indicate that a general positive spiritual orientation to life (i.e. that life, including both its more apparently mundane and difficult aspects, has purpose, meaning and inherent worth) makes a basic and important positive contribution to job satisfaction. Some researchers explain that spirituality or spiritual well-being may contribute to job satisfaction through a mechanism known as horizontal spillover. Horizontal spillover theory (Wilensky 1960) suggests that affect, such as satisfaction, in one life domain has an influence on affect in a neighbouring life domains. Thus, Lee et al. (2003) proposed that satisfaction in the domain of spirituality is positively related to satisfaction in the work domain.

The second group of spirituality dimensions consists of two related spiritual values – Altruism and Idealism. Both of these
dimensions demonstrated strong correlations with job satisfaction. In addition, Idealism, which was included in the hierarchical regression, continued to demonstrate a strong contribution to job satisfaction, over and above the contributions of the other dimensions. These two dimensions are based on a type of sacrifice of self for one’s beliefs or for the sake of others. On the assumption that a high score on these dimensions of spirituality indicates an inherent need to give of oneself to others – either to ideals or to individuals – a nurse who is characterized in this way would most understandably find satisfaction in the nursing profession providing care to the suffering.

The third group of spirituality dimensions gave the most interesting, and unexpected, results. Zero-order correlations indicated that Transcendent Dimension was not statistically significantly related to nurses’ job satisfaction. However, after controlling for other dimensions of spirituality in the hierarchical regression analysis a net repressor effect (see Conger & Jackson 1972, Conger 1974, Paulhus et al. 2004) emerged, i.e. a statistically significant contribution to job satisfaction was revealed. In this case, the contribution was negative. The basis for this study’s prediction of a positive contribution of transcendence to nurses’ job satisfaction was an assumption that spiritual transcendence represents a form of denial of the here-and-now by stressing something above and beyond. Therefore, an individual scoring high on these dimensions could be assumed to bear human suffering in this life better than an individual who is focused on the here-and-now. In case of hospital nurses, it was expected that nurses who were more strongly oriented to transcendence would therefore be more satisfied with their jobs, in comparison with those who were less strongly oriented in this manner. However, the negative contribution of this dimension to nurses’ job satisfaction would seem to indicate that, rather than a denial of the here-and-now, transcendence represents its rejection. In this way, a transcendent orientation may be a reaction to the difficulties of life, e.g. human suffering, and in essence work as a defence mechanism. Therefore, it may be that nurses who have difficulty coping with human suffering, and are therefore less satisfied with their jobs, develop a reactive transcendent/rejection orientation. Of course, this explanation is conjecture and future research should be planned to investigate this issue in depth.

In summary, the results of this study clearly indicate that spirituality is an important contributor to the work satisfaction of hospital nurses. Specific dimensions of spirituality, such as altruistic and ideological orientations, demonstrated particular relevance to enhanced work satisfaction in accordance with a number of recent researchers (e.g. Brown 2003, Komala & Ganesh 2007). However, other dimensions of spirituality, such as the belief in a transcendental dimension in life, appear to be detrimental to nurses’ work satisfaction, a finding that has not been predicted by researchers in the field.

Conclusion

The results presented here implicate that nurses’ spiritual orientations are an important issue and should not be ignored by hospital administration. Since work satisfaction is an important predecessor to turnover, spiritual considerations may be a key factor in retaining nurses in hospital work. However, more specific models of the relationship, both positive and negative, between spirituality, nurses’ work satisfaction and turnover are needed to develop effective organizational interventions.

Healthcare managers could use the findings presented here to enhance hospital functioning. For example, they could provide a working environment favorable to the experience of spirituality at work, and thus facilitate the enhancement of
job satisfaction. In particular, it is recommended that managers give nurses opportunities to fulfill their feelings that nursing is a mission and also stress the opportunities for true altruistic behavior through nursing. In addition, it may be important to identify nurses who have a strong transcendent orientation on the one hand, but on the other hand lack a strong altruistic ideological orientation. Such nurses may be prone to lower job satisfaction and individual organizational intervention may be called for.

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**Conflict of interest**

No conflict of interest has been declared by the author.

**References**


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