



The Impact of Spiritual Leadership on Nurses' Performance and Work Discipline in the Post-Pandemic Era

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to explore the impact of spiritual leadership on nurses' performance and work discipline in the post-pandemic context. To achieve this, the research utilized an experimental design. The study focused on nurses working in regional hospitals in Bali, specifically in the Emergency Department. Using purposive sampling, a total of 160 nurses from seven different hospitals were selected to participate in the study. Data were gathered through questionnaires, which were then analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The findings indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores between the pretest and posttest, with a p-value of less than .05. This suggests that spiritual leadership had a notable and positive effect on improving nurses' performance and work discipline.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only brought to light but also intensified many of the challenges faced by nurses, a group whose contributions to healthcare are often undervalued despite their critical role. Nursing is a demanding profession that requires extensive formal education, rigorous training, and certification through a professional competency exam (Scott Tilley, 2008). In addition to these foundational qualifications, nurses are expected to adhere to internationally recognized quality standards to ensure the safety and comfort of both patients and their families (Gunawan & Aunguroch, 2017).

Beyond their technical expertise, nurses are tasked with providing holistic care that addresses not only patients' physical needs, but also their psychological, social, and spiritual needs (Vandali, 2017). This comprehensive approach to patient care requires nurses to maintain a high level of professionalism, navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, and work effectively within multidisciplinary teams. The pandemic further exacerbated these expectations, placing nurses under immense pressure to deliver care in high-risk, emotionally charged, and often resource-limited environments. Despite these challenges, the quality of nursing care has a profound impact on patient outcomes, making it imperative to recognize and support the multifaceted role nurses play in healthcare systems.

During the pandemic, nurses worked under extreme conditions, facing substantial risks, including exposure to COVID-19 due to insufficient personal protective equipment. In addition, the overwhelming surge in patients often exceeded the hospital's capacity, placing an immense strain on nursing staff (Pahlevan Sharif et al., 2022). Tragically, many nurses lost their lives while caring for COVID-19 patients (Keles et al., 2021). Data from 50 countries confirmed that 1,510 nurses died from exposure to the virus while providing healthcare services (Vera-Alanis et al., 2022). This heightened risk, coupled with burnout and emotional exhaustion, led to a noticeable decline in nurses' performance and, in some cases, to a decision by some to leave the profession entirely.

In order to support and improve nurses' performance, it is crucial to implement leadership strategies that foster resilience and motivation. Effective human resource management in healthcare, particularly within nursing, requires the adoption of appropriate leadership styles (Ruzaini et al., 2021). One such leadership approach gaining

attention is spiritual leadership. This leadership model focuses on nurturing the spiritual well-being of employees, creating an environment conducive to both personal and professional growth. Research has shown that spiritual leadership positively impacts employee well-being and job satisfaction (Chen & Yang, 2012), and its application can enhance organizational culture by promoting values such as motivation, integrity, and professionalism.

Spiritual leadership is fundamentally about meeting the spiritual needs of employees by fostering core values such as trust, honesty, love, and a clear sense of vision and mission (Singh, 2013). Unlike traditional leadership models that may focus primarily on task completion or financial results, spiritual leadership goes deeper, encouraging leaders to connect with their teams on a more personal and emotional level. It is characterized by leaders who not only inspire and influence their subordinates but also guide them by embodying values such as justice, responsibility, emotional intelligence, and motivation (Suhonen & Paasivaara, 2011).

In environments like hospitals, where high stress and intense demands are the norm, spiritual leadership becomes especially important. By focusing on the spiritual and emotional well-being of employees, leaders can create a work culture that promotes greater engagement and a sense of purpose among staff. Nurses and other healthcare professionals, who often face burnout, compassion fatigue, and emotional exhaustion, are more likely to thrive in such an environment where they feel supported and valued not just for their professional skills, but also as whole individuals. When spiritual leadership is implemented effectively, it can lead to improved employee satisfaction, higher productivity, and increased commitment. Employees are more likely to feel motivated and fulfilled in their work, and their performance is enhanced because they are encouraged to align their personal values with the goals of the organization. This, in turn, contributes to better patient care and outcomes, as employees who feel spiritually and emotionally supported are more likely to perform at their best and remain engaged in their roles.

However, observations in several hospitals in Bali suggest that the leadership in healthcare settings, especially in emergency departments, is not fully aligned with these ideals. Despite the high stress and demands placed on nurses, particularly during the pandemic, there seems to be a lack of recognition and appreciation for their efforts. Interviews with nurses revealed a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction, with many feeling unsupported by their leaders despite working under extreme pressure. The emergency department, in particular, is a high-stakes environment where unpredictability and the need for quick decision-making can contribute to heightened stress and burnout. This lack of effective leadership is likely contributing to declining performance and work discipline among nurses.

The concept of work discipline plays a significant role in improving the performance of healthcare workers. Discipline acts as a bridge between goals and achievement, and it is critical for nurses to maintain a high level of discipline in their work, especially in emergency situations. Discipline in nursing goes beyond punctuality; it also reflects an employee's ability to consistently complete tasks on time, adhere to protocols, and maintain a high standard of care even without constant supervision (Dixon et al., 2022; Ruzaini et al., 2021). Nurses who exhibit strong discipline are more likely to provide timely, quality care, which is essential in emergency healthcare settings. Unfortunately, the level of work discipline among nurses in Bali appears to have declined, and this is contributing to a deterioration in their overall performance.

The performance and work discipline of nurses are critical factors that directly influence the quality of service perceived by patients and the general public. These aspects also play a significant role in hospital accreditation assessments, which are often based on the effectiveness of care provided by healthcare professionals. As nurses are at the frontline of patient care, their performance is a key indicator of a hospital's overall effectiveness, efficiency, and ability to meet international quality standards. When nurses demonstrate high performance and maintain strong discipline, it leads to better patient outcomes, higher patient satisfaction, and improved organizational reputation.

Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping and sustaining nurse performance and work discipline. Effective leadership is essential for guiding nurses through the complexities of healthcare delivery, ensuring they meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of their patients. During the COVID-19 pandemic, nurses faced unprecedented challenges, including increased patient loads, higher stress levels, and significant risks to their own health. The experience highlighted the need for a leadership model that goes beyond traditional approaches, addressing not only the technical and logistical demands of nursing but also focusing on the emotional and spiritual well-being of staff.

The pandemic exposed a gap in leadership that left many nurses feeling overwhelmed, unsupported, and disconnected from their organizations. In many cases, the lack of emotional and spiritual support resulted in burnout, decreased work discipline, and a decline in performance. These challenges underscore the need for a leadership style that nurtures resilience, motivation, and engagement by supporting the holistic needs of nurses. This gap in leadership underscores the importance of investigating how spiritual leadership can be applied to improve nurses' performance and work discipline, particularly in the post-pandemic context. Spiritual leadership, which focuses on fostering trust, empathy, integrity, and a sense of purpose, offers a potential solution. By addressing nurses' spiritual and emotional needs, spiritual leadership has the potential to foster a more supportive work environment, leading to improved performance, enhanced work discipline, and ultimately, better patient care.

In the post-pandemic era, particularly in hospitals in Bali, there is a clear need for further research to examine the influence of spiritual leadership on nurses' performance and work discipline. By exploring this leadership model, hospitals can better understand how to support their nursing staff through a more holistic approach to leadership—one that nurtures both their professional and personal well-being. This could lead to improved job satisfaction, reduced burnout, and ultimately, a higher standard of care for patients. In summary, to improve the performance and work discipline of nurses, especially in the aftermath of the pandemic, it is essential to adopt leadership styles that address the holistic needs of healthcare workers. Spiritual leadership offers a promising solution by creating a supportive, values-driven work environment that fosters motivation, integrity, and professionalism—critical elements for high-quality patient care and organizational success. Further research into the application of spiritual leadership in nursing is necessary to assess its effectiveness in enhancing nurse performance and discipline in hospitals across Bali.

2. METHODS

Design

The present study employed a quantitative research design utilizing a pretest-posttest framework to examine the impact of spiritual leadership on two key variables: nurse performance (Y1) and work discipline (Y2). The study aimed to assess how the introduction of spiritual leadership influences these outcomes among nurses, particularly in the context of post-pandemic healthcare settings.

Table 1

Design of The Study

Pretest	Treatment	Posttest
Y1.1 (Pretest of Nurse Performance)	X (Spiritual Leadership)	Y1.2 (Pretest of Nurse Performance)
Y2.1 (Pretest of work discipline)		Y2.2 (Pretest of work discipline)

Population and Sample

The study was conducted in Bali, which is home to 69 hospitals, including both government and private institutions. Among these hospitals, there is a total of 11,529 nurses. The population for this research consisted of 265 nurses from 10 regional hospital emergency departments across Bali. To determine the sample size, the Slovin formula was employed, which resulted in a sample size of 160 nurses. This ensures that at least 160 nurses are included in the study, providing sufficient data for meaningful analysis.

Data Collection

Data were collected using questionnaires, designed to assess nurses' work performance and work discipline. The questionnaire consisted of Likert-scale items, where respondents rated statements based on their experiences or feelings. The responses were measured on a scale from 1 to 5

The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms for easy access and data collection. The instruments used in this study had undergone validity and reliability testing. The validity of the instruments was confirmed with a score of 0.70, indicating they accurately measured the intended variables. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.81, confirming the reliability of the questionnaire, meaning the instruments produced consistent results across different respondents.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive Analysis: This analysis focused on calculating the mean, standard deviation, and minimum/maximum scores of the nurses' work performance and work discipline, providing an overall view of the data distribution. Inferential Analysis: This analysis aimed to determine whether there was a significant difference in the mean scores between the pretest and posttest measurements. The purpose was to assess the impact of spiritual leadership on the nurses' performance and work discipline after the intervention. The classification of nurses' performance and work discipline is presented in Table 2, which helps categorize and interpret the results in a meaningful way.

Table 2.

Scoring Category

Score	Category
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low
1.81 – 2.60	Low
2.61 – 3.40	Average
3.41 – 4.20	High
4.21 – 5.00	Very High

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3.

Descriptive Results

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest Performance	160	1.70	4.40	3.3862	.40212
Pretest Work Discipline	160	2.47	4.73	2.9879	.26853
Posttest Performance	160	2.95	4.14	3.5360	.24137
Posttest Work Discipline	160	2.60	4.33	3.4831	.32112
Valid N (listwise)	160				

From the results of descriptive analysis, the score of pretests of nurses' performance is 3.38 and work discipline is 2.98. Both are in average category. Meanwhile, in posttest the score of nurses' performance is 3.53 and work discipline is 3.48. The results highlight that there are mean differences between pretest score and posttest score of all variables. To identify the significancy of the mean difference, a paired sample t test was conducted as shown in Table 5. These results show a clear improvement in both nurses' performance and work discipline between the pretest and posttest, with increases in the average scores for both variables. The mean differences between the pretest and posttest scores point to positive changes that occurred during the study period, likely as a result of the leadership intervention.

To evaluate whether these differences are statistically significant and not simply due to chance, a paired sample t-test was performed. The t-test compares the average scores of the pretest and posttest to determine whether the observed changes in performance and work discipline are statistically meaningful. A significant result from this test would suggest that the introduction of spiritual leadership has had a tangible effect on improving both the performance and work discipline of the nurses. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 5, which includes key statistical outputs such as the t-value, degrees of freedom, and p-value. If the p-value is less than the conventional threshold of 0.05, it would confirm that the observed improvements are statistically significant and not merely coincidental.

Table 4.

Paired Sample t Test

	Posttest Performance - Pretest Performance	Posttest Work Discipline - Pretest Work Discipline
Z	-3.884 ^b	-9.912 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test		
b. Based on negative ranks.		

The results of the paired sample t-test reveal a significant mean difference between the pretest and posttest scores for both nurses' performance and work discipline. This significance is indicated by the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value, which is reported as 0.000. Since this value is much lower than the threshold of 0.05, it confirms that the observed differences between the pretest and posttest scores are statistically significant. In other words, the data provide strong evidence that the improvements in nurses' performance and work discipline are not due to random chance, but rather the result of the intervention. These findings suggest that the introduction of spiritual leadership had a significant impact on enhancing both the performance and work discipline of nurses. Therefore, we can conclude that spiritual leadership played a key role in positively influencing these important aspects of nursing practice.

Research has consistently highlighted the positive influence of spiritual leadership on employee performance and well-being, particularly in healthcare settings. For instance, Pio et al. (2015) investigated how spiritual leadership affects the performance of hospital employees who were affiliated with a particular religion. Their findings suggested that spiritual leadership had a positive impact on employees' job performance, especially when paired with efforts to maintain a work-life balance. This indicates that when employees feel spiritually supported and achieve balance between their personal and professional lives, their overall performance improves. Similarly, Sureskiarti and Avioleta (2019) explored the impact of spiritual leadership on nurses' work discipline. Their study revealed that spiritual leadership positively influenced nurses' discipline by fostering a sense of appreciation and helping them derive deeper meaning from their work. This approach to leadership encourages

employees to feel connected and valued in the workplace, which in turn promotes greater job satisfaction and commitment. Nurses who experience this sense of meaning and connection often report greater fulfillment, not just in their work but in their personal lives as well, leading to higher performance levels and improved work discipline.

Tobroni (2015) further elaborated on the essence of spiritual leadership, describing it as a leadership style that not only inspires and motivates but also awakens employees' inner potential through example, compassion, and a strong adherence to values and spiritual principles. This form of leadership goes beyond the traditional transactional style, which typically focuses on meeting material needs, such as salary. Spiritual leadership, on the other hand, also addresses the emotional and spiritual needs of employees, thereby fostering a deeper, more meaningful connection to their work and the organization. According to George (2003), this holistic approach helps leaders go beyond simply fulfilling employees' basic needs and works to elevate their sense of purpose and well-being. Moreover, organizations that foster a spiritual environment have been shown to experience enhanced organizational performance. Krishnakumar & Neck (2002) highlighted that the incorporation of spirituality in the workplace can lead to a variety of benefits, including improved creativity, honesty, trust, personal fulfillment, and commitment among employees. These benefits contribute to a more productive and harmonious work environment, ultimately resulting in better organizational outcomes. Finally, Zhang & Yang (2021) emphasized that spiritual leaders who communicate a clear and inspiring vision are particularly effective in addressing employees' spiritual needs. By aligning organizational goals with employees' personal values and sense of purpose, spiritual leadership can significantly enhance employee motivation, independence, and engagement. This, in turn, leads to improved performance and a stronger organizational culture.

In summary, the body of research consistently highlights the profound impact of spiritual leadership on enhancing employee outcomes, particularly in areas such as motivation, work discipline, and performance. Spiritual leadership is unique in its ability to address not only the material needs of employees—such as compensation and job security—but also their emotional and spiritual needs, which are often overlooked in traditional leadership models. By recognizing and nurturing these deeper aspects of employee well-being, spiritual leadership fosters a more holistic, fulfilling work experience. One of the key benefits of spiritual leadership is its ability to create a supportive work environment, where employees feel valued, respected, and connected to both their work and the organization. This sense of belonging and purpose is crucial for cultivating higher motivation among employees, as they are more likely to feel engaged, dedicated, and willing to invest extra effort in their tasks when they find personal meaning in their work.

In addition to motivation, spiritual leadership promotes greater work discipline. Employees who feel spiritually supported are more likely to exhibit higher levels of commitment to organizational goals, demonstrate responsibility, and adhere to workplace norms and standards. This, in turn, leads to more consistent and reliable performance, as employees feel both personally and professionally invested in the success of the organization. Furthermore, by fostering a spiritually enriched environment, organizations can enhance individual performance and develop a more committed, creative, and satisfied workforce. When employees are emotionally fulfilled and spiritually nurtured, they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of creativity, offer innovative solutions, and work collaboratively towards shared organizational goals. The result is a more resilient and adaptable workforce, capable of navigating challenges with a positive mindset and a strong sense of purpose.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of the current study strongly support the notion that spiritual leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing both nurse performance and work discipline. The research provides robust evidence that spiritual leadership has a significant direct impact on these two key aspects of nursing practice, with a p-value of less than 0.05 indicating statistical significance. This means that the improvements observed in nurse performance and work discipline are highly unlikely to be due to chance, and are instead directly attributed to the implementation of spiritual leadership principles.

Spiritual leadership, which focuses on addressing both the material and spiritual needs of employees, has been shown to positively influence important organizational outcomes. In the case of nurses, spiritual leadership helps to foster a sense of purpose and meaning in their work, which in turn enhances their commitment to their tasks, adherence to workplace standards, and overall job satisfaction. By meeting nurses' spiritual needs, spiritual leadership encourages a work environment characterized by mutual respect, empathy, and compassion, which are critical for ensuring high-quality patient care.

In the specific context of hospitals in Bali, the results suggest that the application of spiritual leadership can be a powerful strategy for improving nurses' job performance and work discipline, especially in challenging and high-stress environments such as the emergency department. Nurses who feel supported and valued not only perform better but also display greater dedication to their roles, leading to better patient outcomes and more effective teamwork within the hospital.

Given these positive effects, hospitals in Bali are strongly encouraged to integrate spiritual leadership into their management practices. By doing so, hospital administrators can help create a more supportive and fulfilling work environment for nurses, which will ultimately translate into better nursing care for patients. Nurses, in turn, will experience a deeper sense of professional satisfaction, enhanced work discipline, and a higher level of motivation, all of which contribute to overall hospital success. Additionally, the implementation of spiritual leadership in the workplace can be seen as a holistic approach to addressing employee well-being, not just through material rewards, but by nurturing the emotional and spiritual aspects of nursing work. This can help nurses feel more connected to their roles, more aligned with the values of the institution, and more committed to providing the best care possible to their patients.

In summary, the study underscores the importance of spiritual leadership in improving the performance and work discipline of nurses. By embracing this leadership approach, hospitals in Bali can significantly enhance the quality of nursing care, improve organizational outcomes, and ensure that nurses feel more valued and supported in their critical roles.

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